

PIMA COUNTY LOCAL DROUGHT IMPACT GROUP
Wednesday, January 9, 2019
Pima County Public Works Building
RECAP

Attendance: Kathy Chavez (Pima County/OSC), Jeannette Montañó (Pima County/RWRD), Marie Light (PC/DEQ), Candice Rupprecht (Tucson Water), Zack Richards (ADWR), Jaimie Galayda (Tucson Water), Bill Schock (Santa Cruz NRCD), Colby Bowser (Pima County/OSC)

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Review November 14 LDIG meeting Kathy Chavez, OSC
3. ADWR Activities and Updates- Zack Richards, ADWR
 - a. Review December Short-Term Drought Status Report – The most recent short-term drought map reflects December’s precipitation. Drought status has improved in western Pima County, but extreme drought conditions persist in the four-corners region of Arizona. A weak to moderate El Niño signal means wet and warmer conditions through February, which could result in less snowpack in the mountains. The monsoon season was average, but not exceptionally wet. A review of the short-term drought status maps over the last six months shows improving drought conditions in southern and central Arizona, but extreme drought in north eastern Arizona
 - b. Review July-September Long-Term Drought Status Report – The July-September long-term drought status does not reflect October’s precipitation, nor the recent precipitation or warm weather. ADWR will issue the October-December long-term drought status map in early February. Comparison of the long-term drought status from January through October 2018 shows worsening drought conditions throughout Arizona and exceptional drought conditions expanding in north eastern Arizona
 - c. Interagency Coordinating Group Meeting Summary – The ICG met on November 28, 2018. In 2018, the Salt/Verde River watershed experienced its lowest runoff since 1913. As of October 3, the total storage was 46% of capacity, compared to 65% at the same time last year.

For the Water Year ending September 30, 2018, the upper Colorado River Basin received 65% of its average precipitation. As of November 26, the total system storage was at 46% of capacity. The Bureau of Reclamation announced no shortage in 2019, but there is a 57% chance of a shortage declaration in 2020.

The Game & Fish Department reported over one million gallons of water were hauled to various wildlife catchments throughout Arizona from January through August in 2018. There is an outbreak of epizootic hemorrhagic disease in the deer population attributed to drought in the Prescott area. Algal blooms caused by low water levels and warm temperatures are reported to be affecting fish populations in numerous lakes throughout the state.

The Forestry Department reported over 1,968 wildfires damaged 161,356 acres this year. This is less than 2017, but the decrease is due to preventative measures such as the closure of lands to the public. October rains triggered warm weather vegetation that will act as fine fuel in the spring, increasing the wildfire risk. Bark beetle infestation affected 275,000 acres of forest trees, primarily Ponderosa Pine. This is a 513% increase over last year.

The Navajo Nation reported all five of their agencies have observed a downward trend in annual average precipitation since 1984.

ADWR will hold the spring ICG meeting in May. No firm date has been set.

4. Arizona Drought Planning – Zack Richards, ADWR. Arizona has experienced three severe droughts in the 20th Century. The current drought began in the mid-late 1990s. In 2003, Governor Napolitano created the Governor’s Drought Task Force to address drought impacts. The resulting Drought Preparedness Plan established water use reports and drought plan requirements for all of the State’s water systems and created three working committees; the monitoring technical committee, the interagency coordinating committee and local drought impact groups.

The Monitoring Technical Committee meets quarterly to gather and evaluate drought, climate and weather data. MTC is comprised of weather and climate experts to produce the monthly short-term drought status report and the quarterly long-term drought status report.

The Interagency Coordinating Group is an advising body to the Governor on drought and is comprised of state agencies, federal agencies and non-governmental organizations. ICG meets semi-annually to advise the Governor of drought status, impacts and preparedness and response actions. ICG also reviews the Drought Preparedness Annual Report

Local Drought Impact Groups (LDIG) are county-based groups that identify local drought-related impact, define and assess drought, identify response options and needs and identify and facilitate efforts to mitigate impacts.

ADWR compiles the Drought Preparedness Annual Report with input from the MTC, ICG and LDIGs. The plan is based on the federal water year, October 1 through September 30. It includes information on drought status changes, climate and precipitation data and water supply status.

ADWR’s Drought Program challenges include lack of statutory requirements for plan updates, decreasing LDIG participation, lack of drought impact reporting and lack of resources. A workshop will be held March 6 to improve statewide drought reporting. Successes are the MTC and ICG’s consistent engagement over the last 12 years and the number of community water systems that have created and submitted drought and conservation plans. The State drought program is also increasing its outreach and employed a new gridded Standardized Precipitation and Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI) long-term map in early 2018. Responding to a question about drought index wells, the annual report identifies their locations within the San Pedro River and the Whitewater Draw watersheds. ADWR staff developed a Monitoring Well Network Optimization Plan in 2015, which includes identifying additional drought monitoring index wells within the state. Water level data from continuous monitoring sites are being reviewed and evaluated with respect to meeting drought index well criteria for the USGS Climate Response Network.

5. Updates
 - a. RWRD held its annual grease collection campaign, collecting over 87,000 pounds of grease at five sites. RWRD will hold several community outreach events on water conservation this spring
 - b. The Town of Marana has completed a constructed recharge facility to store up to 600 acre-feet annually of effluent
 - c. Tucson Water will be updating its two-year master plan and conservation plan. They will be participating in the annual water festival for elementary school students.
6. The next meeting, March 13 will feature the National Weather Service’s summary of the winter season and CAP’s update on the Colorado River. Today’s meeting notes and materials will be posted on the LDIG site. The remaining 2019 meeting dates are also listed on the website.
7. Meeting adjourned