

Pima County Local Drought Impact Group  
(Drought Monitoring Committee)  
Wednesday, May 11, 2011  
2:30 p.m.  
Public Works Building  
201 North Stone

Attendance:	Kathy Chavez	RWRD	Karen Wilson	RWRD
	Glen Sampson	NOAA	Erin Boyle	NOAA
	Marie Light	PCDEQ	Mead Meir	PAG
	Ken Seasholes	CAP	Melaney Seacat	RWRD
	Tom Arnold	Tucson Water		

1. Introductions and Updates – Introductions were made.
2. Recap of March 24 meeting - K Chavez summarized the March 24<sup>th</sup> LDIG meeting. There was one correction to the recap, noting that Debbie Hopkins is with the USDA Farm Service Agency, not the Farm Bureau as was reported.

At the March meeting, several members from the National Drought Mitigation Center were in Arizona visiting with the active LDIGs, Mohave and Pima County.

K Chavez noted that links to the members from NDMC are posted on Pima County's Drought page, under "LDIG" and "Drought Links." <http://www.pima.gov/drought/>

3. National Weather Service 2010/2011 Winter Season Update – Glen Sampson. (This agenda item was taken out of order).

G Sampson intrigued the group by talking about the "new" climate that was coming, summarized the winter season and presented an indication of what weather might come. He also informed the meeting about Evapotranspiration Forecasts, a new tool in the NOAA/National Weather Service belt.

As expected, in late 2010 a strong La Niña developed in the Pacific, increasing storms in the Pacific Northwest and decreasing winter storms in the southwest – typical of the La Niña effect. The official record, (September 2010 – January 2011), shows below average precipitation with above average temperatures occurring in our area. From October 2010 through March 2011, Eastern Pima County received approximately 2 inches of rain, 4.3 inches below normal. The temperature was warmer than normal this winter, especially in January, followed by the deep February freeze and warmer than normal temperatures.

Owing to the particularly higher temperatures in Texas, Oklahoma and the mid-west, Southern Arizona could experience a slightly better than normal monsoon season, if the temperatures hold.

Glen introduced the Weather Service's new Evapotranspiration Forecast. The evapotranspiration rate is driven by various meteorological factors, and crucially, by the presence of moisture to evaporate. Evapotranspiration increases with increasing sunshine, wind speed and temperature. Arizona has the highest evapotranspiration rate in the nation because the state has the most days of sunshine. <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/forecast/evap/FRET/FRET.php?wfo=twc> (FRET stands for Forecast Reference Crop Evapotranspiration)

Lastly, Glen discussed the "new" climate. Every ten years in the United States and every 30 years worldwide, 'normal' temperatures are recalculated. The 'normal' temperatures we are accustomed to were based on the 'normal' between the years 1971 – 2000.

In August, the new 'normal' will be based on the years 1981 – 2010. This mandatory recalculation will move our 'normal' temperatures slightly higher.

Normal temperatures are based on information from the last 30 years and Average temperatures are just that, the average over the period of time in which temperatures have been recorded.

4. Colorado River Shortage Update – Ken Seasholes (Mr. Seasholes attended in the place of Mitch Basefsky, CAP)

As a result of a much better than long-term average snow pack and snowmelt, the expected shortage on the Colorado River will be delayed by several years. A shortage is unlikely until at least 2016. A shortage on the Colorado River would be declared by the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) if Lake Mead's water level falls below 1075 feet. Currently, Lake Mead is 21 feet above the shortage trigger, at 1096 feet.

An equalization release of approximately 11.2 maf (million acre-feet) will bring Lake Mead's level to 1111 feet, 36 feet above the trigger. For Lake Mead, a one-foot rise in elevation equals about one hundred thousand acre-feet of water.

If or when the Secretary declares a shortage on the Colorado River, Arizona takes the biggest hit sharing the reduction with Nevada. Central Arizona Project (CAP) has junior priority status during a declared shortage, meaning Arizona takes on California's share of any shortage up to a point.

During shortage years, CAP would deliver less water while many operating and maintenance costs would be fixed resulting in higher CAP water rates. CAP is examining how to stabilize rates to avoid rate shock in the event of a declared shortage. The shortages would impact availability to excess water and banking water. It is still important for Arizona to continue to use its full CAP allocation and to store CAP water in underground storage banks.

5. Drought Declaration Review – In view of the fact that the Colorado River will not experience a shortage this year, the discussion surrounding the current drought stage centered on the status quo. One significant winter storm crossed Arizona this spring, leaving the eastern and southern counties extremely dry. Drought conditions have expanded to include almost all of every county except Mohave and western La Paz. Extreme drought conditions include eastern Pima County while abnormally dry to moderate drought conditions exist in western Pima County.

Tom Arnold, Tucson Water, noted that the aquifer in the Tucson area looks good and is rising steadily, recovering in areas that were once in decline. This is due, in part, to the fact that water demand is going down, conservation methods are working and Tucson Water is taking its full allotment of CAP.

He recommended and the participants agreed the Drought Status remain at Level One.

6. Next LDIG Meeting July 13, 2011

7. Adjournment

Enclosures: Winter Season Review and Update, Glen Sampson  
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Tucson Water Aquifer Stats  
LDIG 05/11/11 Sign-in Sheet