

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2017, 2:00 PM
CT Office of Policy & Management
Room 2A, 450 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

CT Agency representatives:

Steve Anderson, DoAg; Doug Glowacki, DESPP; Doug Hoskins, DEEP; Linda King-Corbin, DEEP-PURA; Eric Lindquist, OPM; Lori Mathieu, DPH; Nick Neeley, PURA (by phone); Ryan Tetreault, DPH; Bruce Wittchen, OPM

Other attendees:

John Mullaney, USGS East Hartford; Tim Sargent, USGS East Hartford

1. Call to order

Bruce Wittchen called the meeting to order at 2:10 PM and everyone introduced themselves.

2. Assessment of Existing Conditions

• **2a. Review & evaluation of data**

Precipitation:

There was a discussion of precipitation totals from the recent storm and the preceding dry period dating back to late summer. Doug Glowacki said the current forecast is for 2" – 4" of precipitation from the approaching weekend storm and it could be as much as 7".

Stream Flow & Ground Water:

John Mullaney provided an overview of USGS stream flow data and pointed out that streams have been dropping below normal in many areas. He and Tim Sargent said that USGS will be making monthly ground water measurements this week and data should be available on Monday.

The group reviewed charts of stream flow at a number of gages and Eric Lindquist showed a recent photo of low water at Colebrook Reservoir. There was a discussion of Colebrook's role in the MDC system and of water levels and stream flows upstream and downstream of the MDC reservoirs, including at Otis Reservoir in MA. Tim Sargent said he would check with his contact at MDC for further information.

Reservoirs:

Lori Mathieu said the Norwalk 1st Taxing District system is at its first drought trigger and there was a discussion of Aquarion's Greenwich system, which also is. Doug Hoskins noted that Aquarion uses a model-based system for identifying drought

triggers and there was a discussion of that system, which currently indicates that there is a 10% chance that the system will be down to a 90-day supply by December.

There was a discussion of the frequency water companies' reservoir level reporting, which currently is monthly, and Lori Mathieu said DPH is transitioning away from receiving only reservoir level data to receiving broader system status data that includes groundwater status and total estimated days of supply. She added that DPH also wants to be able to deploy that information on maps instead of just in tables.

Palmer Drought Severity Index (Palmer Index) and Crop Moisture Index:

Before discussing the Palmer Drought and Crop Moisture indexes, Bruce Wittchen mentioned that the US Drought Monitor will likely expand the area shown as being in Moderate Drought. There was a discussion of the cut-off for each week's data, which was prior to most of this week's rain.

Bruce said the weekly Palmer Drought and Crop Moisture Indexes both meet Drought Advisory criteria outside of the Northwest Hills.

Fire Danger:

Bruce Wittchen said the Fire Danger is low today and might have been high before yesterday's rain. It's a measure that can change rapidly.

- **2b. Discussion**

There was a discussion of the drought criteria and that, although a drought advisory could be declared for parts of the state, it did not seem appropriate at this time, given the amount of precipitation expected within a few days.

Bruce Wittchen mentioned that he had not yet received a response to an email he had sent the Governor's communication office about the possibility of the group recommending a drought area. He suspected that they probably were focused on the State budget.

Bruce said Aquarion's representative on the WPC's Advisory Group said there would be greater public acceptance of conservation measures if the state would issue an advisory. He asked Lori if DPH could issue a notice explaining that conditions have been dry and recommending that public water customers follow any drought-related messages from water suppliers. There was a discussion of what could be said and Lori said she did not yet see a level of urgency that would warrant bringing this to the commissioner or issuing a news release.

3. Course of action

The Interagency Drought Workgroup decided to not take any action but to meet again in two weeks.

4. Other Business

- a. Update of Drought Plan Subcommittee

Bruce Wittchen said that, at last week's subcommittee meeting, DEEP recommended that the agencies work with the public comments received regarding the current draft and take the steps necessary to adopt an updated plan. Bruce said OPM staff had believed it would be better to reconsider draft plan based on experiences with the current plan during the Drought Watch earlier this year. Eric and Bruce discussed DEEP's recommendation with their manager afterwards and OPM agrees with DEEP's recommendation.

There was a discussion of the plan review and adoption process and some members believe that other changes should also be made. There was a discussion of the timeframe in which agencies can do this and Bruce mentioned that he and Eric will not have much time before January because they are tied up with revising the State C&D Plan. He asked each agency to review the public comments that were received and to determine whether they can begin addressing those that are most relevant to their agency.

5. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be in two weeks, to be scheduled via email.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 PM.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM