

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

September 2, 2021, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda:

<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/10268>

Drought Conditions Report:

None for this meeting

Meeting Recording:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2021/2021-09-02_IDW_Audio.m4a

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: Corinne Fitting, Helene Hochholzer, Doug Hoskins
DEMHS: Bob Kenny
DoAg: Steve Anderson
DPH: Steve Harkey, Lori Mathieu
OPM: Martin Heft, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Linda King-Corbin, Cathy Pedemonti, Maria Szul

Federal Agency representatives:

USGS: John Mullaney, Tim Sargent
NWS: None

Other participants:

Alicea Charamut

1. Call to order

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM.

2. Seating of Voting Members

Doug Hoskins of DEEP, Bob Kenny 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 arrived by 2:13.

3. Approval of minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [5/6/2021 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously by the voting members.

4. **Business**

a. Drought condition update

Given the current conditions, a drought conditions report was not prepared and Eric Lindquist noted conditions are wetter than normal in most of the state.

b. CT Water Planning Council's State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup Report on recommendations to the CT Drought Preparedness and Response Plan

Martin Heft provided some background regarding this report and Eric Lindquist noted that he, Steve Harkey, and Doug Hoskins were involved in its preparation. He also mentioned others who were involved, including Alicea Charamut and John Mullaney, who are attending this meeting, and that the effort was led by Steve Rutar.

There was a discussion of the process that led up to the report and Alicea said she appreciates that this group is addressing some of the problems identified in that report even as that review was underway. Martin Heft said he favors a quick response. He outlined an approach where this group determines whether a recommended change is already done and, if not, whether we agree it should be. If it should be done, we would determine how and draft language as needed.

Martin recommended scheduling separate meetings for the four charges addressed by the report, with the first meeting addressing Charge 1, the 2nd meeting addressing Charges 2 & 3, and the 3rd meeting addressing charge 4. He invited any other suggestions.

Lori Mathieu said the recommendations will be more work for certain agencies and said all agencies should be represented at each of those meetings. Martin agreed that there will be impacts on the agencies and said those impacts must be identified and the recommendations prioritized. There was further discussion of the recommendations and Lori Mathieu pointed out that some would require statutory or regulatory changes.

Doug Hoskins noted that this group would not be the vehicle for undertaking some of the recommended changes. He added that although the report summary clearly says this group has already implemented some of the recommendations, it is not so clear in the rest of the report. There was a discussion of changes needed in the plan, including the need to add some actions to the plan that have already been incorporated into this group's process.

Bruce Wittchen recommended that this effort be divided into two stages: a first stage incorporating easy or high priority changes into an updated plan that can be adopted by the WPC by early 2022, and a second stage for other worthwhile changes that will not be completed so soon and will be incorporated into a later update. Martin Heft said that he will work on a matrix of recommendations with

Bruce and Eric Lindquist. He said this group should consider a meeting schedule and will poll everyone to determine dates. He also provided an overview of the approach he has started with for a matrix spreadsheet.

Lori Mathieu recommended beginning with the effort today as a test of how that approach will work and Martin recommended beginning with Charge 2. Eric Lindquist shared his screen to show the full report and proceeded to pg 6. Martin Heft said the group has already adopted recommendation 2.01, but it is not addressed in the plan. There was a discussion of past meeting gaps and Alicea Charamut described the findings that led to that recommendation. There was a consensus to add that to the plan.

There was a discussion of Recommendation 2.02A and of OPM being the lead agency according to the plan. Martin Heft noted the availability of additional support staff in other agencies and suggested that tasks like minutes and data compilation might be divided. Steve Harkey said the intention of the recommendation is to ensure the continuity of the IDW's work. Lori Mathieu noted that OPM will always lead in interactions with the Governor's Office and Doug Hoskins recommended that the agencies rotate the responsibility for meeting minutes.

The group discussed the terminology of the report's Appendix D and Doug Hoskins asked if the "state drought coordinator" is Martin or someone else. There was further discussion of different aspects of logistics, who is expected to do what, and of these aspects being made more specific or left more ambiguous.

The group discussed recommendation 2.02B and Martin said it is done but can be more formalized. He noted the desire to split PURA from DEEP as a voting member and the possibility of adding the Dept. of Consumer Protection because of its role with private wells. Lori Mathieu pointed out the role of health directors as the regulators of private wells but noted that they are not a state agency.

The group discussed the desire for municipal-level liaisons and whether they are required. Eric Lindquist provided background and there was a discussion of DEMHS's approach in recruiting municipal coordinators, which was still underway as the most recent drought ended. There was a discussion of options for filling that role, which does not require new people to be hired. Lori Mathieu said municipal conservation commissions are a possible vehicle for this.

Martin Heft said this is a good approach for addressing individual recommendations. Eric Lindquist asked if people agree that recommendation 2.03 should be done and Martin asked if it should be mandatory. Corinne Fitting recommended flagging it for further discussion. Eric cautioned against postponing it and Martin outlined the approach for handling it. Lori Mathieu said we do not have all the needed information yet and that we must track what is needed. Eric Lindquist expressed concern that much of the work of organizing this could fall on a few people as before.

There was a discussion of the state's capacity to compel action at the local level and Lori said towns can be pushed to update local liaison contact information on an annual basis. Bob Kenny said his agency can continue doing that in the same way it started. Lori said COVID has changed things and better coordination is possible now.

c. Other Business

There was no other business.

5. Next meeting – October 7, 2021

Martin Heft said the next scheduled meeting will be 10/7/2021 but additional meetings are expected before then.

Lori Mathieu thanked Steve Harkey, Doug Hoskins, and Eric Lindquist for their work on the drought plan review. She added that this is in a better place than before and noted that no staff are dedicated exclusively to this work.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:35.