

Pima County Local Drought Impact Group
(Drought Monitoring Committee)
Wednesday, September 14, 2011
2:30 p.m.
Regional Flood Control Building, 2nd Floor
97 E Congress

Attendance:	Kathy Chavez	RWRD	Karen Wilson	RWRD
	Mitch Basefsky	CAP	Erin Boyle	NOAA
	Marie Light	PCDEQ	Andy Wigg	RFCD
	John Glueck	NWS	Roberta Lopez-Suter	Tucson Water
	Fernando Molina	Tucson Water	Dan Hartley	Tohono O'odham

1. Introductions and Updates – Introductions were made.
2. Recap of May 11, 2011 meeting - K Chavez briefly summarized the May 11th LDIG meeting.

Pima County and the major water providers are currently at Drought Stage 1 and it was the consensus of the attendees to remain at that level.

Mitch Basefsky added up-to-date information on the status of the Colorado River. Lake Mead is 50% full, up 30 feet since December 2010 when Mead's water levels were a mere 6 feet from the designated emergency declaration depth. Lake Powell is 75% full and its levels slowly decreasing as water is released.

K Chavez also recapped the August 2, 2011 Arizona Drought Monitoring Technical Committee meeting (attached).

Ms. Chavez announced the 6th Hydrometeorology Symposium will be held in Tempe, September 27-28, 2011.

Pima County's Local Drought Impact Group's 2011 Annual Report will be compiled and forwarded to all LDIG contacts for comments and suggestions. The report, prepared by ADWR and sent to the governor, is due in November.

3. 2011 Monsoon Season and its Effect – John Glueck, National Weather Service

The official pre-monsoon forecast from the Climate Prediction System has equal chances of having a wetter than normal monsoon, a drier than normal monsoon or a nearly normal monsoon.

Mr. Glueck discussed the drought expansion from December 2010 through March 2011 due to a strong La Niña presence in the southwest. Summer 2011 was hot and dry. Douglas, AZ had gone more than 100 days without precipitation this summer.

June was a very dry month with low daily dew points. During the month of June, Tucson International Airport (TIA) recorded 112° for the first time since 1995. The end of June saw monsoonal moisture move through the area ending eight straight days of temperatures 107 or higher in Tucson. The total rainfall at the airport for the month was 0.03 inches although some parts of Tucson received close to an inch.

July started very hot with 111° on the 2nd, the fifth hottest July day on record. By July 4th, the monsoon produced strong to severe thunderstorms and heavy rain in Tucson and the following day, Phoenix experienced the "Great Phoenix Haboob," one of several to occur in the Phoenix area this monsoon season.

Tucson Airport ended the month with a total of 1.64" rainfall less than half of the 3.79" received in the Tucson Mountains area.

August was also hot – six record highs and three record high minimum temperatures were recorded. August averaged 89.3° – the second hottest August and 7th hottest of any month on record. TIA recorded 1.35” of rainfall.

Record to near record heat continued for four days in September – 106° on September 4th was one degree short of an all-time September high. Thanks to low pressure hovering over southern California, Tucson underwent strong to severe thunderstorms and heavy rains for a week ending on the 13th. As of that date, TIA’s September’s precipitation total was 2.61” ranking September as the 19th wettest on record. TIA had 5.61” of rainfall – the “normal” is 6.08”.

A strong La Niña from last winter led to current U.S. drought status showing nearly all of Texas in extreme or exceptional drought status. Many parts of New Mexico are in the same dire straits and parts of southeastern Arizona are also experiencing extreme or exceptional drought conditions.

4. Pima County ALERT System – Andy Wigg, Pima County Regional Flood Control District

In response to the state mandated breaching of Golder Dam, in 1981 Pima County entered into an IGA with the National Weather Service (NWS) and the State of Arizona to install the Automated Local Evaluation in Real Time (ALERT) System in the Upper Cañada Del Oro watershed. ALERT refers to a communication protocol system developed by the National Weather Service.

The ALERT System, operated by Pima County Regional Flood Control District (RFCD) is comprised of remote automated sensors, a radio telemetry network and base station computer hardware and software. Sensors include stream flow gauges, precipitation gauges and five weather stations. Essentially, ALERT is a flood threat recognition system.

During a precipitation/storm event, the various gauges send data feed information through radio telemetry and microwave to RFCD and the NWS. RFCD’s Storm Monitor assesses the situation and if necessary, notifies the Pima County Department of Transportation (DOT), National Weather Service and/or Pima County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEM). The ALERT System is not fully automatic; it requires assessment and conclusions by staff.

ALERT is a very effective tool in areas where flood hazards exist, it helps make roads and travel safer and maintenance more efficient. With adequate lead-time, emergency responders can be given information to assist in the reduction of loss of life and property.

Real-time ALERT information can be found at <http://159.233.69.3/perl/pima.pl> . More information may also be found on the County’s web site at <http://rfcd.pima.gov/wrd/alertsys/index.htm>

The LDIG participants toured RFCD’s ALERT System “command” center and the wall-sized map showing where stream or precipitation gauges are located and how they trigger when the parameters for an event has been met.

5. Next LDIG Meeting – the next meeting is Wednesday, November 2nd, 2:30 p.m., at the Public Works Building (201 N. Stone), 3rd Floor Conference Room.

Agenda ideas are always welcome.

6. Adjournment

Enclosures: Monsoon 2011 by John Glueck, NWS
ALERT System by Andy Wigg, PCRFC
Arizona Drought Monitoring Technical Committee Quarterly Meeting Agenda and notes
LDIG 05/11/11 Sign-in Sheet