

What's next for the *Dealing with Drought: A Handbook for Water Suppliers* resource?

Did you take part in the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship survey to assess the *Dealing with Drought: A Handbook for Water Suppliers* (the "Drought Handbook") back in February/March of this year? If yes, thank you!

The Ministry wanted to understand water suppliers' awareness and use of the Drought Handbook. We used survey feedback and discussions with colleagues and drinking water partners to determine next steps for the Handbook. This post summarizes what we heard from the survey and other analysis that we undertook and shares next steps for the Drought Handbook.

Information considered

We considered the following information:

- results from the water supplier survey about document access and use,
- comparison of the Drought Handbook with existing resources to identify overlapping and supplier-relevant content, and
- feedback from drinking water partners in public health and on drought management teams.

What we learned

Low awareness and limited use

- From the 104 survey responses, we learned that only 17% of respondents were aware of the Handbook and even fewer water suppliers are using it as their go-to resource.
- Further, we analyzed web data that showed that the Handbook is downloaded far less frequently than other provincial drought resources like the [B.C. Drought and Water Scarcity Operations Plan](#).

Strong content, but poor usability

- Survey respondents valued the Handbook's content related to drought concepts and what different provincial agencies roles are in drought response.
- Drinking water partners agreed that a dedicated resource for water suppliers was useful but noted that, in its current form the Drought Handbook is too complex and lengthy to be practical, particularly during a drought emergency.

Duplication with other resources

- Survey results highlighted that there are other, more easily accessible resources elsewhere on BC Government websites, but it would be helpful to have an organized pathway through all the resources for water suppliers, including for drought.

Planning templates are underused

- Survey results showed that the templates in the Drought Handbook appendices are not being used. Partner feedback suggested that the templates are essentially checklists that would require the support of a qualified professional to complete.

Format is a barrier

- Updating a static document that needs to be downloaded and likely, printed, to use is not efficient nor effective.
- Web analytics confirm that web-based content provides easier and more frequent access than downloadable documents.

The outcome: Refresh and reformat the Drought Handbook

The survey responses and analysis led us to conclude that most water suppliers are not accessing or using the Handbook and are instead accessing other resources from different government webpages. This is likely because the Drought Handbook format could be more user-friendly and focused on information most relevant to water suppliers.

We plan to update the content of the Drought Handbook to reduce duplication of content from other sources and improve readability. The next Drought Handbook will be a web-based resource, making it easier to access, navigate, and update. You will hear more about this project from us later in the year.

Again, our thanks to those of you who provided feedback.

- The Drinking Water Policy Team, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, July 6, 2026