

PIMA COUNTY LOCAL DROUGHT IMPACT GROUP
Wednesday, March 11, 2020
Pima County Public Works Building
RECAP

Attendance: Kathy Chavez (OSC), Jeff Glickhorn (OSC), Caroline Vargas (RWRD), Nemesis Ortiz-Declet (ADWR), Erin Boyle (NOAA/NWS), Mitch Basefsky (CAWCD), Asia Philbin (Marana Water), Jessica Rodriguez (Tucson Water)

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Review January 8 meeting - Kathy Chavez, OSC
3. Arizona Department of Water Resources Updates - Nemesis Ortiz-Declet, ADWR
 - a. February Drought Status: short-term drought improvement from September through January, but northeast Arizona still showing signs of prolonged drought. Slight improvement in the Chuska Mountains. Long-term drought shows improvement in southeast Arizona over the year. Cold winter conditions and decreased evaporation improved conditions in most of Arizona, except the northeast four-corner area. Chuska Mountains received some snowfall.
 - b. Water Awareness Month Kick Off – ~~April 2 at the Arizona State Capitol~~. This event is canceled. Municipalities can post education community events on the [Arizona Water Facts Events](#) page. To add an event to the WAM website, email [Nemesis Ortiz-Declet](mailto:Nemesis.Ortiz-Declet@adwr.com) with your event details along with a website address.
 - c. Important Dates:
 - i. National Groundwater Awareness Week is March 9-13
 - ii. Water SENSE Fix a Leak Week is March 16-22
 - iii. Drought Monitoring Technical Committee meets April 6
 - iv. Drought Interagency Group meets in May
4. Review of 2019-2020 Winter Season – Erin Boyle, NOAA/NWS
 - a. Winter Precipitation was normal, but the last 11 of 15 winters have experience below average precipitation. Volunteers in Summerhaven are now providing snowfall data. For the water year to date (October 1), precipitation has been slightly above normal.
 - b. December 2019 had slightly above normal precipitation and was the 29th warmest over the recorded period of 125 years. Some areas recorded 0.75” and up to 3” of rain.
 - c. January was drier and warmer than normal.
 - d. February temperature and precipitation was near normal with hree precipitation events.
 - e. As described by ADWR, drought conditions are improved, except for northeast Arizona. The US Seasonal Drought Outlook calls for persistent drought in the four corners.
 - f. The outlook for March through May is warmer and drier than average in Arizona and the southwest US.
 - g. Water Year Precipitation for the Colorado watershed is not as robust as last year. Below average precipitation in most of Utah, Colorado and New Mexico. March 1-10 precipitation and snow conditions are also below average.
 - h. The short term forecast, March 12-16, calls for greater probability of cooler temperatures and precipitation
5. CAP and Colorado River Update – Mitch Basefsky, CAWCD
 - a. Lake Powell is 49.1% full, up 31 feet from this time last year. Lake Mead is 43.9% full and up 6.8 feet from this time last year.

- b. The Colorado Basin River Forecasting Center shows the Colorado River snow water equivalent above Lake Powell at 106% of median. However, warmer conditions resulting in higher evaporation will mean less water to Lake Powell, indicating the impacts of a drought driven by higher temperatures
- c. The Drought Contingency Plan provides strategies for leaving water in Lake Mead to preventing levels lower than elevation 1075 feet. Under the plan, Arizona's intentionally created surplus (ICS) accumulation is 600,000 acre-feet consisting of 300,000 acre-feet of non-federal water and 300,000 acre-feet of federal water. The non-federal share is CAP ICS and water from the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan, while the federal share is mostly ICS from the Gila River Indian Community and the Colorado River Indian Community. Under the Drought Contingency Plan, Arizona leaves 192,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead when the elevation is between 1090 feet and 1075 feet.
- d. The current probability of a spring release from Lake Powell of 8.23 million acre-feet is 97% in 2020. Lake Mead will be at the Drought Contingency Plan Tier Zero level requiring a reduction of 192,000 acre-feet of deliveries to Arizona in 2020. Excess water and nearly half of the water pool normally dedicated to agriculture are being used to meet the Tier Zero reduction. The probability of additional tiered shortages increases through 2024 under projections using both the observed record, 1906-2018, and the stress period, 1988-2018. The Drought Contingency Plan, with participation from the Basin States, has prevented Lake Mead from reaching a Tier One shortage. There are no shortages to municipal and industrial allocations until a Tier Three shortage is reached. The next major effort is renegotiation of the 2007 interim guidelines that expire in 2026. Arizona is starting preparations for the negotiations process.

6. Updates

- a. Pima County OSC/Water Resources Unit – K Chavez reported participation in a Drought and Health Impacts Workshop on February 26-27 sponsored by the National Integrated Drought Information Center and the University of Nebraska. It was very informative with participation from the National Weather Service Tucson and Phoenix offices, Arizona Department of Health Services, Arizona Department of Water Resources and others. ADHS maintains the [Arizona EPHT Explorer](#) that has great demographic information. Workshop presentations are available at the [Southwest Drought and Human Health Workshop website](#).
- b. CAWCD – M Basefsky reported CAP will be developing CAP strategies for coping with drought and climate scenario The Board's April meeting will be in Casa Grande and in Tucson in October.
- c. Pima County OSC/Conservation Sciences Division – J Glickhorn reported under Pima County's Multi Species Conservation Plan ecological monitoring, they are looking at drought effects on the species and their habitat. They are working with CLIMAS at the University of Arizona to track conservation lands. Pima County has 108,000 acres of conservation lands in fee simple and an additional 100,000 acres of leased land. Most available data is in the urban core, such as rainlog and the Regional Flood Control District's ALERT system. More data on temperature and precipitation is needed on these lands. They are also working with Pima Association of Governments to monitor Cienega Creek and Davidson Canyon. Davidson Canyon is flowing for the first time in two years. After last year's wet winter, it was expected to flow, but it is not clear why there is a lag in flows.
- d. Pima Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department – C Vargas reported good participation in the Citizen Science Academy It consists of five weekly sessions. County's partners are Tucson Water and the U of A.

7. Adjournment and next meeting is May 13. Notes and presentation materials will be posted on the [LDIG Website](#).