

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)  
Meeting Minutes

June 8, 2023

Meeting agenda:  
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/18655>

Drought Conditions Handout:  
[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2023/IDW\\_2023-06-08\\_Handout.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2023/IDW_2023-06-08_Handout.pdf)

Meeting Video:  
[https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/IDW\\_2023-06-08\\_Video.mp4](https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/IDW_2023-06-08_Video.mp4)

**Members and Agency Staff** (\* - denotes voting member):

DEEP: Bill Foreman, Doug Hoskins\*, Olney Knight  
DEMHS: none  
DoAg: Simon Levesque, Eileen Underwood\*  
DPH: Steve Harkey, Eric Lindquist, Lori Mathieu\*, Ryan Tetreault  
OPM: Rebecca Dahl, Martin Heft\*, Justine Phillips-Gallucci, Bruce Wittchen  
PURA: Jack Betkoski, Maria Szul\*

**Other State Agency Representatives**

CEQ: Paul Aresta, Nick Velseboer

**Federal Agency representatives:**

NWS/NOAA: Joe Dellicarpini, Bill Leatham, Deanna Marks, Sylvia Reeves, Britt Westergard  
USGS: Dee-Ann McCarthy, John Mullaney, Tim Sargent

**Other participants:**

None

**1. Call to order & Seating of voting members**

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm and confirmed the quorum of agency representatives: DEEP – Doug Hoskins; DoAg – Simon Levesque; OPM – Martin Heft; and PURA – Maria Szul. DPH’s Lori Mathieu joined after the conclusion of another meeting and DEMHS was not represented.

**2. Minutes – May 4, 2023**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [5/4/2023](#) meeting minutes and that motion was approved unanimously.

**3. State Drought Coordinator Report**

a. Review of April monthly data and other relevant information

Becca Dahl thanked everyone who provided the data compiled in today's [handout](#) and showed that on the screen. She noted that some conditions have deteriorated since the end of May, highlighting the dryness that this week's [Palmer Drought Index](#) and [US Drought Monitor](#) are showing in the coastal region. She added that the [Daily Forest Fire Danger Report](#) identifies five counties as high and the other three as moderate. She added that other indicators are in the normal range and asked John Mullaney to provide an overview of ground water and stream flow conditions.

John Mullaney said ground water levels are generally in the normal range but pointed out that some wells in Middlesex and New London counties are below normal. Nine of ten real time wells are currently in their normal range. Stream flows were normal during May but have declined in the past week. He mentioned that NW CT is also dry and added that runoff is limited even with normal ground water inflow and showed details for some affected stream gage sites.

Bill Leatham said he had nothing to add to NWS's report and Doug Hoskins pointed out that the 14-day precipitation outlook is slightly below normal. Eric Lindquist said the 14-day outlook will vary and said the 7-day precipitation forecast is trending wetter. Martin Heft pointed out that some Stage 2 triggers have been reached but not enough of them to justify going to Stage 2 and said Stage 1 also might not be justified.

- b. Vote on drought stage changes if warranted

There was no vote.

#### 4. Business

- a. Post-2022 Drought Actions

Martin Heft thanked agency staff who have been working on the draft after-action report and Becca Dahl provided an overview of their work and of the draft report. She outlined its contents and said the group will continue to meet to work on that and on the drought plan update. Martin pointed out the benefits of such reports and that the drought plan improves from drought to drought.

- b. [Drought Plan](#) Review

This was covered in 5a.

- c. National Flash Drought Workshop Review- Eric Lindquist, DPH

Martin Heft introduced Eric Lindquist to speak about the national flash drought workshop he attended and Lori Mathieu said Eric has been a tremendous addition to DPH. Eric showed a [PowerPoint](#) and described the workshop goals and backgrounds of people who participated. He also showed diagrams illustrating different flash drought scenarios and highlighted flash drought dilemmas and key takeaways. Eric said a workshop will be organized with our neighboring states and mentioned funding opportunities.

There was a discussion of the upcoming [American Water Works Association conference](#), which Eric will also attend, and Lori Mathieu noted there will be ten concurrent sessions and described some topic areas. Doug Hoskins asked about the controversy regarding the choice of terminology between *flash drought* and *rapid onset drought*. Eric described some of those discussions and highlighted the interest in getting people to respond while minimizing false alarms. Sylvia Reeves elaborated on the discussion and emphasized the level of variability with our increasingly non-stationary climate.

Olney Knight pointed out the relationship between drought onset and fire risk, explaining that it can take from two weeks to 40 days for forest materials to go from being unable to burn to able to burn. He added that 1/2" of rain in CT now would take the current fuel out of play. Eric Lindquist showed an aerial photo of the recent large fire in RI and said fire risks should be re-assessed because we continue to think of fires as being isolated events but they are not.

#### **5. Public comment**

There were no public comments.

#### **6. Next Meeting – July 6, 2023**

Martin Heft pointed out that the group can meet sooner if needed.

#### **7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 1:59.