

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)

Meeting Minutes

October 2, 2025

Meeting agenda:

<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/27553>

Drought Conditions Handout:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/water/drought/2025/25-10-02-idw-handout---september-conditions-report.pdf>

Video Link:

<https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/251002%20Interagency%20Drought%20Workgroup%20Meeting%20Recording.mp4>

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

DEEP: Melissa Fahnestock*, Olney Knight, Shalyn Zappulla
DEMHS: Ken Dumais*, Doug Glowacki, Bob Kenny
DoAg: Simon Levesque*
DPH: Steve Harkey*, Ryan Tetreault
OPM: Martin Heft*, Rebecca Dahl^, Justine Phillips-Gallucci, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Maria Szul*

Federal Agency representatives:

NWS/NOAA: Rob Megnia
Matthew Belk
Deanna Marks

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 – Steve Harkey; OPM – Martin Heft; and PURA – none.

2. Minutes – September 4, 2025

A motion was made by Simon Levesque and seconded by Ken Dumais to approve the 9/4/2025 meeting minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. State Drought Coordinator Report

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

She noted that the US Drought Monitor (USDM) at the end of August and halfway into September remained similar, showing D0 across much of the southern portion of the state. As of September 23rd, the entire state was D0, with a portion of the state along the coastline in D1, and this remained the same for the September 30th map.

She continued to note groundwater conditions, with particular attention to the lower half of the state, highlighting Fairfield and Middlesex counties as showing 60% and 100% of groundwater wells below normal this month, respectively. She noted that streamflow levels are reduced from last month, but did “spike up” in many areas with the precipitation event on the 24th.

Becca shared the reservoir data from DPH, noting that most reservoirs are trending downward, with a couple below 80% of normal, hitting the Stage 2 drought trigger, but the majority remain above 80% of normal.

She shared graphs noting a roughly 8-inch precipitation deficit in Bridgeport since June. Additionally, she shared a map with the 7-day precipitation forecast, noting that there is a lack of precipitation hitting the northeast region.

Becca also shared the 2-month and 4-month precipitation tables, noting that New Haven, Middlesex and Fairfield counties will hit the Stage 2 drought trigger and generally below normal precipitation in these counties since June.

Becca also pulled together and shared the Stage 2 Drought Trigger Summary by Region table – though not actively in a drought stage now, she shared this as an illustrative tool. She noted that this month’s table compared to August’s table is showing more of the Stage 2 triggers being met.

Becca Dahl noted that there is an option to move into Stage 2 in Fairfield, New Haven, and Middlesex counties, as well as an opportunity for the IDW to discuss if Stage 1 is warranted.

Martin Heft noted that Stage 2 drought was last declared in November 2024 and that this is a similar trend to last year. He also noted that New York State has declared drought stages in some areas neighboring Connecticut. He highlighted that Stage 2 is indicative of an emerging drought and focused on providing awareness.

Melissa Fahnestock noted that it would make sense to move into Stage 2 for Middlesex, Fairfield and New Haven counties, especially with the lack of precipitation forecasted.

Doug Glowacki agreed with the recommendation to move to Stage 2 in the aforementioned counties, and noted that this would aid in providing awareness of some dryness in the state, with particular concern about the fall wildfire season. Ken Dumais concurred.

Steve Harkey asked about when the next precipitation event is expected. Doug Glowacki shared that a cold front is expected to come through around October 8th with potential for 1+ inches, but that may not come through. Beyond that the forecast does not show any systems moving through.

Melissa Fahnestock made the motion to move into Stage 2 drought for Fairfield, New Haven and Middlesex Counties, seconded by Ken Dumais. There was no discussion. The motion passed with 4 affirmative votes and 1 negative vote.

Martin Heft noted that the motion passed and that OPM will issue a recommendation to the Governor's office to move into Stage 2 in these counties.

4. Business

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

Becca Dahl shared that this is a statewide exercise put on by DEMHS that focused on wildfire during a time of drought.

Ken Dumais shared it was a good opportunity to promote the IDW and work through drought and that the exercise went well.

Becca agreed that it was a good opportunity to bring awareness to drought as a threat to the state and the State Drought Plan as a tool and resource, including DEMHS executive staff and municipalities. Further, the EPPI was modeled to demonstrate and test Stages 4 and 5 of the drought plan, and an after-action report for the EPPI should aid in learning more.

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 provided an overview of the case study via email. Connecticut will be one of two states highlighted to discuss flash drought in the Northeast and understand opportunities to make improvements to tools, resources and state drought plans. A final report is expected for Summer 2026.

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 met with staff of the IDW (Eric Lindquist, Melissa Fahnestock, and Ryan Tetrerault) to discuss the current draft of the report. She will continue making edits to this based on conversations and hopes to have this wrapped up by the end of the year.

5. Other Business:

October 23rd – 14th Biennial USDM Forum: Martin provided the link for registration for this virtual, half-day forum.

6. Public comment

There were no public comments.

7. Next Meeting – November 6, 2025

Martin Heft noted that the next meeting is scheduled to be November 6th, 2025 and that staff will continue to monitor conditions, and the group is permitted to call a meeting if needed. He also noted that OPM will send notice to the Office of the Governor with the recommendations made today and that the IDW will be alerted on the final decision.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:38 pm, moved by Melissa Fahnestock and seconded by Ken Dumais.