

PIMA COUNTY LOCAL DROUGHT IMPACT GROUP
(LDIG)

Wednesday, March 9, 2016
Pima County Public Works Building

RECAP

Attendance: Kathy Chavez (RWRD), Erin Boyle (NWS), Mitch Basefsky (CAWCD), Marie Light (PCDEQ), Chris Magril (USGS), Lilian von Rago (RWRD), Brian O’Neill (UA/RWRD), Candice Rupprecht (TW), Selso Villegas (TON-WRD)

1. Welcome and Introductions -Welcome and Introductions were made
2. Updates – Kathy Chavez, RWRD
 - a. Recap January 13 meeting
 - b. Drought Status Maps-January’s Short Term Drought Status Report reflects drought relief to parts of the state. Most of Pima County showed no drought, except for the central portion of the county. The Long Term Drought Status Report, covering October through December 2015, reflects early winter precipitation, but insufficient accumulation to warrant long term drought improvement. Most of Pima County’s drought level is abnormally dry. February’s Short Term Drought Status Report reflects the month’s lack of precipitation. Much of Pima County remains abnormally dry, except for the eastern portion.
 - c. Pima County’s Quarterly Report on line
 - d. Bureau of Reclamation Funding Opportunities-K Chavez shared two funding announcements from the Bureau of Reclamation; one for drought resiliency project funding and one for drought contingency planning.
 - e. Agency Updates:
 - i. Ted Cooke has been appointed General Manager of the CAWCD
 - ii. Tim Thormure has been appointed Director of Tucson Water
 - iii. Tucson Water’s gallon per capita per day water use has decreased to 117 gpcd total and 81 gpcd for residential. Last year’s numbers were 86 for residential and 124 for the total gpcd.
3. Winter Season Overview – Erin Boyle, NWS, summarized the 2015-16 winter season as the 13th warmest and 57th driest. The last two winters have been the warmest. This winter’s average monthly temperature was 1.8°F above normal. Precipitation was 0.55” below normal

December temperatures were mixed with some above average and some below. Most of Pima County received below normal precipitation. January’s precipitation was 0.59” above normal. February was warm and dry; six record high temperatures were set and precipitation was 0.68” below normal.

Regarding El Niño Southern Oscillation; a normal ENSO year produces 3.46” of precipitation, while a strong ENSO year can produce 6.25”. This year’s ENSO has produced 2.18” of precipitation as of February. The outlook is for a strong ENSO signal to continue until May followed by neutral conditions and a 50% chance of La Niña conditions in the fall. Most storms have veered to the Northwest and Northern California. Many areas of the state continue to be

in drought status, particularly Central Arizona. The outlook calls for drought conditions to persist.

The Colorado Basin River Forecast Center shows many areas have less than normal snowpack. However, late spring storms bringing snowfall in the Colorado Rockies is still a possibility. The temperature outlook for Arizona calls for equal chances of above or below normal temperature and a greater than 50% chance for above average precipitation

4. Colorado River Status/Outlook – Mitch Basefsky, CAWCD, provided a brief visual tour of the Colorado River and made the following key points:
 - a. Flows in the Colorado River have been below average in 13 of the last 16 years.
 - b. The Upper Colorado River Basin reservoirs are 80% full
 - c. The Lower Colorado River Basin includes two major reservoirs; Lake Powell which is 46% full and Lake Mead which is 37.3% full
 - d. Early in the Water Year which began October 1, the snow water equivalent (SWE) was trending at 100% of average, but has begun to decrease. The Rocky Mountains can experience heavy precipitation in March and April so there is hope for improvement
 - e. There is an 80% chance that the 2016 release from Lake Powell will be between 8.23 and 9 million acre-feet. This release increases the elevation at Lake Mead
 - f. There is a 10% probability of a shortage in 2017 and a 52% probability in 2018
 - g. A number of Federal drought activities are underway
 - i. \$11.5 million for the Lower Colorado River Basin Drought Response Action Plan, which includes funding for upgrades to the Yuma Desalting Plant in preparation for potential operation and
 - ii. \$5 million for a System Conservation Pilot Program for conservation projects and participants
 - iii. A Western States Drought Bill introduced in Congress that includes funding for water resource programs and projects
 - iv. The Western States and the U.S. are continuing to meet regularly to develop additional strategies to protect water levels in Lake Mead. If an agreement is reached that includes Arizona as a signatory, public hearings will be held to provide stakeholders with information and an opportunity to provide input.
5. Adjournment and next meeting
 - a. Next LDIG meeting is Wednesday, May 11 and will include summary of the 2015 *Living with Less Water Conference*
 - b. Meeting adjourned