

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)  
Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2022, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda:

<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/13687>

Drought Conditions Report: None prepared for this meeting

Current Conditions: <https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Drought/Data-and-Reports>

Meeting Recording:

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2022/2022-02-03\\_IDW\\_Audio.m4a](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2022/2022-02-03_IDW_Audio.m4a)

**CT Agency representatives:**

DEEP: Bill Foreman, Doug Hoskins  
DEMHS: Doug Glowacki, Bob Kenny  
DoAg: Simon Levesque  
DPH: Steve Harkey, Lori Mathieu  
OPM: Martin Heft, Bruce Wittchen  
PURA: Alyson Ayotte, Maria Szul

**Federal Agency representatives:**

USGS: John Mullaney, Tim Sargent  
NWS/NOAA: Sylvia Reeves

**Other participants:**

None

**1. Call to order**

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

**2. Seating of voting members**

Martin Heft identified the quorum of agency representatives: OPM – Martin Heft; DOAG – Simon Levesque; DEEP – Doug Hoskins; DEMHS – Doug Glowacki. DPH’s Lori Mathieu was leaving another meeting and arrived a few minutes later.

**3. Minutes – January 6, 2022**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [draft 1/6/2022 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

**4. Review of Hydrologic Conditions**

Martin Heft noted that monitoring of potential drought indicators continues and Doug Glowacki said quite a bit of precipitation is expected in the next two weeks, beginning today

and with two more possible storms. Simon Levesque said agriculturally-related indicators are normal or near-normal, but pointed out that some are not reported this time of year.

Sylvia Reeves provided an overview of drought conditions across the Northeast, highlighting continuing drought across northern New England and the recent expansion of abnormally dry conditions from NH into southern NY. John Mullaney noted that some stream flows have dropped below normal in SW and SE CT and said an increased number of ground water wells are below normal.

Bruce Wittchen said precipitation has been on the dry side of the normal range for the last two months, but three-month totals are below normal because of the dry November. He also mentioned that the state's real time wells are now largely below normal, as of the beginning of the month, because "normal" increases from January to February and water levels did not. He said ground water being below normal for a single month is not a drought trigger.

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

Bruce Wittchen showed the [an updated version of the group's spreadsheet](#) and Martin Heft asked about a wording change requested by DEEP. Doug Hoskins explained that DEEP would like to change the recommendation in Charge 1.02B by replacing the word "maintain" with "continue support for" in the phrase "...maintain the existing stream gages and groundwater stations". He noted that it is the USGS that maintains, those with state support. Bruce made that change. *[Note: that change was reconsidered following the meeting because the original language had been a direct quote from the WPC topical work recommendations. The original wording was restored and "(in conjunction with USGS)" was added following "DEEP" in the Agency Responsibility column, as recommended by Doug Hoskins.]*

There was a lengthy discussion of the model water use restriction ordinance recommendation of Charge 3.01. Lori Mathieu pointed out the limited acceptance of the state's model ordinance and Bruce Wittchen described the roll-out of that model ordinance and very limited interest shown in it. He also mentioned former WPCAG member and Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition executive director Len DeJong's unsuccessful efforts to have Southbury adopt an ordinance based on that model even after adapting to satisfy various concerns.

Lori Mathieu said there must be a lot of education and recommended working with COGs and towns. She mentioned Aquarion's operational rules and described differences among the responses of towns in lower Fairfield County during the 2016 drought. She highlighted that people served by private wells are not directly subject to Aquarion rules, which complicates drought response.

Lori mentioned that Greenwich already had a municipal ordinance and noted that other towns began to understand the need and were working on one. She also mentioned the work in this area by WPCAG member Denise Savageau, who formerly worked for Greenwich, and she noted that Norwalk and Simsbury have ordinances. Lori recommended the WPC form a work group to focus on municipal ordinances. Martin Heft recommended that "DPH" in the Agency Responsibility column of Charge 3.01 be changed to "WPC".

Doug Hoskins pointed out the challenges of enforcing water use restrictions, as called for in Charge 3.02. Lori Mathieu described the difficulty in areas where some people are served by public water systems and others are not. She mentioned Aquarion's placement of signs on properties where owners were violating restrictions and added that some towns do not want to be put in the position of enforcing restrictions. Steve Harkey provided an update on DPH's work with the online portal described in the recommendation for Charge 1.04. Simon Levesque said DoAg has nothing to add to the spreadsheet.

Martin Heft pointed out that some of the recommendations can be handled quickly but others will take longer. Bruce Wittchen added that agencies might want to suggest other concepts that weren't among the recommendations of the topical group. He said one example is a change he would recommend – that the plan's Stage 1 be eliminated. Martin Heft pointed out that it has been added as a note at the end of the row for Charge 1.03 for future consideration.

## **6. Public comment**

There were no public comments.

## **7. Other business**

Bob Kenny provided an update on DEMHS's work to update its list of local coordinators, which is being done through each of its regions. Martin Heft said the next meeting is scheduled for March 3 and Lori Mathieu said she and Steve Harkey will have a conflict that day.

## **8. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:48.