

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2020, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting handouts:

[Handout 1](#)

Audio recording available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2020/2020-09-17_IDW_Recording.mp3

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: William Foreman, Helene Hochholzer, Elizabeth McAuliffe, Philip Trowbridge
DEMHS: Brenda Bergeron, Doug Glowacki, Bob Kenny
DoAg: Steve Anderson
DPH: Steven Harkey, Lori Mathieu
OPM: Martin Heft, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Gail Lucchina, Cathy Pedemonti, Maria Szul

Federal Agency representatives:

USGS: John Mullaney, Tim Sargent
NWS: Nicole Belk, Nancy Furbush, Britt Westergard

Other participants:

None identified

1. Call to order

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

2. Introductions (if needed)

Philip Trowbridge introduced himself

3. Approval of minutes: 9/3/2020

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [9/3/2020 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Update on Regional Water/Drought Coordinators (DEMHS)

Bob Kenny said 109 of 169 municipalities have designated coordinators as of this morning and noted that all 14 municipalities in Region 1 and all 30 municipalities in Region 2 have done so. Two municipalities have done so in Regions 3, 30 have in Region 4, and 33 have in Region 5. They will keep plugging away.

5. Discuss current conditions and areas of improvement/degradation

a. Review summary prepared by OPM (see below) and any questions on agency updates

Eric Lindquist provided an overview of the [table of Stage 2 triggers circulated with the agenda](#) and John Mullaney provided a mid-month update on stream flows. Lori Mathieu requested clarification regarding changes in the depiction of CT in the US Drought Monitor released earlier in the day and Eric described the changes.

Helene Hochholzer said there has been an uptick of fires, with four yesterday. She added that there is an active 50-acre fire in Windham and noted this is the same pattern observed in 2016. She said a further increase in fires should be expected and she mentioned that members of the state fire crew have been mobilized to California.

Bruce Wittchen said the Palmer Drought and Crop Moisture index values for Fairfield County are deceptive because they are reported for broader climate zones including drier areas to the east and north. Nicole Belk pointed out that the more intense drought along the RI border is part of a broader area in RI and she noted that RI declared its first drought stage this week.

6. Recommend a course of action in accordance with State Drought Plan:

a. Maintain or modify current drought stage for each county

Martin Heft said the group had considered elevating New London County to Stage 2 at the 9/3 meeting and precipitation expected at that time didn't happen. There was a discussion of the 2-week outlook only predicting 1/4" at this point. Nicole Belk said only showers are expected, but she pointed out that there is possible tropical storm activity. She added that the next week is expected to be cool, but the following week is expected to be warmer and dry.

Martin Heft recommended the group elevate New London County to Stage 2 per the [state drought plan](#) and Lori Mathieu agreed. There was a discussion of the extent and severity of dry conditions and Lori said some water companies' experience is similar to 2016. There was a discussion of messaging and John Mullaney said he just did an interview. Brenda Bergeron suggested that the media show a drought logo comparable to the one used for hurricanes. She added that messaging should note the similarities with 2016.

There was a discussion of conditions being improved in Fairfield County and Maria Szul pointed out that Aquarion's Greenwich system is at Stage 2. There was further discussion of potential changes and Martin Heft said he votes on behalf of OPM to change New London County to Stage 2, with no changes elsewhere. Lori Mathieu agreed on behalf of DPH; Maria Szul agreed on behalf of PURA; Philip Trowbridge agreed on behalf of DEEP; Doug Glowacki agreed on behalf of DEMHS; and Steve Anderson agreed on behalf of DoAg.

b. If modifications are made, review actions to take place in accordance with drought plan

Steve Anderson noted the USDM map depiction of extreme drought having advanced into far eastern CT and John Mullaney said Pendleton Hill Brook is quite dry at the

[USGS gage in North Stonington](#). Martin Heft said OPM will draft and circulate a draft press release and beef up the conservation message.

7. **Items for next meeting and schedule**

Martin Heft said a meeting is scheduled for Oct. 8, at 2:00. He said we need a complete list of municipal water coordinators by then and offered OPM's assistance to DEMHS in completing that. He asked if there is anything else to discuss and Lori Mathieu asked about requirements at Stage 3, if needed, and Eric Lindquist showed the list of tasks included in the state drought plan. There was further discussion of Stage 2 and Stage 3 messaging and of referencing the elevated fire risk.

Eric Lindquist asked if the Web EOC system used by DEMHS and DPH would be appropriate for receiving information from municipal water coordinators and Bob Kenny said DEMHS will look into it. Eric noted that a smaller group, a drought action team, has been convened to carry out drought plan tasks.

Steve Anderson recommended the press release mention the USDM mapping of extreme drought and the large fire burning in Windham. Noted that CT had also reached the level of extreme drought in 2016, covering much of northwest and north-central CT. There was further discussion of conservation messaging and of coordination with the smaller drought action team.

8. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM