

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)  
Meeting Minutes

July 13, 2022, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda:  
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/13691>

Drought Conditions Report:  
[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2022/CT\\_Drought\\_Conditions\\_2022-07-13.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2022/CT_Drought_Conditions_2022-07-13.pdf)

Current Conditions (will be current for the time viewed, not the time of meeting):  
<https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Drought/Data-and-Reports>

Meeting Recording (recording in two parts):  
[https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/IDW\\_2022-07-13A\\_Video.mp4](https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/IDW_2022-07-13A_Video.mp4)  
[https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/IDW\\_2022-07-13\\_video.mp4](https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/IDW_2022-07-13_video.mp4)

**CT Agency representatives:**

DEEP: Bill Foreman, Doug Hoskins\*  
DEMHS: Ken Dumais\*, Bob Kenny  
DoAg: Simon Levesque\*  
DPH: Steve Harkey, Lori Mathieu\*, Ryan Tetreault  
OPM: Chris Collibee, Martin Heft\*, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen  
PURA: Ally Ayotte, Cathy Pedemonti, Maria Szul

\* - denotes voting member

**Federal Agency representatives:**

NWS/NOAA: Rodney Chai, Nancy Furbush, Sylvia Reeves, Britt Westergard  
USGS: Dee-Ann McCarthy, John Mullaney, Tim Sargent

**Other participants:**

Andy Brown, Dave Mager, Mark Mirko, Quan Sahl, Denise Savageau, Patrick Skahill

**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: DEEP – Doug Hoskins; DEMHS – Ken Dumais; DoAg – Simon Levesque; DPH – Lori Mathieu; and OPM – Martin Heft.

**3. Minutes – July 13, 2022**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [draft 6/2/2022 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

#### 4. **Business**

##### a. Review of Hydrologic Conditions

Eric Lindquist showed the [7/13/2022 Drought Conditions Report](#) and went to the Stage 2 Drought Trigger Summary on pg 3. He noted that shorter term indicators like VegDRI and Fire Danger are worse than longer term indicators such as reservoirs. He went through the indicators and pointed out that the Fire Danger is incorrect: only the northern border area is rated Moderate, the rest of the state is at High. He was asked about recent weeks' changes and pointed out that some key data are monthly. Martin Heft mentioned that precipitation data have improved during the past month in New London & Windham Counties but other counties have deteriorated and the decline is accelerating.

Britt Westergard provided an overview of precipitation and temperature data beginning on pg 4 of the handout, highlighting that July has been especially dry in the western part of the state that had been less impacted in previous months. She did note that above normal precipitation is likely in the next three months.

John Mullaney described the ground water data and explained that the decline in water levels began in late April. He showed stream flow data and highlighted that peak flows from occasional storms can mask what are generally low conditions. John also mentioned that the USGS [ground water watch](#) system will be lost and he is working on a local system that can show data this group uses.

Simon Levesque noted that the Dept. of Agriculture report compares conditions in mid-July to those in early June and he highlighted the deterioration. Doug Hoskins and Bill Foreman provided an overview of DEEP's reports on water resources, fisheries, and fire danger. Doug highlighted the fish kill on Bride Brook in East Lyme.

Note: At this point the meeting had to be switched from Zoom to Teams.

Bill Foreman described Farmington River flows, which have been augmented by DEEP.

Steve Harkey Provided an overview of DPH reservoir data, noting that some newer data have been received and that Aquarion data have been delayed because the person who ordinarily submits those was unavailable. Steve said nine reservoir systems are slightly below normal and one of those is because its level was lowered for work being done.

Eric provided a brief overview of the long-range precipitation outlook provided by DEMHS and Doug Hoskins mentioned that the Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition just issued a low flow notice for that river this afternoon. Eric returned to the Stage 2 trigger summary on pg 3 of the handout and Martin Heft outlined the group's process for considering the data.

Doug Hoskins noted that eastern CT has been dry for longer, but the west might be experiencing more of a flash drought. Martin Heft read the potentially relevant drought stage descriptions and there was a discussion centered on three general options:

- Expand the area of Stage 1 to include all but the most western or southwestern counties;
- Escalate all but the most western or southwestern counties to Stage 2 with the remainder being Stage 1
- Designate the entire state as Stage 2

There was a discussion of what is expected of the agencies and others if some or all of the state is designated Stage 2. Doug Hoskins pointed out that western CT is mapped as being especially dry in July and that a low flow notice has been issued for the Pomperaug River, so western CT should be Stage 1 or even Stage 2. Lori Mathieu listed specific options to consider and Martin Heft noted that designating the entire state as being Stage 2 would provide clarity with similar notification to all.

Steve Harkey pointed out that the reservoir systems that are currently below normal are not in eastern CT, noting that none of the utilities indicates being at one of their water supply plans' drought stages. There was further discussion of going to Stage 2 statewide and of the resulting obligations on agencies. Eric Lindquist pointed out that DEMHS has already updated the local water coordinator listing. There was a discussion of private wells and Ryan Tetreault said DPH has received no reports of private wells running dry.

A motion was made and seconded to go to Stage 2 statewide and it was noted that consistent messaging will be beneficial and that the public will observe that conditions are drying. The motion was approved unanimously. Martin Heft described the next steps and said a draft Stage 2 notice will be circulated.

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

Martin Heft said there have been some minor edits and it was recommended to hold this until the next meeting.

- c. Next meeting – August 4, 2022

Martin Heft noted that future meetings will be at 1:00, not 2:00.

## 5. Public comment

Denise Savageau complimented the group on its work today and pointed out the lack of stream gages in coastal areas of New London, Middlesex, and New London Counties, which are drier than the rest of those counties. She added that VegDRI is important for showing dryness in areas lacking other data.

## 6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:30.