

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

August 18, 2022, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda:
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/15593>

Drought Conditions Handout:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2022/Drought-Report-2022-08-18.pdf>

Meeting Video (CT-N):
<http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=20953>

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: Chris Bellucci, Kim Czapla, Bill Foreman, Helene Hochholzer, Doug Hoskins*
DEMHS: Ken Dumais, Doug Glowacki*, Bob Kenny
DoAg: Bryan Hurlburt*
DPH: Steve Harkey, Lori Mathieu*, Isaac Quansah
OPM: Rebecca Augur, Chris Collibee, Martin Heft*, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Ally Ayotte, Cathy Pedemonti, Maria Szul

* - denotes voting member

Federal Agency representatives:

NWS/NOAA: Nicole Belk, Britt Westergard
USGS: Dee-Ann McCarthy, John Mullaney, Tim Sargent
FEMA: Jonathan Hartenbaum

Other participants:

Ron Bata, Andrew Brown, Josh Cingranelli, Pat Eaton-Robb, Rick Green, John Moritz, Nick Salemi, Michael Sicoli, Tom Tyler

1. Call to order

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM.

2. Seating of voting members

Martin Heft identified the quorum of agency representatives: DEEP – Doug Hoskins; DEMHS – Doug Glowacki; DoAg – Bryan Hurlburt; DPH – Lori Mathieu; and OPM – Martin Heft.

3. Business

a. Review of Hydrologic Conditions

Eric Lindquist provided an overview of the [8/18/2022 Drought Conditions Handout](#). He noted that monthly data have not been updated since the group's meeting two weeks ago but pointed out that conditions have continued to deteriorate and that some USGS stations are approaching all-time lows. He mentioned reservoir and other data, highlighting that conditions are worse in eastern CT and that portions of New London and Windham Counties were elevated to the more extreme D3 category in today's [US Drought Monitor](#).

Nicole Belk of the National Weather Service explained the July and the first half of August precipitation and temperature data illustrated in the drought conditions handout. John Mullaney of the US Geological Survey described stream flows at a number of gages across the state and pointed out that ground water levels at some locations are at record lows for the month.

Steve Harkey of DPH described the reservoir data included in the handout and noted that some data are still coming in. He noted the significance of private well permit data and provided an overview of water utility conservation requests. He also mentioned that DPH is requesting that potable water haulers provide information regarding deliveries to locations with well problems.

Doug Hoskins of DEEP said the Diversion Program has contacted holders of diversion permits and of grandfathered diversion registrations and he noted that permits can include drought restrictions. He described the situation experienced by Putnam Water Co, which has to stop its Little River withdrawals during periods of low water but a well field and interconnections are also available. He noted that there will be a field demonstration next week of the program's new ultrasonic flow meter, which he described at this group's last meeting.

Bill Foreman of DEEP said they continue to augment flow of the Farmington River to reduce the water temperature as MDC maintains its minimal required release. He described fisheries impacts. Helene Hochholzer of DEEP provided further details regarding the fire danger, highlighting the role of the current fuel moisture depletion, and said fire danger is likely to remain high, very high, or extreme until there is a soaking rain. She noted that ground fires at times like this deplete local and state fire fighting resources. There was a discussion of these updates and Doug Hoskins pointed out that he is not seeing the usual level of lawn irrigation.

Bryan Hurlburt said reports from the field are consistent with the data presented here and described some of the agricultural impacts. He also mentioned the US Dept. of Agriculture's [disaster designation process](#). Eric Lindquist provided a quick overview of impacts reflected in the Vegetation Drought Response Index (VegDRI) mapping. Doug Glowacki said the long-term weather outlook is for continued hit or miss storms but pointed out that modeling has been overestimating precipitation, possibly because the prevailing dryness impedes the expected precipitation. He also said long-range modeling indicates the potential for hurricane activity later in the month.

b. Drought Plan Actions – VOTE

Martin Heft provided an overview of actions taken prior to today's meeting and of additional expectations if part of the state is elevated to Stage 3. Doug Glowacki said vegetation is drying and suggested elevating New London and Windham Counties to

Stage 3. Eric Lindquist pointed out that some of the criteria are out of date in the in the drought conditions handout's Stage 3 trigger chart because of this meeting being mid-month.

Doug Hoskins asked John Mullaney what the current status is, in his professional opinion, and John said levels are declining and are especially low in the eastern counties. Doug Hoskins noted that reservoirs are generally better than the 70% of normal trigger for Stage 3. Bryan Hurlburt said that, if the data support it, going to Stage 3 would bring federal support.

Martin Heft said New London and Windham Counties have worsened; others possibly can wait. A motion was made and seconded to elevate New London and Windham Counties to Stage 3. There was a brief discussion of the resulting impacts on agencies and the motion was approved by a unanimous roll-call vote. Martin said this recommendation will be sent to the Governor and noted that agency actions are identified in the drought plan overview.

c. Drought Webinar

Martin Heft said this topic was raised at the group's last meeting and Lori Mathieu described what DPH has in mind for a webinar by this group. There would be messaging about Stage 3, what it means, and each agency's role. OPM could begin with an overview of the plan and each agency would explain its role. She mentioned DPH's ongoing series of webinars for water systems and Martin Heft agreed with the benefits of providing such information. There was a discussion of topics to be covered in the webinar, including private wells and the differences between the state's and water companies' drought declarations.

d. Other

Steve Harkey suggested that the Governor's press release include a link to the National Drought Mitigation Center's [Condition Monitoring Observer Reports](#) (CMOR) system. Lori Mathieu recommended first reviewing who receives and responds to information posted there and Martin Heft agreed.

4. Public comment

Meteorologist Josh Cingranelli asked if there have been any impacts to the power grid due to a loss of hydropower, if there is any information about impacts to private wells in eastern CT, and if there is a contingency plan for that.

Lori Mathieu recommended that people with a private well monitor their water use and said health directors should report water supply problems to DPH so the state can be aware of them. She noted the previously mentioned request to water haulers to report such situations. Steve Harkey described the request going to water haulers and said private wells are an unknown. Lori pointed out that there have been few reports so far. Doug Hoskins offered to check with others at DEEP regarding Josh's hydropower question and can get back to him with an answer.

5. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:09.

DRAFT