

# Water Planning Council Implementation Working Group

## Drought Sub-Work Group

### Summary of Recommendations

The Drought Topical Sub-Work Group of the Implementation Work Group (IWG) responded to four charges as directed by the Water Planning Council (WPC). The full report gives the background for the group and describes their process. It includes all their findings for which there was general agreement, discusses those findings, and makes a recommendation for each one. Thus, the report captures the groups thought process. It also includes appendices presenting their agendas, minutes, the internal survey they used to identify issues, and recommended changes to the Drought Plan.

This document only presents a summary of the charges and the recommendations for each; it does not substitute for the full report. While this summary contains all recommendations, it should be noted the Interagency Drought Workgroup (IDW) has already incorporated some of these recommendations, in whole or in part, in its current practices.

**Charge 1-** *The WPC, through its committees, could develop a template for interpreting statewide drought indices to local risk levels and response measures for use by utilities at the local level, based on storage, demand levels, type of system, etc.*

#### Recommendations:

- 1.01 The Department of Public Health should develop guidance for how utilities should develop their utility specific drought response plans.
- 1.02A Maintain allowances for regional declarations and professional judgement in the State Drought Plan.
- 1.02B Identify areas where additional indicator sites are needed (real-time stream and groundwater gages in each drought region) and maintain the existing stream gages and groundwater stations.
- 1.03 Develop a committee through the Water Planning Council to determine the need for and develop a template for interpreting statewide drought.
- 1.04 Recommendation: DPH, in coordination with Federal partners, should develop an online portal for public water systems to report their various surface water and ground water capacities as well as the other metrics required by regulation.
- 1.05 Recommendation: Develop a checklist for press releases, messaging, and public outreach materials that will be issued by the IDW or lead agency, including:
  - Clear messaging about the status of regions affected (or not) by dry conditions or drought.
  - Language differentiating between IDW declared regional droughts and individual public water supply droughts and encouraging those on public water supply to pay close attention to their providers as conditions and restrictions will vary depending on the source.
  - Information about the status of groundwater supplies and instructions for residents on private wells.
- 1.06 Recommendation: Conclusions of each IDW meeting should be consistently reported and clear. Data upon which conclusions were based should be included in official meeting materials.

**Charge 2-** *The Drought Plan and the Interagency Drought Workgroup exist in an ad hoc capacity; therefore, its implementation relies upon existing statutory and regulatory powers of the agencies that comprise the Interagency Drought Workgroup. The Council should consider developing legislative recommendations to improve the authority and implementation of the Drought Plan.*

Recommendations:

- 2.01 The IDW should establish a regular schedule of meetings.
- 2.02A OPM should remain the lead agency for the IDW and serve as Chair. The IDW should also have a designated staff coordinator located within OPM.
- 2.02B A lead and backup member should be designated on each agency on the IDW.
- 2.03 All towns should be required through State statute or regulation to have an official Municipal Drought Liaison (MDL).
- 2.04 The operations of the IDW should be updated in the Drought Plan. Recommended language is included in Appendix D.

**Charge 3 -** *The adoption of water use restriction ordinances by municipalities is a major element of drought planning and response, but the model water use ordinance featured in Appendix B of the Drought Plan is inadequate or impractical for some communities. There is also a need for better coordination between municipalities and public water suppliers on reduction targets. The WPC should consider collaborating with municipalities and public water suppliers to improve and promote the model water use restriction ordinance.*

Recommendations:

- 3.01 A new set of model ordinances should be developed to better fit local municipal needs. There are many different scenarios regarding water supplies at the local level and model ordinances should be developed to meet the different set of conditions. For example, some towns may be serviced solely by public water supplies and other towns may be a combination of private wells and public supply. A task force should be convened to develop model ordinances for the different town/water supply configurations. These should include how municipalities will coordinate with local water utilities.
- 3.02 The Water Planning Council should confirm that public water suppliers have the authority to implement and enforce water use restrictions on their customers in accordance with their approved drought response plans without the need for enacting ordinances in each municipality served, similar to the authority assumed by Aquarion during the 2016 drought.
- 3.03 Each town should have a Municipal Drought Liaison (MDL) which should be required by state regulation or statute.

**Charge 4 -** *Would the current state drought plan have been effective during the 2016-2017 drought?*

Recommendations:

- 4.01 IDW should continue to review and evaluate drought on a regional scale.
- 4.02 Identify/demarcate drought regions to be used by IDW and whose boundaries can be easily communicated to the public.
- 4.03 Identify gaps in data needed to adequately assess drought conditions on a regional scale and determine pathways for obtaining better data.

- 4.04 The IDW should maintain detailed records of data, data analysis, and drought status for each IDW meeting, in order to provide a record and context for the meeting minutes and any decisions that were made.
- 4.05 The IDW should include copies of all indicators and records reviewed with their meeting minutes.
- 4.06 The IDW should strive to make all significant decisions at an IDW meeting and not use emails.
- 4.07 If decisions are being made using emails then the IDW should draft minutes to reflect the information in the emails and any decisions made.
- 4.08 Drought criteria and condition summaries should be provided and evaluated on a regular basis.
- 4.09 The IDW should evaluate the data and information currently available to them to determine where there are any deficiencies.
- 4.10 If in the IDW's evaluation of drought data deficiencies are identified, the IDW should endeavor to address the deficiencies.
- 4.11 If the deficiencies are found to be at a regional or local level, the IDW should develop a process to gather more local level drought conditions and impacts.
- 4.12 The IDW should conduct a research review to determine if snow drought impacts CT and develop winter criteria and triggers if it does.
- 4.13 Update drought plan to better define how private wells will be considered by the IDW, what data should be considered in their evaluation, and what actions will be implemented during drought emergencies.
- 4.14 Expand network of USGS groundwater monitoring stations to better anticipate and corroborate private well impacts.
- 4.15 Develop procedure for reporting of private well yield problems caused by drought and how IDW should coordinate with local government.
- 4.16 The state drought plan should be updated to better define the relationship between State IDW and public water supply drought preparedness and response and its role in both. This should include goals for response to each drought phase.
- 4.17 IDW should conduct after-action assessments following each drought event and should include water utilities in that assessment.
- 4.18 DPH should require public water suppliers to demonstrate the effectiveness of their drought response plans.
- 4.19 IDW should determine a consistent set of procedures for communications that should define timing and responsibilities.
- 4.20 Templates for various stages and drought conditions should be drafted and finalized using agency staff and communication's offices staff. These templates should be approved prior to the next drought event and include areas where additional situational information can be added during the drought event.
- 4.21 IDW should develop a mechanism to document any decisions made by the Governor's Office when a recommendation is made regarding drought declarations and conservation requests.
- 4.22 IDW should develop a plan to fully implement the use of the MDL that includes defining the role and responsibilities of the position.

- 4.23 The IDW should develop and establish simple and efficient mechanisms that ensure two-way impactful communications between the state and the Water Coordinator.
- 4.24 IDW should determine, after the full implementation of the MDL, if the MDL has fulfilled the role of two-way communication. If the MDL has not completely fulfilled the role, then the IDW should determine a mechanism that expands their membership to include local or regional stakeholders as advisory members.
- 4.25 IDW should establish monthly meetings during non-drought conditions.
- 4.26 IDW should establish a schedule of meetings during drought conditions whose frequency is sufficient to relay conditions and make timely decisions.
- 4.27 OPM should identify a staff position with sufficient authority to be the lead of the IDW and add the duties to the position's description to ensure the leader role is established.
- 4.28 Members and alternates should be determined by each agency who have the authority to make decision for their agency or branch and can attend meetings regularly.
- 4.29 IDW members and alternates should be updated periodically.
- 4.30 The Water Planning Council needs to provide guidance as to the role of water conservation in mitigating for drought and determine if water conservation should be part of the Drought Preparedness and Response Plan. Further it needs to look at other planning documents including the State Hazard Mitigation Plan and the GC3 reports.
- 4.31 The Water Planning Council needs to determine and advise the SWP-IWG and WPCAG as how best to coordinate with the GC3 planning efforts.