

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)  
Meeting Minutes

May 5, 2022, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda:  
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/13690>

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/IDW\\_2022-05-05\\_audio.m4a](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2022/IDW_2022-05-05_audio.m4a)

**CT Agency representatives:**

DEEP: Doug Hoskins  
DEMHS: Marcos Gonzalez  
DoAg: Simon Levesque  
DPH: Steve Harkey  
OPM: Martin Heft, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen  
PURA: Ally Ayotte

**Federal Agency representatives:**

USGS: Dee-Ann McCarthy, John Mullaney, Tim Sargent

**Other participants:**

None

**1. Call to order**

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM.

**2. Seating of voting members**

Martin Heft identified the quorum of agency representatives: DEEP – Doug Hoskins; DoAg – Simon Levesque; and OPM – Martin Heft, noting that today’s attendees from DEMHS and DPH are not authorized voting members. Steve Harkey said DPH voting member Lori Mathieu will have a regular conflict with this meeting.

**3. Minutes – March 3, 2022**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [draft 3/3/2022 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

**4. Business**

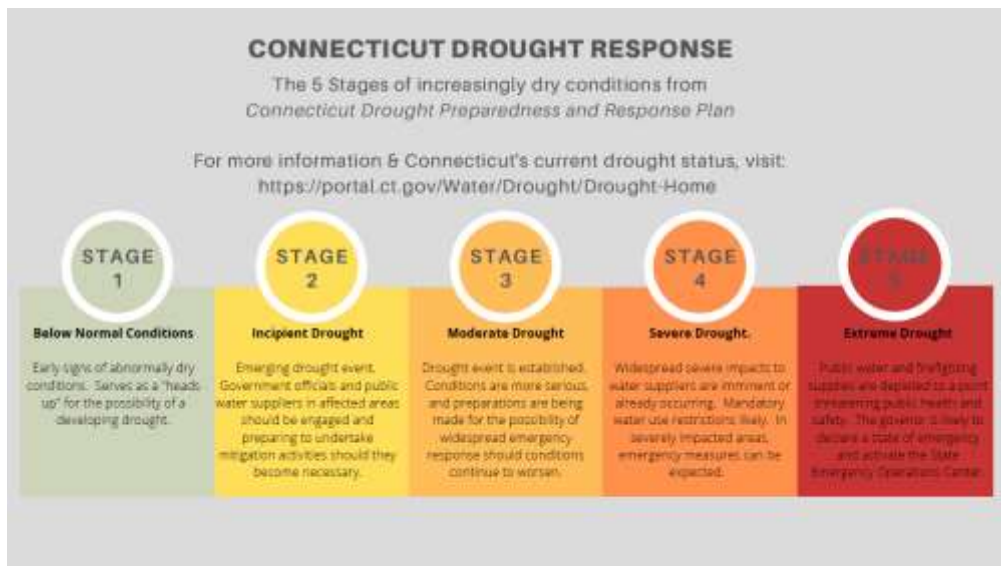
a. Review of Hydrologic Conditions

Eric Lindquist pointed out that we have entered a time of year when we must be extra vigilant, noting the potential fire danger and that soil dries out quickly with the higher sun angle and temperatures. He also showed that conditions are likely to be warmer and drier than normal from May 11 through May 19, and possibly beyond. Bruce Wittchen added that today's edition of the US Drought Monitor mentioned that conditions are dry in coastal MA, RI, and CT without classifying that area as being abnormally dry. Those areas might be mapped as abnormally dry in next week's edition. Steve Harkey said the state's reservoirs, overall, are at 101% of normal but four systems' reservoirs are slightly below normal. Doug Hoskins noted that Fire Danger currently is classified as moderate.

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

Martin Heft explained the approach that OPM has taken with its [suggested changes](#), highlighting that changes have been assigned to one of three buckets: changes that can be made quickly; those that will take more time but could be completed within a year; and those that would require more time. The changes shown today are that first category. There was a discussion of the degree to which each agency has been able to review OPM's recommendation and the group decided to scroll through the document and discuss any that are questioned.

There was a discussion of the recommendation to eliminate the current drought stage names and retain only the numbers of Stage 1 through Stage 5. It was noted that DEEP Fisheries staff had raised a concern about whether that conveyed enough information and also a discussion of the graphic that DEEP's Melissa Czarnowski and Ali Hibbard had previously prepared.



Doug Hoskins said he will check with Melissa and Ali about modifying the graphic to eliminate the stage names. There also was a discussion of the possibility of adding

highlighting to draw attention to the current drought stage and the potential confusion that might result when different parts of the state are at different stages.

The group continued to scroll through the document, discussing the clarity of some wording, and had a longer discussion of new Sec. 2.4, regarding Drought Management Areas. Steve Harkey said the discussion is straight-forward except for the portion regarding the census bureau, which is confusing. Martin Heft mentioned the county equivalency review underway at the census bureau and said that part can be removed because the change is not official yet. There was further discussion of the term and the increased flexibility available by leaving the definition open.

The group discussed new Sec. 2.5, *Organizational Structure and Meeting Schedule*, and Steve Harkey agreed with the section's mention that meetings of agency staff carrying out work assignments are not public meetings. He and Doug Hoskins asked about the change that would have the interagency group choose a member of one of the agencies to be coordinator rather than have that person be from OPM as previously recommended. Martin said OPM faces the same staffing issues as other agencies but provided an overview of recent WPC discussions of funding for water planning, which could support this too.

The group also discussed the first paragraph of Sec. 3.2 and decided to add a clause to the first sentence to say the drought coordinator would go to the IDW chair if it seemed the chair should trigger the listed sequence of actions; the second sentence provides an alternate path for any other IDW to trigger those actions.

Steve Harkey referenced Subsec. 3 and said the WPC's drought plan topical subgroup wants the IDW to create documentation of instances in which the governor rejects the IDW's recommendation. Eric Lindquist said he believes that is addressed later and he also pointed out the potential for a governor to neither accept or reject the group's recommendation.

The group also discussed the National Incident Management System section and Eric Lindquist explained that at the most severe stages of drought the IDW would handle the science and DEMHS would provide boots on the ground. Bruce Wittchen added that the previous drought plan assigned the IDW's oversight role to a larger task force at the higher levels of drought. It was generally agreed that the structure of this should be clarified.

c. Next meeting – June 2, 2022

Martin Heft said he will contact Lori Mathieu to discuss an alternative meeting schedule.

d. Other

Steve Harkey provided an update on progress with the water system data portal

## 5. Public comment

There were no public comments.

## 6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:29.