

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2025

Meeting agenda:
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/27545>

Drought Conditions Handout:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/water/drought/2025/250206-idw-handout---january-2025-conditions-report.pdf>

Meeting Video:
https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/250206_IDW_Meeting_Recording.mp4

Members and Agency Staff | * - denotes Voting Member | ^ - denotes Drought Coordinator

DEEP: Doug Hoskins*, Melissa Fahnestock, Olney Knight, Shalyn Zappulla
DEMHS: none
DoAg: Simon Levesque*
DPH: Eric Lindquist*, Ryan Tetreault
OPM: Martin Heft*, Rebecca Dahl^, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Maria Szul*

Other State Agency Representatives

None

Federal Agency representatives:

NWS/NOAA: Deanna Marks
Rob Megnia
Britt Westergard
USGS: John Mullaney
Tim Sargent
Dee-Ann Crozier
NOAA/NIDIS: Sylvia Reeves

1. Call to order & Seating of voting members

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and confirmed the quorum of agency representatives: DoAg – Simon Levesque; DEEP – Doug Hoskins; DEMHS – none; DPH – Eric Lindquist; OPM – Martin Heft; and PURA – Maria Szul.

2. Minutes – [January 9, 2025](#)

A motion was made by Doug Hoskins and seconded by Maria Szul to approve the 1/9/2025 meeting minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. State Drought Coordinator Report

Becca Dahl provided a brief overview of conditions, as described in the provided January 2025 Conditions Report. She noted that there was some additional information in her report that was not included in the Conditions Report due to timing issues.

She shared maps of the U.S. Drought Monitor from the month of January and February 4th, indicating consistent drought status throughout January, and some degradation in central CT in February 4th's mapping.

She shared precipitation data for the month of January and for the two-month period look-back. She noted dry conditions for January, though December precipitation totals make the two-month period look closer to normal ranges.

She compared maps of groundwater conditions from December 2024 to January 2025, noting below-normal, much-below normal and low measurements at present. She also showed two graphs of groundwater wells that demonstrate a pattern of improvement at the end of December and early January, with a steady decrease from early January to present, noting concerns of this trend continuing into the spring months. She also shared USGS' groundwater summary from December and January, noting the increase in the percentage of wells below normal.

Becca Dahl shared the drought triggers tables from December and January, noting similar patterns, with groundwater shifting towards meeting the Stage 2 Drought Triggers. **Citing groundwater decreases and low precipitation, she recommended keeping the entire state in a Stage 2 Drought.**

Tim Sargent shared that there has been enough cold weather to cause ice formation in the rivers, making their stage discharge relation data invalid. Ultimately, USGS has to estimate this discharge data and will have some lag in the data until the estimates are approved.

John Mullaney added that groundwater wells are experiencing a pattern that is different for a winter drought – some of the groundwater levels came back to normal and then dropped down, so he needed to revise some data to account for the drought triggers.

Sylvia Reeves mentioned that she attended meeting with the Massachusetts Drought Task Force and the Northeast River Forecast Center earlier today – both groups presented data indicating continued drought conditions. Regionally, the Connecticut River Valley has seen degradation in the USDM and Massachusetts is also seeing decreasing groundwater levels. These illustrate hydrological drought concerns at the regional level. There are also snow depth deficits in most of New England contributing to the existing hydrological drought.

Sylvia also added that the LA Wildfires have brought up discussions around the USDM and its use in determining wildfire risk. She iterated that the USDM is descriptive of the previous week's conditions and good for monitoring agricultural impacts, but not necessarily intended for monitoring wildfire risk.

Martin Heft agreed with the recommendation to maintain Stage 2 Drought and called on individual IDW Voting Members to provide insight.

Simon Levesque had no further comment.

Doug Hoskins asked for some more discussion on the forecasted precipitation. Rob Megnia added that it should be an active precipitation pattern for the next couple of weeks, with several events contributing modest precipitation.

Eric Lindquist had no further comment but asked to hear about private wells. Ryan Tetreault added that they have seen some additional permits but nothing out of the ordinary.

Maria Szul agreed with keeping Stage 2 drought.

Martin Heft confirmed that we will remain in Stage 2 Drought and encouraged all to reach out if there are concerns about drought between meetings.

4. Business

Martin Heft brought up the topic of county equivalents and the potential shift of federal partners reporting data based on county equivalents instead of geographic counties, as discussed in previous meetings.

John Mullaney shared that USGS will be switching to the county equivalents, at a time in the future. He plans to keep a reference document to aid in the transition from counties to regional planning organizations.

Sylvia Reeves added that will be best to align with the State Drought Plan and there may be more to consider in terms of agricultural drought / emergency declarations.

Becca Dahl shared that progress with the drought tabletop exercise has been happening “in the background” with partners at DEMHS. Funding is the primary concern at the moment for the Drought Tabletop Exercise.

5. Other Business

There was no other business.

6. Public comment

There were no public comments.

7. Next Meeting – March 6, 2025

Martin Heft noted that the next meeting is scheduled to be March 6, 2025 and that staff will continue to monitor conditions, and the group is permitted to call a meeting if needed.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:37 pm, moved by Doug Hoskins and seconded by Maria Szul.