

PIMA COUNTY LOCAL DROUGHT IMPACT GROUP
Wednesday, March 13, 2019
Pima County Public Works Building
RECAP

Attendance: Kathy Chavez (Pima County/OSC), Erin Boyle (NWS), Mitch Basefsky (CAP), Zack Richards (ADWR), Jaimie Galayda (Tucson Water), Heidi Lasham, (Town of Sahuarita), Jeff Glickhorn (Pima County/OSC)

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Review January 9 LDIG meeting Kathy Chavez, OSC
3. ADWR Short-Term and Long –Term Drought Status- Zack Richards, ADWR
 - a. The short-term drought status for most of Arizona is much improved. Northeastern Arizona, including Apache and Navajo counties, is in drought ranging from abnormally dry to severe. Sixty percent of Arizona is in no drought, reflecting above normal precipitation this winter. The long-term drought status, October through December, is also improved; drought status ranges from exceptional conditions in east-central and northeast Arizona to abnormally dry conditions in the southeast. Areas in central Pima County and Cochise County showing no drought are primarily due to the lack of stations and surface data.
 - b. The next Interagency Coordinating Group meeting is May 9 from 10 am to noon. ADWR will be sending an announcement. The Monitoring Technical Committee will meet in early May.
4. Review of 2018-2019 Winter Season – Erin Boyle, NWS
 - a. Winter 2018-2019 was the 14th snowiest, 15th wettest and 59th warmest. Based on a 30-year average, precipitation was almost two inches above normal. Fourteen days had low temperature below 32° or colder, four more days than normal. The official readings are taken at the Tucson International Airport. February's increased precipitation is the result of weak El Niño conditions that began in February. Most of Pima County has average precipitation, except western Pima County and northeastern Pima County, which had above normal precipitation.
 - b. December rainfall was about one-half inch wetter than normal, but the year ended with colder than normal temperatures and light snowfall. Precipitation was normal throughout most of the county.
 - c. January rainfall was close to normal and temperatures were largely near normal, but the year began with cold temperatures and light snowfall.
 - d. February was the 8th snowiest, 9th wettest and 31st coolest. Precipitation was 2.03" compared 0.86" normal. Tucson International recorded 1.9" of snow on February 22, the most since February 2013. Rainlog and Pima ALERT rain gauges recorded precipitation ranging from 1.75" to over 4" throughout the county. Most of Pima County saw precipitation of one-half to one inch above normal, but western Pima County experienced rain as much as 3" above normal
 - e. The seasonal outlook for February 21 through May 31 is for drought to remain, but improve in northeastern Arizona. The outlook is for a probability of above normal temperatures and above normal precipitation
 - f. Since the water year began in October 2018, precipitation in the Colorado River Basin is above average. At this time last year, precipitation ranged from 30 to 70 percent of average.
 - g. Through March 12, The Tucson International Airport has recorded 0.62", while the normal for the month is 0.73". If the trend continues, precipitation will be significantly above normal. The Colorado River watershed has received up to 300% of average precipitation in some areas. The upper Colorado River watershed snow conditions are also significantly above average.

5. CAP and Colorado River Update – Mitch Basefsky, CAP
 - a. Lake Powell is 37.8 percent full and the elevation is 43.8 feet lower than at this time last year. Levels do not typically rise in the winter and much of the precipitation is snowpack, while releases to Lake Mead must continue. If lake levels continue to decline, there is concern about decreased production of hydroelectric power production from Glen Canyon Dam. Power revenues are used to fund conservation programs to meet endangered species compliance. Lake Powell is obligated to release 7.5 million acre-feet (maf) over the ten-year running average and had typically released 8.23 maf.
 - b. Lake Mead is filling as is usual in the winter season and the recent precipitation has helped. Its elevation is currently 1089.3 feet and it is 41.7 percent full. The concern is more with supply, which the drought contingency plan (dcp) will address. Next month, Lake Powell will begin to fill as snowpack starts to melt, while Lake Mead levels will begin to decline.
 - c. The snow water equivalent (swe) is 125 percent of average overall. Key productive sub-watersheds, the Upper Green and Upper Colorado, are at 107% and 131% of average, respectively. Stakeholders are concerned that warm spring temperatures will decrease run off, due to evaporation and evapotranspiration. Reservoirs above Lake Powell are 60 percent full reflecting favorable storage conditions.
 - d. The probability of a shortage in 2020 is 69 percent, same as in January. The probability does not include February's precipitation, so next month's projections may be slightly more favorable. April will be a key month, as the Colorado Basin Forecasting Center issues its 24-month projections that determine the releases from Lake Powell. All of Arizona's shortages are applied to the users of the Central Arizona Project.
 - e. Arizona's position is that it has met its obligations for dcp. California is still working on details. Comments from the Colorado Basin states' governors on dcp implementation are due to the Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner on March 19. Reclamation is working on federal legislation to implement dcp. Arizona is in a favorable position, since two of our Congressional representatives are on key committees in the House and Senate. Dcp is an overlay on the 2007 interim guidelines that sunset in 2026. After dcp is approved, the 2007 guidelines will be renegotiated.

6. Updates
 - a. CAP announced AzWater is April 7-8 and AWWA's Sustainable Water Management Conference is March 31-April 3 in Tucson. CAP is planning for the Colorado River Users Association annual meeting in December. They are considering presentation topics
 - b. NWS reported high stream flows in the Gila River.
 - c. Pima County/OSC reported they observe field conditions on Pima County's conservation lands and conduct wet/dry mapping of streams to document the extent of aquatic habitat
 - d. Tucson Water is working on an update to their drought preparedness plan
 - e. Pima County/OSC staff presented on LDIG at the USDA's drought workshop on March 8. It was well attended by agencies throughout the state. RWRD has and is participating in the following:
 - i. Southern Arizona Regional Science and Engineering Fair March 7-8 encouraging middle school students to consider careers in science, engineering and technology
 - ii. Water Citizen Academy March 22 and RWRD will host students from Flowing Wells High School
 - iii. The Southern Arizona branch of American Public Works Association will recognize RWRD for several infrastructure projects
 - iv. Cyclovia April 7 at U of A
 - v. Earth Day April 21 at the Children's Museum
 - vi. Tours to UA students and in-class demonstrations
 - vii. Website sign up to request tours

viii. Summer youth employees

- f. ADWR is requesting input to streamline drought impact reporting
- g. AMWUA is evaluating the possibilities for a water loss pilot program in Central Arizona utilizing the AWWA M36 Water Audits and Loss Control Programs Manual

7. The next meeting is May 8 and Mike Crimmins, UA CLIMAS, will present on drought index soil moisture monitoring

8. Meeting adjourned