PIMA COUNTY LOCAL DROUGHT IMPACT GROUP
Wednesday, March 8, 2017
RECAP

Attendance: Kathy Chavez (PC/OSC), Erin Boyle (NWS), Mitch Basefsky (CAP), Asia Philbin (Marana), Colby Bowser (PC/OSC)

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Review January 11 LDIG meeting – The January meeting included discussion of the Interagency Coordinating Group meeting, the ADWR Annual Drought Report and Pima County's submittal.
3. Review Short-Term and Long Term Drought Status Report – Short-term, February was relatively dry with less than 50% normal precipitation across the state though central and southwest areas were wetter. Long-term status reflects an ending of La Nina conditions and good winter storms and snowpack. Western Pima County is in Moderate drought, eastern in Abnormally Dry for short-term. Long-term, the County is Abnormally Dry.
4. Winter Season Overview: Much Improved? – This winter was the 4th warmest of record, with average high temperatures warmer than Phoenix, which also saw more rainfall. The winter rain was 0.27" below average. Water year to date rain is down 1.13".
    a. December was the 7th warmest with above average rain, +0.15".
    b. January was the 36th wettest with 0.24" of rain above average.
    c. February was warm (8th) and dry, precipitation 0.66" below the average. The 7th straight dry February.
    d. The February snowpack and soil moisture in the Little Colorado, Salt, Gila and Verde basins is at or above average indicating a March-May forecast flow well above average in the Verde and Gila, average in the Salt and below average for the Little Colorado.
    e. The Colorado River Basin above Lake Powell is at 145% with an expected 10.4 million acre-foot (maf) inflow. The March forecast has increased 600,000 af since mid-February.
    f. With warm weather, lower elevations will be in fire season soon; fine fuels are drying out though behavior will not be extreme because of good soil moisture.
5. CAP and Colorado River Update and Status – Precipitation within the Colorado River Basin is up to 500% of average in some areas. The Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) for the basin above Lake Powell was at 167% of the long term average for this date and 125% of the average full-season snowpack. Heat and evaporation could influence SWE.
    a. Lake Mead is at 41% capacity, Powell at 46%.
    b. Release to Mead is expected to be 9 million acre-feet; if snow season continues in Upper Basin release may be higher.
    c. Equalization is possible, meaning a 10-12 maf release and a rise in Mead elevation of 30'.
    d. Probability of shortage has dropped down to 34% and a possible Tier 2 shortage is unlikely until after 2020. The probability doesn't include conservation efforts and intentionally created surplus so elevation will be higher than calculated.
    e. California state water projects are filled, this water may be used in-lieu of CAP water leaving more water in Mead- 200,000 af or more. Farmers are expecting full allotments.
    f. Forecast for Mead, positive; if winter conditions continue probable greater release, Mexico will sign Minute 32x, and water in California means more storage in Mead.

g. Forecast for Mead, concerns; decreased urgency for DCP, progress on DCP+ has stalled.

6. Updates – Navajo Generating Station is closing in 2019. CAP expects to purchase power in the open market. Natural gas prices are currently low. There is concern over the impacts to jobs on the Navajo area.
7. Adjournment and next meeting – May 10