

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

May 6, 2021, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda:

<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/10264>

Drought Conditions Report:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2021/2021-05-06_Drought_Conditions_Report.pdf

Meeting Recording:

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

CT Agency representatives:

DCP: Jason Cohen
DEEP: Bill Foreman, Helene Hochholzer, Doug Hoskins
DEMHS: Doug Glowacki, Bob Kenny
DoAg: Steve Anderson
DPH: Steve Harkey, Austin McMann, Ryan Tetreault
OPM: Martin Heft, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Ally Ayotte

Federal Agency representatives:

USGS: Dee-Ann McCarthy, John Mullaney, Tim Sargent
NWS: Nicole Belk

Other participants:

Alicea Charamut, Iris Kaminski

1. Call to order

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM.

2. Seating of Voting Members

Doug Hoskins of DEEP, Doug Glowacki of DEMHS, Steve Anderson of DoAg, and Martin Heft of OPM were identified as the voting members present for the meeting. DPH voting member Lori Mathieu was not present.

3. Approval of minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [3/4/2021 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with DPH not voting.

4. **Business**

a. DPH presentation of pilot Drought Data Portal (SharePoint site)

Steve Harkey said that the availability of the Sharepoint system through Office 365 provides an opportunity for greater collaboration. He provided an overview of the Drought Reporting and Information Portal DPH has developed on SharePoint. He showed how reservoir data are portrayed and described some of the information currently available there. He noted that people not accustomed to the measurement might be misled by the days of supply remaining data because some reservoirs' water levels fall and rise much more quickly than others. He also showed the documents library and tracking page.

There was a discussion of potential uses and of the benefit if information shown on the dashboard is displayed on the state's drought website. Steve Harkey outlined how that could be done and pointed out that it will require someone with specific knowledge. Martin Heft recommended all agencies with data to show on the dashboard or website verify which information can be revealed. Bruce Wittchen added that such website work could take a long time and recommended the dashboard development continue during that time. There was further discussion of legal and other issues to be considered in making information available online.

b. Current conditions review and course of action

Eric Lindquist provided an overview of conditions detailed in the drought conditions report. He highlighted that the VegDRI and Fire Danger measures were at or near Stage 2 drought triggers in many counties but noted that they are flighty and can change from one day to the next. He pointed out that the other measures largely did not indicate drought.

Martin Heft asked for a recommended course of action and mentioned that OPM staff had discussed the option of going to Stage 1 statewide. Steve Harkey pointed out that this week's discussion among people involved with the [Northeast Drought Early Warning System](#) (DEWS) leaned towards recommending the area the [US Drought Monitor](#) (USDM) classifies as abnormally dry be reduced in coming weeks.

There was a discussion of the degree to which precipitation in May has improved conditions reported as of the end of April and that the precipitation and temperature outlooks are good. Martin Heft noted that no one had made a motion to go to Stage 1 in any county, so no changes will be made. There was a discussion of procedure and Martin explained that because no motion was made to go to a drought stage there was no need for a vote.

c. DEMHS update on municipal drought liaison (MDL) outreach plan

Bob Kenny described the process of updating local liaisons and said the communication went out to the regions yesterday. He provided an overview of what was said about procedures and expectations. Martin Heft said he had told the WPC that the interagency group will continue to do that annually rather than wait until going into Stage 1 as stated in the drought plan.

d. Report on recommendations for edits to CT Drought Preparedness and Response Plan

Eric Lindquist said staff from the agencies have discussed potential changes and are considering edits that might be made quickly vs others likely to require more time. Eric added that they have more to look at and noted they are waiting for recommendations of the separate group that is reviewing drought plan implementation during the 2016-17 drought. Martin said the WPC was informed that the other group's recommendations are expected next week.

e. Other Business

Steve Harkey described a drought workshop being planned by DPH and the US EPA. There have been two planning meetings so far and they are aiming for two half-day sessions in September. The first day would focus on small systems and the issues they struggle with. The second day would focus on large systems, with water loss being a significant part of it.

5. Next meeting – June 3, 2021

Martin Heft said the next meeting is scheduled for June 3 but the group can meet sooner if needed. Alicea Charamut thanked the group for continuing to meet and monitor conditions.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:56.