

Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW)
Meeting Minutes

January 7, 2021, 2:00 PM Teleconference

Meeting agenda, with data handout:
<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/10260>

CT Agency representatives:

DEEP: Bill Foreman, Doug Hoskins
DEMHS: Doug Glowacki, Bob Kenny
DoAg: Steve Anderson
DPH: Steve Harkey, Lori Mathieu, Austin McMann, Ryan Tetreault
OPM: Martin Heft, Eric Lindquist, Bruce Wittchen
PURA: John Betkoski, Cathy Pedemonti, Maria Szul

Federal Agency representatives:

USGS: John Mullaney
NWS: Nicole Belk

Other participants:

Alicea Charamut

1. Call to order

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

2. Introductions (if needed)

Martin Heft identified the person voting on behalf of each agency to introduce themselves. They were Martin Heft, OPM, Steve Anderson, DoAg; Doug Hoskins, DEEP/PURA; and Doug Glowacki, DEMHS; and Lori Mathieu, DPH.

3. Approval of minutes: 12/10/2020

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [12/10/2020 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with DPH not voting.

4. 2021 meeting dates

There was a discussion of [2021 meeting dates](#) and Martin Heft noted that meetings will be canceled when needed. A motion was made and seconded, there was a brief discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously, with DPH not voting. Note: this vote was redundant because the group had already voted to approve that schedule in December.

5. Discuss current conditions and areas of improvement/degradation for each drought region(county)

Martin Heft noted that the [data handout](#) was circulated previously and asked Eric Lindquist to show the Stage 2 indicators chart. There was a brief discussion of the listed data and Martin asked if there is anything to add. John Mullaney highlighted that the majority of ground water wells are monitored only monthly and December's measurements preceded the late month rain that greatly increased levels in many of the continuous wells. Ground water levels are probably higher than listed.

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

Martin Heft outlined the available options and Lori Mathieu said from the perspective of DPH, all counties should be returned to normal. Martin agreed but said the group should recognize the lingering concerns. There was a discussion of the precipitation outlook and of the potential for a coastal storm next week, although the current expectation is for it to stay to the south.

Lori Mathieu asked about New London County ground water data and John Mullaney said levels were low when measured before Christmas but probably are normal now. He showed a chart for the continuous gage in Clinton, which rose significantly during that time. There was further discussion about the data and Lori Mathieu asked what MA and RI have done. Eric Lindquist said RI's group has not met during this period and Nicole Belk said MA decided yesterday to move all regions back to normal. Doug Hoskins noted that the US Drought Monitor does not show dry conditions anywhere in CT.

Martin Heft asked for a recommendation and said it appears that we should return the state to normal. There was further discussion and Martin said a press release can indicate the return to normal but include messaging about conservation. Lori Mathieu mentioned the magnitude of irrigation in 2020 and said we cannot have that taking reservoirs down to 25%. Martin Heft said the press release can state that no drought remains but avoid saying conditions are back to normal. He requested a motion and a motion was made to eliminate the Stage 1 and Stage 2 drought from every county and the motion was seconded and approved unanimously. Martin said a press release is already being written.

7. Old business

a) Drought Plan modification recommendations

Martin Heft noted that some things worked but some did not when using the drought plan for the first time with the just-concluded drought. There was a discussion of compiling recommendations for changes, including that PURA have a vote separate from the rest of DEEP. Martin said the Dept. of Consumer Protection might also be added as a voting member. He also noted issues that arose regarding drought stage names. There was a discussion of using the upcoming meetings to look back at the drought and how the plan was implemented.

Jack Betkoski and Lori Mathieu thanked everyone for their work and there was a discussion of the meeting schedule approved for 2021. Eric Lindquist noted that some of the scheduled meetings will likely be canceled. Lori said it would be helpful in the future to have more ground water data and added that more work and thought is needed on the process for going into and out of drought. The action team can work on this, also looking at other states' procedures. Lori also said municipal ordinances are critical and that we

should look at the City of Norwalk as an example. There was further discussion of needed work.

Steve Harkey mentioned the work being completed by the drought plan topical group formed by the WPC. Eric Lindquist added that the other group was assigned to evaluate implementation of the drought plan during the previous drought but noted that it had been under the previous drought plan. There was further discussion of the different groups' roles and how that other group's work can be used by this group.

There was further discussion of messaging regarding the end of the current drought. Bob Kenny explained that Doug Glowacki's report that was included in the meeting handout will also be provided to the local coordinators. There was a discussion of keeping them updated and Bob said his agency will share this group's information with them.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:47.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM