

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

January 6, 2022, 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/2022/2022-01-06_IDW_Audio.m4a

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: Doug Hoskins
DEMHS: none
DoAg: Simon Levesque
DPH: Steve Harkey, Lori Mathieu
OPM: Martin Heft, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Alyson Ayotte, Maria Szul

Federal Agency representatives:

USGS: None
NWS: None

Other participants:

None

1. Call to order

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

2. Seating of voting members

Martin Heft noted that he will represent OPM, Lori Mathieu will represent DPH, and Simon Levesque is the new designee of DoAg. Doug Hoskins joined a short time later and was noted to be representing DEEP. DEMHS was unrepresented.

3. Minutes – December 2, 2021

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [12/2/2021 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Review of Hydrologic Conditions

Martin Heft asked Bruce Wittchen to provide an overview. Bruce referenced data at <https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Drought/Data-and-Reports> and said most of the state has

triggers the Stage 2 drought criteria of 2 months of 65% or less of normal. Stream flows and ground water levels recently went below normal at some locations in SE and SW CT, but it has not been long enough to reach the 2 out of 3 month trigger for either of those criteria. Other measures are in the normal range.

Bruce said the people of NE DEWS think part of CT is getting close to being classified as abnormally dry and said it must also be getting close to the state drought plan's Stage 1. He pointed out that the drought plan doesn't list specific criteria for making that decision but a key action at that stage is to notify local drought liaisons of conditions. He suggested the list of liaisons be updated before doing that.

Bruce also noted that one of the recommendations the group recently reviewed was to develop text for press releases in advance to avoid the multiple-day delays that often follow a decision by this group. Perhaps that can also be prioritized in the coming month due to the potential it might be needed following this group's February meeting.

Martin said DESPP should be asked to update the list of local liaisons because some will have changed following local elections. He asked if there is anything to add and Steve Harkey noted that water supply reservoirs remain above normal state-wide, but have declined from 114% of normal to 101%. No one made a motion to go to Stage 1 of the drought plan.

5. Review of [CT Water Planning Council topical work group recommendations regarding the CT Drought Preparedness & Response Plan and its implementation](#)

Eric Lindquist showed the [spreadsheet the group has been working with in recent months](#) and he explained how he consolidated the spreadsheet, used his best judgment to assign priorities where they were left blank, and sorted the spreadsheet to highlight the most immediate priorities. Martin Heft said the group can start going through those today or agencies can review them independently and reconvene to discuss them at this group's next meeting. Lori Mathieu recommended giving agencies time to review the consolidated spreadsheet and returning to it next month to wrap up the review. Martin agreed.

There was further discussion of updating the list of local liaisons and of "pre-approved" press releases. Lori Mathieu said each agency has to review drought press releases and pointed out that the Governor's office has taken different approaches in the past. She will discuss basic messaging with DPH's press office.

Doug Hoskins referred back to Eric mentioning he had unilaterally assigned priorities to some tasks and asked if those should be reviewed by the group now or later. Martin Heft recommended that the consolidated spreadsheet be sent out and each agency confirm that it agrees with the prioritization assigned to every task. Eric added that the responsible agency listed for many tasks is often this group, the WPC, or multiple agencies. He pointed out that leaving the assignment of responsibility vague can make it difficult to ensure a task is completed. Martin agreed and said they should identify a primary agency when possible.

6. Public comment

There were no public comments.

7. Other business

There was no other business and Martin Heft noted that the next meeting is scheduled to be 2/3/2022.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:35.

DRAFT