

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

August 4, 2022, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda:
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/13693>

Drought Conditions Handout:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2022/Drought-Conditions-Report-2022-08-04.pdf>

Meeting Recording (CT-N):
<http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=19923>

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: Kim Czapla, Bill Foreman, Helene Hochholzer, Doug Hoskins*
DEMHS: Ken Dumais, Doug Glowacki*
DoAg: Simon Levesque*
DPH: Steve Harkey, Lori Mathieu*
OPM: Rebecca Augur, Chris Collibee, Martin Heft*, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Ally Ayotte, John Betkoski, Maria Szul

* - denotes voting member

Federal Agency representatives:

NWS/NOAA: Nicole Belk, Nancy Furbush, Britt Westergard
USGS: Dee-Ann McCarthy, John Mullaney, Tim Sargent

Other participants:

Michael Graziano, Nick Salemi, Rao Vandana

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 – Doug Glowacki; DoAg – Simon Levesque; DPH – Lori Mathieu; and OPM – Martin Heft.

3. Minutes – July 13, 2022

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [7/13/2022 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Business

a. Review of Hydrologic Conditions

Martin Heft explained the drought declaration that followed last month's meeting, with all counties declared to be at Stage 2. Eric Lindquist showed the [8/4/2022 Drought Conditions Handout](#) and Martin pointed out that it provides three spreadsheets: the 7/13 analysis of Stage 2 triggers reviewed last month and the 8/4 analyses of Stage 2 and Stage 3 triggers. Eric provided an overview of the 8/4 Stage 2 triggers spreadsheet, noting that Palmer Drought Index are unavailable. He then provided an overview of the 8/4 Stage 3 triggers spreadsheet.

Nicole Belk, reporting on behalf of the National Weather Service (NWS), referencing the precipitation report in the meeting handout. She highlighted that some stations received less than 1" of rain for the month and some are in the top ten of the driest Julys on record. She pointed out that it had also been a warm month, with some stations having a top-ten warmest month.

John Mullaney, reporting on behalf of the US Geological Survey (USGS), showed the ground water pages of the handout and said ground water levels are below normal and declining at a majority sites, currently at the Stage 2 trigger. He noted that dry conditions in April set this up. He said stream flows also are below normal but pointed out that stream flows were generally normal in June because of rains that month. With little recharge from ground water at this time stream flows drop quickly following storms. It's only a matter of time before these data decline to the trigger for the next drought stage.

Steve Harkey, reporting on behalf of DPH, pointed to the reservoir spreadsheet in the meeting handout and said reservoirs are at an average of 87.3% of capacity statewide, which is 97.4% of normal. Most are trending down. Some water utilities have issued conservation requests and some utilities are approaching their system's drought threshold. Steve also noted that DPH has received reports of nine requests for permits to address issues with private wells, but that might not capture all. Lori Mathieu provided an overview of the work involved in updating the spreadsheet and said DPH will make that information available to agencies weekly.

Simon Levesque, reporting on behalf of DoAg, noted that Palmer Drought Index values are not available at this time but said Veg DRI mapping is a better indicator of current agricultural drought conditions. He highlighted that drought is advancing out of SE CT. Conditions are less dry in the agricultural area in the NW. Martin Heft asked about federal declarations and Simon said the state has not met the federal criteria yet. He will update the group if that changes.

Doug Hoskins, speaking on behalf of DEEP, provided an overview of DEEP's report. He described what DEEP intends to do regarding diversions and noted DEEP's purchase of a portable ultrasonic water meter to be used during site visits. He highlighted the fisheries report regarding the West Branch Farmington River and Bill Foreman provided further background regarding the water DEEP is able to release to maintain better water temperatures downstream. Helene Hochholzer explained variations in the reported fire danger and provided an overview of current fires, noting the burden that persistent ground fires place on fire departments and on DEEP.

Doug Glowacki, speaking on behalf of DEMHS, showed the weekly update issued by DEMHS. He said current conditions are governed by a strong Bermuda High and added that updated models are reducing what was anticipated to be a significant precipitation event early next week. Instead of the 2” projected earlier it now is projected to be less than ¾” for the week, continuing the below-normal trend.

The group returned to the current Stage 3 chart and Martin Heft provided an overview. Lori Mathieu recommended making no change to the current statewide Stage 2 status and scheduling a special meeting to reconsider. She also recommended presenting a drought webinar for municipal and local health officials. Doug Glowacki, Doug Hoskins, Simon Levesque, and Martin Heft agreed on behalf of their agencies and Martin said that a vote is not necessary since no change is recommended.

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

Martin Heft provided an overview of the [updated draft drought plan](#) and [change log](#) and explained that the goal has been to identify changes that can be reviewed and approved quickly. Other changes will require more time. Lori Mathieu made a motion to move the draft along to the WPC for its consideration and approval. Doug Hoskins seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. The draft plan will be sent to the WPC for its next meeting.

- c. Next meeting – September 8, 2022

Martin Heft noted that a special meeting will be scheduled on 8/18, ahead of the next regular meeting.

5. Public comment

Jack Betkoski said he has been told that some vegetable farmers have been threatened by a water company regarding their water use. Simon Levesque said he can look into it and he will talk with Jack first and then look into it at DoAg.

Eric Lindquist said we need to keep the limitations of our data in mind and highlighted the hyper-localized variations that can be hidden when looking at the county level. He also pointed out that longer-term changes are still necessary in the drought plan.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:09.