

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)

Meeting Minutes

September 4, 2025

Meeting agenda:

<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/27552>

Drought Conditions Handout:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/water/drought/2025/250904-idw-handout--july--august-conditions.pdf>

Video Link:

https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/250904_Interagency_Drought_Workgroup_Meeting_Recording.mp4

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

DEEP: Chris Bellucci, Melissa Fahnestock*, Doug Hoskins, Olney Knight, Shalyn Zappulla
DEMHS: Josh Cingranelli, Ken Dumais*, Bob Kenny
DoAg: Simon Levesque*
DPH: Eric Lindquist*, Ryan Tetreault
OPM: Martin Heft*, Rebecca Dahl^, Justine Phillips-Gallucci, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Maria Szul*

Other State Agency Representatives:

DAS: Doug Moore

Federal Agency representatives:

NWS/NOAA: Rob Megnia

USGS: Dee-Ann Crozier

1. Call to order & Seating of voting members

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm and confirmed the quorum of agency representatives: DoAg – Simon Levesque; DEEP – Melissa Fahnestock; DEMHS – Ken Dumais; DPH – Eric Lindquist; OPM – Martin Heft; and PURA – Maria Szul.

2. Minutes – July 3, 2025

A motion was made by Eric Lindquist and seconded by Maria Szul to approve the 7/3/2025 meeting minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. State Drought Coordinator Report

Becca Dahl provided a brief overview of conditions, as described in the July and August Conditions Reports provided.

She noted that the US Drought Monitor (USDM) remained unchanged for the most part throughout the month of July. There was an expansion of Do (Abnormally Dry) status in the lower four counties of the state throughout August. She noted that there was potential for flash drought to occur as conditions were dry and temperatures were in the high 80s-90s.

She continued on to note groundwater conditions, with particular attention to the lower half of the state. She also mentioned that 83.3% of the groundwater wells in Middlesex county were below normal this month.

Becca shared maps of the August precipitation, following similar trends, with drier conditions and precipitation departure in the lower half of the state. She also highlighted the New Haven and Bridgeport areas as being particularly dry. Additionally, she shared a precipitation departure map, noting that the Bridgeport area is current seeing a precipitation departure of about 8 inches.

Becca also pulled together and shared the Stage 2 Drought Trigger Summary by Region table – though not actively in a drought stage at the moment, she shared this as an illustrative tool. She also highlighted that Fire Danger is High as of 9/4/25, which is not on the table, and that this is likely due to lack of precipitation.

Olney Knight shared that for fire danger/drought areas of greatest concern include northern Fairfield County, New Haven County, southern Middlesex County and southern New London County. Seeing that many fuels are available, including live fuels due to early leaf cessation.

Dee-Ann Crozier added that streamflow conditions - 50% are below, much below normal, evenly distributed, new for this month, last month they looked mostly normal.

Rob Megnia added that there are two opportunities for precipitation / to make up precipitation deficits coming up this weekend, with Litchfield and Hartford counties with the best opportunities for soaking rain.

Ryan Tetreault added that he's recently received reports that wells in New Haven county are running dry. He's currently looking into the type of well to aid in determining the cause of these wells getting low.

Becca Dahl noted that we will need to continue to closely monitor conditions throughout the state, particular in the southern portion, and at this time she does not recommend moving into any drought stage per the State Drought Plan.

Melissa Fahnestock asked about moving into a Stage 1 drought for Fairfield and Middlesex counties, specifically noting the groundwater and streamflow levels being largely below normal. Martin Heft responded that Stage 1 is a preparatory stage and is not a public-facing stage, and is consistent with what we are doing now and has some hesitation moving into a Stage 1. Melissa Fahnestock agreed.

Eric Lindquist noted that this situation highlights issues the State Drought Plan does not address well, particularly with rapid-onset/flash drought, due to the indicators used and data available. He noted that professional judgement should continue to be used. Martin Heft noted that this is one item among many, that should be improved upon for the Plan and that the group should begin to look at making these recommendations for improving the Plan. Eric Lindquist also suggested more frequent IDW meetings during times of rapid-onset drought.

4. Business

a. DEMHS Statewide Emergency Planning and Preparedness Initiative (EPPI) – September 9, 2025

Martin Heft provided a brief overview on the EPPI, which is a statewide exercise to aid in managing natural disasters. He noted that through efforts from the IDW and the State Drought Coordinator, drought will be incorporated as part of this year's EPPI along with wildfire and air quality concerns. Becca Dahl will be participating as staff for this exercise

b. NRCC Flash Drought Case Study

Becca Dahl noted that the NRCC and NE DEWS approached her and Eric Lindquist to participate in the development of a case study on our most recent drought, in relation to flash drought. She will share more information as this develops.

c. 2024-2025 Drought After-Action Report

Becca Dahl noted that she is actively working on a draft of the After-Action Report on the recently 'closed' drought. She will work with staff of the IDW to develop a final report and share her first draft shortly, looking primarily for aid on the recommendations and discussion portions of this After-Action Report.

Martin Heft noted that this will also serve the dual-purpose of providing updates for the Water Planning Council Annual Report.

d. Extreme Weather and Our Watershed Webinar Series

Martin Heft shared that the Water Planning Council has two upcoming virtual webinars that may be of interest to this group – one on Water Quality and the Impacts of Flooding on 9/30, and one on Water Quality and the Impacts of Drought on 10/17. He shared a flyer for these webinars and noted that registration is now available on the WPC website.

e. Doug Hoskins Retirement

Martin Heft shared that Doug Hoskins will be retiring soon and that this may be his last meeting. Martin thanked Doug for his service on behalf of the Water Planning Council and the IDW and congratulated him on his retirement.

Doug Hoskins shared his last date will be October 1st, and noted that it has been a pleasure to be a part of the IDW and that he has seen many positive changes since he first began. He highlighted the positive aspects of collaboration in this

manner among state and federal partners, and that this level of cooperation will continue to be important.

5. Public comment

There were no public comments.

6. Next Meeting – October 2, 2025

Martin Heft noted that the next meeting is scheduled to be October 2, 2025 and that staff will continue to monitor conditions, and the group is permitted to call a meeting if needed.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:37 pm, moved by Simon Levesque and seconded by Eric Lindquist.