

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

April 6, 2023

Meeting agenda:
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/18653>

Drought Conditions Handout:
Not prepared this month

Meeting Video:
https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2023-04-06_IDW_Video.mp4

CT Agency representatives (* - denotes voting member):

DEEP: Bill Foreman, Doug Hoskins*
DEMHS: Ken Dumais*
DoAg: Simon Levesque*, Eileen Periverzov
DPH: Steve Harkey, Eric Lindquist, Lori Mathieu*
OPM: Rebecca Dahl, Martin Heft*, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Ally Ayotte*

Federal Agency representatives:

NWS/NOAA: Andrew Loconto
USGS: Tim Sargent

Other participants:

1. Call to order

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm.

2. Seating of voting members

Martin Heft confirmed the quorum of agency representatives: DEEP – Doug Hoskins; DEMHS – Ken Dumais; DoAg – Simon Levesque; DPH – Lori Mathieu; and OPM – Martin Heft. PURA – Maria Szul. Ally Ayotte of PURA arrived later.

3. Minutes – February 2, 2023

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [3/2/2023](#) meeting minutes and was approved unanimously.

4. Business

a. Post Drought Actions

Martin Heft asked Bruce Wittchen for an update on recent meetings of the agency staff who are reviewing the 2022's drought. Bruce provided an overview, explaining that

agency staff are considering ways in which the drought plan can be improved, either based on deficiencies that were recognized during implementation or that staff believe could be problematic under different circumstances. He highlighted that the drought triggers considered when heading into drought were not helpful coming out of drought and said staff are also discussing how the plan might handle flash drought better. The last meeting included three people from DEEP's Forestry Division for a discussion of fire danger data.

Bruce said future meetings will include people from other agencies to discuss sources of information that might not be used currently in drought determinations. He added that they intend to proceed in this fashion, not only to prepare the after-action report required by the drought plan but also to compile recommendations for possible changes to that plan.

Martin Heft noted that the update addressed aspects of Sec. 4a and 4b of the agenda and asked if there were any questions. Lori Mathieu agreed that the drought triggers specified in the plan do not work well coming out of drought and recommended looking at other states. Bruce agreed and noted that while the drought plan enables Interagency Drought Workgroup members to use their professional judgment, it would be helpful for the plan to provide guidance to support such decisions. There was further discussion of how such judgment is used.

b. [Drought Plan](#)

Martin Heft noted that some of this task has been discussed already. He mentioned OPM staff research begun regarding water use restriction ordinances. Doug Hoskins mentioned a work group created by the Water Planning Council to consider needs for surface and ground water data from the USGS and provided an overview of that group's ongoing meetings.

c. State Drought Coordinator recommendation

Martin Heft explained that the drought plan calls for a staff member of one of the agencies to be designated Coordinator and recommended that OPM's Rebecca Dahl be considered for that position. He described her qualifications and water-related roles and a motion was made and seconded to recommend that the Water Planning Council appoint her to the coordinator role specified in the drought plan. Lori Mathieu and Doug Hoskins said Rebecca is a good choice for the position and the motion was approved unanimously.

d. Review of hydrologic conditions

Simon Levesque said DoAg has no concerns about current agricultural-related data. Steve Harkey said three reservoirs are only slightly below normal. Andrew Loconto commented that the NWS is tag-teaming until it is able to refill Nicole Belk's Service Hydrologist position following her retirement and said Fairfield and New London counties received 75 – 90% of normal precipitation and other counties were approximately normal. He pointed out that precipitation was normal for the first three months of the year but noted that temperatures have been above normal. He noted that the coming week will likely be dry and April will likely have above normal temperatures and normal precipitation.

There was a discussion of precipitation variations within counties that are not reflected in county-wide averages and that they should be watched. There also was a discussion of the impact of having relatively little precipitation accumulating as snow can result in mid-winter stream flows being misleading, as water that would ordinarily be stored on the ground to support stream flows in spring was lost to the streams earlier. Tim Sargent provided an overview of current stream flow and ground water measurements, mentioning the [Marlborough real-time well](#) as an example of state wells with downward trends at a time levels are usually rising. There was a discussion of the USGS's protocol that requires a minimum period of record before classifying stream flows and ground water levels.

e. Drought stage recommendations – VOTE

No one made a motion and there was no vote.

f. Next Meeting – May 4th

g. Other Business

Martin Heft mentioned an upcoming webinar on preparing for drought, which will feature some people here today.

5. Public comment

There were no public comments.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:45.