

ROUTLEDGE FOCUS

# The Drought Dilemma

States, Innovation, and the  
Politics of Water Quantity

JONATHAN D. FARLEY,  
JONATHAN M. FISK  
AND JOHN C. MORRIS

ROUTLEDGE



As temperatures continue to rise and we experience a greater frequency of extreme weather, drought, and over-extraction of groundwater, effective water policy management is at a critical juncture. Farley, Fisk, and Morris explore these complexities through the study of three exceedingly divergent states: Alabama, California, and Texas. The approach highlights how water policy is driven as much by political culture, institutional characteristics, and historical context as it is by need and best practices. This work will unquestionably be of interest to policymakers and scholars interested in better understanding the complexities and challenges of state water policy.

—**Martin Mayer**, *University of North Carolina at Pembroke*

*The Drought Dilemma* stands out as a pivotal and enlightening read. This book skillfully navigates the challenging water drought policies in Alabama, Texas, and California, offering key insights into one of our time's most pressing environmental challenges. Detailed interviews enhance the authors' extensive research, illuminating the multifaceted aspects of drought management and water policy. This work reveals that the complexities of environmental problems and policy innovations defy simple categorizations like political ideology or regional location. By bringing the critical aspect of environmental resource distribution to the forefront, the book contributes significantly to our understanding of policy variations and their broader implications and serves as a vital guide for understanding and improving environmental policy. It's an essential addition to the field, poised to influence both current discussions and future policy developments in water management. This book will make a valuable contribution to environmental and natural resource literature.

—**David P. Adams**, *California State University at Fullerton*

*The Drought Dilemma* presents an examination of water policy innovation through a comparative case study analysis across three states: California, Texas, and Alabama. This work underscores the dynamic nature of water problems in these states and the growing challenges facing state and local governments to address regional water issues through effective water management approaches. The central message, the efficacy of water management, requires innovative policy solutions that adapt to changing environmental conditions and mediate future water crises. This study offers environmental scholars, water management practitioners, and students interested in natural resource policy a unique framework to understand the complexities of state-level water policies and the importance of governmental response to meet current and future water needs.

—**Luisa M. Diaz-Kope**, *University of North Georgia*



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# The Drought Dilemma

Water policy in United States is one of the most complex topics in the field of public policy. This book, a comparative study of Texas, California, and Alabama's drought response, provides for the first time a common framework for analysis to investigate how water scarcity and droughts have interacted with various state-level factors to produce a wide degree of variance in policy innovations. Using Toddi Steelman's (2010) conceptual framework, the authors examine multiple variables that impact water policy innovation, while showing how one policy solution does not fit all. They expertly demonstrate divergence in water policies due to the environmental cultures, water distribution, and structures in each case, despite similar drought conditions.

As water is increasingly stressed in the future, the ability to draw on lessons learned by these states will provide valuable insight to other entities that face droughts and water shortages. *The Drought Dilemma* is a must read for all those looking for recommendations for the construction of drought policy, as well as future approaches to understand comparative state drought policy.

**Jonathan D. Farley** is a contract simulator instructor at Naval Air Station Meridian, MS. He retired from active duty in the United States Navy after a 20-year career as an F/A-18 pilot. His research interests include environmental management and international resource conflict. He has published on water conflict in Asia and future military concepts, such as multi-domain operations. He previously served as an instructor at the Air Command and Staff College located at Maxwell Air Force Base, AL. In addition to his role as an instructor, he was a guest lecturer at the Royal Danish Defense College, German Bundeswehr Command and Staff College, and the NATO School Oberammergau.

**Jonathan M. Fisk** is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at Auburn University. He has published nearly two dozen single/co-authored articles/book chapters in journals including the *American Review of Public Administration*; *Energy Policy*; *State and Local Government Review*; *Risk, Hazards, and Crises in Public Policy*; *Public Integrity*; *Society*

*and Natural Resources; Politics and Policy; and Review of Policy Research.* He has worked on grants from the National Science Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

**John C. Morris** is a professor in the Department of Political Science at Auburn University. He has studied environmental policy and water policy for more than 30 years and published widely on public administration and public policy. He is the author/coauthor/editor of 12 books, more than 85 scholarly articles, and more than 40 book chapters and reports.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# **Routledge Research in Environmental Policy and Politics**

## **4. Comparative Perspectives on Environmental Policies and Issues**

*Edited by Robert Dible*

## **5. Framing Environmental Disaster**

Environmental Advocacy and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

*Melissa K. Merry*

## **6. National Climate Policy**

A Multi-field Approach

*Elin Lerum Boasson*

## **7. Climate and Clean Energy Policy**

State Institutions and Economic Implications

*Benjamin H. Deitchman*

## **8. Populism, Eco-populism, and the Future of Environmentalism**

*James R. Stone Jr.*

## **9. Partnerships for Sustainability in Contemporary Global Governance**

Pathways to Effectiveness

*Edited by Liliana B. Andonova, Moira V. Faul and Dario Piselli*

## **10. The Drought Dilemma**

States, Innovation, and the Politics of Water Quantity

*Jonathan D. Farley, Jonathan M. Fisk and John C. Morris*

# **The Drought Dilemma**

States, Innovation, and the Politics  
of Water Quantity

**Jonathan D. Farley, Jonathan M. Fisk  
and John C. Morris**



First published 2024  
by Routledge  
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge  
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2024 Jonathan D. Farley, Jonathan M. Fisk, and John C. Morris

The right of Jonathan D. Farley, Jonathan M. Fisk, and John C. Morris to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

ISBN: 978-1-032-76137-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-81188-8 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-49853-7 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003498537

Typeset in Times New Roman  
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

**To Melissa, Layla, Emma, Jackson, and Mason**

**—Jonathan D. Farley**

**To Melanie, Noah, Caleb, and Micah**

**—Jonathan M. Fisk**

**To Molly and Chris**

**—John C. Morris**



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xiv</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	<i>xv</i>
1 State Policy and Droughts	1
2 A Theory of State Drought Policy	11
3 Texas: Scarcity and Cooperation	37
4 California: A Battle Over Historic Water Rights	57
5 Alabama: Benign Neglect	81
6 An Analysis of the Three Cases	101
7 Conclusions and Future Directions	117
<i>Appendix: Interview Protocol</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>125</i>

# Figures

2.1	Steelman’s Policy Innovation and Implementation Framework	12
3.1	Annual Rainfall in Texas	41
3.2	Aquifers in Texas	42
3.3	Google Searches of the Term “Drought” Versus <i>Dallas Morning News</i> Articles	50
4.1	California’s Annual Water Usage	59
4.2	California’s Regional Water Boards	63
4.3	State Lawsuits Against Presidential Administrations	69
4.4	Google Searches of the Term “Drought” by State	73
4.5	Google Searches of the Term “Drought” Versus <i>Los Angeles Times</i> Articles	74
5.1	Watersheds in Alabama	85
5.2	Alabama’s Drought Management Regions	89
5.3	Google Searches of the Term “Drought” by State	94
6.1	Policy Innovation and Implementation Framework With Environmental Variables	102

# Tables

3.1	Scope and Scale of Water in Texas	38
5.1	Water Management in Alabama	87
6.1	Comparison of Cases by Variable	112

# Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation for the state officials in our case study states who were kind enough to share their thoughts and expertise with us for this study. Their willingness to talk with us made this study possible, and we are indebted to each of them. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Steven P. McKnight, PhD candidate at Auburn University, for his assistance in the preparation of this manuscript. Finally, we thank the chair of the Department of Political Science at Auburn, Dr. Cathleen Erwin, for her support for this project.