

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW) **Meeting Minutes**

June 30, 2020, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Audio recording available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/2020/Interagency_Drought_2020-06-30.mp3?sc_lang=en

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: Peter Aarrestad, William Foreman, Helene Hochholzer, Douglas Hoskins

DEMHS: Robert Kenny

DoAg: Stephen Anderson

DPH: Robert Baran, Michael Hage, Steven Harkey, Lori Mathieu, Ryan Tetreault

OPM: Martin Heft, Bruce Wittchen

PURA: Jack Betkoski, Linda King-Corbin, Gail Lucchina, Cathy Pedemonti, Maria Szul

Federal Agency representatives:

USGS: John Mullaney, Tim Sargent

NWS: Nicole Belk, Nancy Furbush

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 PM and attendees were identified from the list on Teams.

3. Discuss any change in conditions & weather forecast since 6/24/2020 meeting

Note: Links to current values of many of the data discussed below are available at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Drought/Data-and-Reports>

John Mullaney provided an overview of current conditions (see attached) and noted that [stream flows](#), which had been declining, are up due to the recent rain. He pointed out that nine of the state's [ten real-time monitoring wells](#) are below normal, but only 39 of the state's [wells monitored monthly](#) were below normal at the end of last week. John said he thought only five of the ten real-time wells had been below normal. John highlighted that it is hard to discern a pattern in the well results in the limited amount of time since the well measurements. He explained that a variety of local factors will influence the behavior of each well and added that there tends to be little recharge to ground water this time of year. Tim Sargent pointed out that the ongoing storms continue to affect stream flows and noted that the Waterford area has received considerable rain.

Nicole Belk said today's rain is entering CT from an atypical direction due to the location of the storm center. Doug Glowacki said the run of the GFS model he shared yesterday showed the state receiving 1½" – 2" of rain in the next two weeks, with most expected yesterday through tomorrow. He said the diurnal storms typical of this time of year could drop 4", or nothing, but it looks like the model might have underestimated the past

day's rain. He added that only 1/2" to 1" was predicted across the final 10 days of the two-week period.

Nicole said precipitation was short across the state in May, but highlighted that an area of north-central CT received only ~1", while other areas were not so short, having received up to 2", also well below normal. Some areas were wetter, particularly the area around Waterbury. She said she will have to calculate the final numbers for June, but noted that the Bradley Airport station would have to receive at least 0.55" through the end of the day to avoid this being one of the ten driest June's in the record.

Nicole said temperatures are below normal now but will be normal to above normal in the coming days. She said the outlook for the coming months is to probably be drier than normal with above-normal temperatures.

Lori Mathieu provided an overview of a spreadsheet maintained by DPH that shows reservoirs trending down. She said DPH will issue a circular letter requesting water companies to submit their data weekly. Steve Harkey highlighted that the spreadsheet shows Middletown depleted 10% of its reservoir capacity in a single week. He contacted the utility and they attributed it to high demands. He said the South Norwalk system is also experiencing high demands and is working with the town on messaging. He also described Aquarion's different approach to drought triggers, which is based on modeling and has resulted in Aquarion issuing notices even with reservoirs above 90% of normal because of the amount of demand.

Lori Mathieu explained DPH's drought tracking spreadsheet and said the Middletown system has reservoirs and wells. She said DPH is contacting utilities to ensure they are observing their drought triggers as required. Mike Hage noted that water demands are currently high and the rain might reduce the demand. There was a discussion of mapping DPH is working on for illustrating water supply issues across the state and Lori said they are building a dashboard for illustrating it.

Doug Hoskins said DEEP had received a notice from the Regional Water Authority which has been requested to activate its emergency interconnection to the Southington system. Lori Mathieu noted that interconnections can interfere with water quality measures and pointed out that there have been recent water quality complaints in RWA's system, which DPH and RWA have discussed. Ryan Tetreau said DPH's private well program has sent a request to health directors asking for information about wells being fracked or deepened.

Jack Betkoski said Linda King-Corbin, Gail Lucchina, Cathy Pedemonti, Maria Szul will participate in these meetings and described PURA's role in working with DPH and regulated water companies. He also highlighted this group's relationship with Water Planning Council.

Steve Anderson provided an overview of information relevant to agriculture. The [Palmer Drought Severity Index](#) met the threshold for Stage 2 in NW CT, but not elsewhere. The [Crop Moisture Index](#) does statewide. Soil moisture tends to be short or very short and [VegDRI](#) shows a concentrated area of moderate or worse drought in NW CT. He noted that precipitation deficits have increased in NW and Coastal CT, but decreased in Central CT.

Peter Aarrestad said there was nothing to report from DEEP fisheries. Helene Hochholzer said the ongoing rains have reduced the [Forest Fire Danger](#) from High to Very High last week to the low side of Moderate today and possibly to Low later this week. It will not be high again for at least a week. There was a discussion of DEEP's ability to identify regional variations in fire danger and Helene said DEEP can do that.

Doug Hoskins reminded the group about Southington's decision to activate its emergency interconnection with the RWA and noted that several diversion permit authorizations are conditioned on Quinnipiac River levels, which currently are low. This is a noteworthy event. He also mentioned that complaints are being received about landscapers and water delivery taking water from various water bodies. Things are getting dry. Doug also mentioned that this is a key season for ensuring crop seed development and they have heard concerns about a farmer's use of water from a pond for irrigation.

4. Discuss actions/responsibilities specified in the [State Drought Plan](#)

Bob Kenny provided an update on the work being done to identify a water coordinator for every CT municipality. He explained that each of DEMHS's five regions is involved and he noted that some of the coordinators named to date are not emergency management directors. He highlighted that two councils of governments (COGs) had raised a concern that the state's water utility coordinating committees (WUCCs) should have that role.

Bob said that, according to his review, do not have the short-term, tactical role expected of municipal water coordinators. Lori Mathieu agreed and explained that her department works with the WUCCs, which have a planning function. She said DPH can help clarify this and suggested they discuss it further.

5. Recommended course of action

Bruce Wittchen read through the drought plan's list of triggers for elevating to Stage 2 and said that, based on the information presented today, he did not believe the state has reached that threshold. There was general agreement, with Doug Hoskins noting that he agrees if the group meets again soon. There was a consensus to meet again late next week.

Bruce Wittchen asked each agency to share its information ahead of that meeting if possible, as Eric Lindquist had suggested in his email scheduling this meeting. Bruce also said the group should consider asking each agency to do a presentation at a future meeting to explain how its data are acquired and assessed.

6. Next Meeting

The group will meet again late next week, the time and date to be determined.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:07 PM.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM

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