

CT Interagency Drought Workgroup
Regular Meeting
March 2, 2023
1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Microsoft Teams meeting

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[+1 860-840-2075,,817266018#](#) (Hartford) Phone Conference ID: 817 266 018#

Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Seating of voting members
3. Minutes – VOTE
 - a. [February 2, 2023](#)
4. Business
 - a. Post Drought Actions
 - i. [Section VI – Drought Recovery](#)
 - ii. Agency findings / reports
 - iii. After-Action/Improvement Plan Report
 - b. [Drought Plan](#)
 - i. Agency reports - [Priority level review](#)
 - c. Recommendation of State Drought Coordinator to Water Planning Council – VOTE
 - d. Review of hydrologic conditions
 - i. Review January monthly data
 - ii. Review any data available for February month-to-date
 - e. Drought stage recommendations – VOTE
 - f. Next Meeting – April 6th
 - g. Other Business
5. Public Comment
6. Adjourn

VI. DROUGHT RECOVERY

At such time when the drought criteria, or other information when warranted, signal that drought conditions are improving, the IDW will consider whether to scale back the drought declaration to a lower stage of drought. When considering the criteria for signs of improvement, special attention should be paid to groundwater levels, since they are more reliable for measuring long-term shifts in rainfall patterns and respond more gradually. Other criteria, such as streamflow, respond quickly to changing conditions and can be misleading during wet periods that may occur during a long-term drought. The IDW will rely on professional judgment guided by the drought criteria, when deciding whether to scale back a drought declaration.

With improving conditions, the IDW should continue to assess and recommend which drought mitigation actions (Section V) are appropriate. These actions should be communicated in the same fashion as when the drought was worsening.

6.1 Post Drought Actions

The primary objectives during post-drought recovery are to maintain, as far as possible, the resources affected by drought, and to assist in the post-drought return and restoration of those resources, taking into consideration resource maintenance and long-term sustainability. These include:

- Administering available funding of federal long-term drought relief;
- Providing risk management programs to assess the financial condition of individual agricultural enterprises and give alternatives for operators to utilize in drought recovery;
- Following-up with drought-impacted community water systems to restore operations and to ensure that drought-driven system improvements and modifications are in compliance with applicable standards;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the triggers as defined in utility water supply plans or asset management plan;
- Preparing an After-Action / Improvement Plan Report summarizing the drought-related issues for the governor and commissioners, to include an assessment of activities undertaken to mitigate drought impacts, successes realized and recommended improvements. This report should, at a minimum:
 - recommend appropriate amendments to state legislation and municipal ordinances;
 - recommend appropriate amendments to the State Drought Plan;
 - recommend programs to encourage efficient use of potable waters;
 - recommend the level of resource monitoring that is needed to establish accurate baseline conditions;
 - recommend improvements to economic impact assessment tools;
 - recommend improvements to drought impacted public water system's water supply plan drought triggers and actions;
 - describe lessons learned with all applicable entities; and
 - summarize the use of class B water sources and emergency reservoirs and wells

III. DROUGHT MANAGEMENT

3.1 Drought Management Areas

The intensity and impact of drought can vary across surprisingly short distances, so the IDW relies on drought management areas to signal variations of drought within the state. By default, the IDW demarcates drought management areas by county: Litchfield, Hartford, Tolland, Windham, Fairfield, New Haven, Middlesex, and New London. This geography is used primarily because NWS often reports weather and climatological data by county, and because NWS issues most of its weather-related hazard messaging by county. As a result, most residents know which county they belong to, an advantage when informing the public about differences in drought intensity across geographies.

The IDW is not bound to the use of counties and, if there is sufficient justification, the IDW may, using its professional judgement, demarcate drought management areas using other political or geographical boundaries, such as portions of counties, watersheds, DEMHS emergency management areas, or municipal boundaries. Arbitrary demarcations for drought management areas may also be used. This flexibility proves useful because drought is dynamic, having the ability to become severe over a hyperlocal area, sometimes called a micro-drought.

3.2 IDW Organizational Structure and Meeting Schedule

The Commissioners of Agriculture, Emergency Services & Public Protection, Energy & Environmental Protection, and Public Health, the Chairman of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, and the Secretary of the Office of Policy & Management, or their designees, are voting members of the IDW. Each appointing authority shall also designate an alternate voting member to serve when the primary voting member is unavailable. The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the Secretary's designee, shall chair the IDW and is responsible for scheduling meetings.

The Water Planning Council shall designate an employee of an agency represented on the IDW to serve the role of State Drought Coordinator. Under the leadership of the State Drought Coordinator, staff of agencies represented on the IDW shall share responsibility for administrative tasks, ensuring communications and reporting protocols are followed, facilitating meetings, administering the online Drought Information Portal, and related tasks. Each agency may designate additional staff to attend meetings as subject matter experts or for administrative assistance, as needed. Such additional staff are not IDW members.

A schedule of monthly meetings for each calendar year shall be adopted annually and be posted on the state public meeting calendar as required by state law. A public notice listing the times, dates, and locations of each meeting shall be posted on the Drought Information Portal website. Meetings may be conducted virtually. All meetings of the IDW shall be public and follow Freedom of Information Act requirements. Meetings of state agency staff assigned to carry out work assignments, planning functions, or other business shall not constitute a public meeting and do not require public notice or participation.

Individual meetings may be cancelled by the chair if warranted, except that the IDW shall meet at least annually to reaffirm membership and responsibilities and other tasks as warranted, including receiving any public input. A quorum of members must be present to conduct business at each meeting. Special or emergency meetings may be scheduled and conducted in accordance with procedures and rules established by state law.

3.3 Implementation

The State Drought Coordinator shall ensure all monitoring data is updated monthly and review such data for signals of developing drought, in accordance with the criteria established under Section V. Whenever the State Drought Coordinator becomes concerned about dry conditions via routine monitoring or other internal or external sources, he or she shall contact the IDW Chair and undertake the following sequence of actions:

1. The State Drought Coordinator shall prepare a drought condition report that summarizes conditions by drought management area and contains relevant data.
2. At the next regular or special meeting, the IDW shall assess and discuss the drought conditions report and any other appropriate data to determine whether dry conditions warrant a declaration(s) of drought for any drought management area, consistent with the thresholds specified in Section V of this plan. The IDW may cite professional judgement in its determination, if not consistent with the thresholds specified in Section V. A determination to recommend such declaration(s) shall be supported by a majority vote of agencies on the IDW, with each agency having one vote.
3. OPM shall transmit any such recommendations of the IDW to the Office of the Governor. The Office of the Governor may accept, reject, or modify the recommendations of the IDW. State agencies shall commit the resources necessary to undertake mitigation actions outlined in Section V. Responsibilities that are not already clearly assigned shall be delegated to appropriate member agencies based on subject matter expertise, statutory and regulatory authorities, and availability.
4. Whenever a drought declaration is active, the chair shall schedule meetings as necessary to re-evaluate conditions and implement mitigation actions associated with each drought stage, as guided by Section V.
5. The IDW shall determine whether to recommend upgrading or downgrading any active drought declarations, following the same decision-making protocols in 2-4 above.

During times of no drought, the IDW shall meet not less than biennially for the purpose of reviewing and implementing long-term drought preparedness activities in Section IV, and to review any changes in agency staffing or resource demands that affect the IDW. The IDW may, at any time, create and oversee one or more independent working groups consisting of staff from state, local, and/or private entities for the purpose of conducting drought preparedness exercises or activities, or for other drought preparedness needs as the IDW may determine.

3.4 Emergency Management

Under the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Emergency Support Function System, the Office of Policy and Management is designated the primary state agency in a drought event. When conditions reach Stage 3, the Governor may consider convening his/her Unified Command in accordance with the [State Response Framework](#) (SRF) prepared by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS). The Governor's Unified Command is comprised of the key state agencies and public sector partners relevant to a particular potential or actual emergency. If conditions reach Stage 5, many necessary response functions may be coordinated under the SRF, including activation of the State Emergency Operations Center and National Guard to centralize planning and response operations.