

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

November 5, 2020, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda, with data handout:
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/9240>

This meeting was covered by CT-N. On demand video is available at:
<http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=17864>

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: William Foreman, Helene Hochholzer, Doug Hoskins, Jennifer Perry
DEMHS: Doug Glowacki, Bob Kenny
DoAg: Steve Anderson
DPH: Mike Hage, Steven Harkey, Ryan Tetreault
OPM: Martin Heft, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: Maria Szul

Federal Agency representatives:

USGS: John Mullaney, Tim Sargent
NWS: Nicole Belk

Other participants:

None

1. Call to order

Martin Heft called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM.

2. Introductions (if needed)

Martin noted that he will be voting on behalf of OPM at this meeting and asked the person voting on behalf of each agency to introduce themselves. They were Steve Anderson, DoAg; Mike Hage, DPH; Bob Kenny, DEMHS; Doug Hoskins, DEEP/PURA.

3. Approval of minutes: 10/1/2020

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [10/1/2020 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Drought Action Team update

Eric Lindquist described the meetings of the Action Team since the Interagency Work Group's October meeting. He said the team has considered the actions necessary, reviewed responsibilities specified in the drought plan, and ensured necessary communications are

happening. Martin Heft said the team has accomplished a lot of work in the last month and noted that the list was also shared with the Water Planning Council (WPC).

5. Discuss current conditions and areas of improvement/degradation

Eric Lindquist provided an overview of triggers and pointed out that stream flows, ground water levels and reservoir levels tend to be the slowest criteria to recover. He mentioned criteria that have improved in the past month and noted that the growing season has ended and the seasonal ending of VegDRI reporting will happen soon. He also pointed out that the [US Drought Monitor](#) depiction of CT has improved, with essentially no severe drought remaining.

Martin Heft invited meeting attendees to update any of the data circulated prior to the meeting. Doug Glowacki said the long-range outlook is dry, but not excessively so. He mentioned that tropical storm Eta might arrive in two weeks and said variations have less impact outside of the growing. Steve Anderson said Eric Lindquist covered most of the agriculturally oriented data and noted that VegDRI is much improved since last month.

Steve Harkey said reservoir levels have improved in the last two week and Mike Hage added that water demand is lower. Maria Szul asked about Aquarion and Steve said the lower Fairfield County system remains at the 3rd drought stage. He said there will be an update from Aquarion the following day. Ryan Tetreault said his program's tracking of permits for private well deepening and fracking shows numbers are declining.

Bob Kenny thanked Doug Glowacki for sending his updates to regional coordinators and to the local liaisons. We are down to only four towns without liaisons. Doug Hoskins said he has no updates to the data previously provided by DEEP but mentioned that, in accordance with [Executive Order 1](#), a notice has been sent to state agencies to curtail lawn irrigation at their facilities.

John Mullaney said the drought plan's stream flow criteria do not reveal recent improvements. Ground water levels are just starting to turn around. There was a discussion of the plan criteria being designed for the process of going into drought and also that one good month does not warrant going out.

Nicole Belk said CT has had a decent amount of rain, 1/2" to 3/4", so far this month and noted that most of the state was near-normal to above-normal in October, the first time since April. She showed longer-term precipitation data and said another dry month might require reconsideration. She noted Doug Glowacki's comments regarding the precipitation outlook for the next two weeks and added that temperatures are likely to be warmer than normal for the next three months, with equal chances of precipitation being above or below normal.

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

a. Maintain or modify current drought stage for each county

Martin Heft asked if anyone had any questions about the data and, hearing none, suggested leaving the drought classification of each county as is. He acknowledged that there is improvement in places, but impacts remain in some places. He invited comments and Doug Glowacki said he agrees with not increasing the drought categories further. He said the expected dry period in the next two weeks will not affect surface conditions but will delay recharge.

Doug Hoskins said he is not seeing conditions as warranting Stage 3 and Steve Anderson asked if areas currently classified as Stage 3 should be improved to Stage 2. Mike Hage recommended maintaining the status quo and Bruce Wittchen said he agrees with Mike and highlighted that they have heard of private wells still going dry and the drought criteria are not good indicators for backing out of drought. Maria Szul said she also agrees with remaining the same. Martin Heft outlined the available options and asked if anyone wanted to make a motion to modify the classification of any county. No one made a motion and Martin said we will leave it as status quo.

7. Items for next meeting and schedule

Martin said the Action Team will continue to work and invited people to suggest items to be included on future agendas. There was a discussion of the timing of the next meeting, which will be December 10, not the December 3, to provide more time for compiling and reviewing month-end data.

Martin asked if there is anything else and Eric Lindquist said the group should consider the need for public messaging following this meeting. Should the website be updated to reflect that nothing changed; should the municipal liaisons be notified? The message could be that we notice improvement in some areas but, out of an abundance of caution, are opting to not make any changes yet.

Doug Glowacki said he can include that message in the weekly update he will send to municipal liaisons Monday. He would also say that if precipitation continues this month people can expect a significant change in drought status in December. Martin agreed with that approach and Eric said he will update the website to reflect that same logic.

8. Adjourn

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn; the meeting was adjourned at 2:50.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM