

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

March 4, 2021, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda, with data handout:
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/10262>

Meeting Recording:
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2021/2021-03-04_IDW_Recording.m4a

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: Bill Foreman, Kevin Grady, Doug Hoskins
DEMHS: Doug Glowacki
DoAg: Steve Anderson
DPH: Steve Harkey, Austin McMann, Ryan Tetreault
OPM: Martin Heft, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Ally Ayotte, Linda King Corbin, Maria Szul

Federal Agency representatives:

USGS: Dee-Ann McCarthy, John Mullaney, Tim Sargent
NWS: Britt Westergard

Other participants:

Iris Kaminski

1. Call to order

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

2. Introductions (if needed)

Martin Heft identified the person voting on behalf of each agency: Martin Heft, OPM, Steve Anderson, DoAg; Doug Hoskins, DEEP/PURA; and Doug Glowacki, DEMHS. Lori Mathieu of DPH was not present and, since DPH has not yet designated an alternate, DPH will not participate in any votes in her absence.

3. Approval of minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [1/7/2020 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with DPH not voting.

4. Business

a. Review of drought plan implementation

Martin Heft described the interest in identifying what worked or did not work when the new drought plan was implemented in 2020-2021. He also noted the interest in

providing PURA with representation separate from the rest of DEEP and possibly also adding DCP as a member or in a support role. Eric Lindquist noted that the action team formed in 2020 has not met recently while waiting for instruction. There was a discussion of how the plan was implemented in 2020-2021 and Eric suggested creating a document for compiling ideas for further consideration.

Ryan Tetreault mentioned the concern that arose during the 2020 drought regarding private wells in Voluntown. He noted it had been based on anecdotal information and said we need a measure for such problems. He also questioned if there is enough well driller capacity in the state to respond. There was a discussion of how to know about such needs and general acknowledgment that such information should be provided by local water coordinators. Doug Hoskins asked about the value of new well completion reports as a source of such information and Ryan said the state only receives those when property owners are able to hire a well driller to do the work. There was further discussion of this aspect of this issue.

Doug Glowacki asked about the status of diversion authorizations during the drought and Doug Hoskins said DEEP considered the requirements of the minimum stream flow regulations and noted that some permits require DEEP to notify diverters of problems. Doug Glowacki asked if diversion amounts had increased and Doug Hoskins described the annual reporting required of diverters and the various conditions that can apply to a permit.

Maria Szul recommended a change be made requiring water utilities to follow state drought plan requirements. Bruce Wittchen suggested that the list being developed be divided between concepts that are currently within the authority of this group and those that would require legislative or regulatory changes.

Martin Heft said two things to consider are the name of the different drought stages and also the criteria for stepping into or out of drought stages. Britt Westergard said the NWS can provide precipitation data as maps instead of county-by-county. John Mullaney noted the interest in more real-time ground water information and there was a discussion of gaps and which wells would be most representative. There also was a discussion of the different time required to bring additional real-time wells online than for precipitation data to be provided in a different format.

Ryan Tetreault noted that a separate work group under the WPC is generating recommendations regarding the mapping of private wells. John Mullaney pointed out that USGS wells tend to be located in areas without heavy use of ground water and there was further discussion of ground water data issues. Doug Hoskins recommended that proposals for higher-cost improvements be ready to go when funding might be available for adding or upgrading ground water monitoring points. He mentioned the possible availability of [supplemental environmental project](#) (SEP) funds. Bruce Wittchen suggested that staff of DPH, DEEP, and the USGS have a separate discussion of options for improving ground water monitoring.

There was further discussion of DEEP recommendations for considering how the drought plan addresses winter drought and climate change. Eric Lindquist asked if the drought plan directs people do appropriate things and also asked if it requires more thought regarding the process for stepping into mandatory restrictions. There was further discussion of procedure, of [freedom of information](#) (FOI) requirements, and of

the need to coordinate any recommended changes with those compiled by a separate group completing its report on the implementation of the previous drought plan three years earlier. Martin Heft said he will coordinate.

b. Interagency group membership

There was no further discussion.

c. DPH update on SharePoint site

Steve Harkey provided an overview of the SharePoint system being developed at DPH that will make drought information shareable through a dashboard he is developing. He asked how it should be rolled out and noted that it is only accessible by state employees. He noted some potential uses and Martin Heft suggested running through the site at this group's next meeting. He also pointed out the need to avoid including confidential information.

d. Procedure for recommending drought plan updates

There was a discussion of the difference between changing procedures the interagency group has adopted on its own and procedures requiring WPC review and revision to the drought plan.

e. Policy for cancelation of meeting

There was a discussion of whether the chair should unilaterally be able to cancel a meeting or if the chair should first reach out to other members. There was general agreement that the chair can do it unilaterally but data compiled for the meeting be posted online as usual.

f. Other

Bruce Wittchen recommended that any significant, but non-controversial drought plan changes be provided to the WPC for consideration so the drought plan can be updated and then implemented more effectively if needed in the coming months.

Doug Hoskins described a recent NOAA Eastern Region webinar featuring one of the US Drought Monitor authors and said it was very informative about the process of assembling each week's mapping. He noted that it requires a lot of professional judgement by each week's author.

Martin Heft said the next meeting is scheduled on April 8 and there was a discussion of the options for a smaller group to work on the drought plan, including FOI requirements. OPM will compile and circulate a list of points being raised for further consideration and Martin Heft said he will look into procedural requirements for plan amendment.

5. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:12.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM