

PIMA COUNTY LOCAL DROUGHT IMPACT GROUP  
Wednesday, September 9, 2020  
Via Microsoft Teams  
RECAP

Attendance:

Asia Philbin, Town of Marana	Lee Comrie, PAG
Caroline Vargas, RWRD	Kathy Chavez, Pima County OSC
Erin Boyle, NOAA/NWS	Mark Johnson, Tortolita Alliance
Glen Barnes, CWC Green Valley	Mitch Basefsky, CAP
Jaime Galayda, Tucson Water	Némesis Ortiz-Declet, ADWR
Jeff Glickhorn, Pima County OSC	Sharon Browning, Pima County Health Department

1. Welcome - Introductions and review of video conference features
2. Review of July 8 meeting and current conditions - Kathy Chavez, OSC summarized the July meeting: ADWR reviewed the short and long term drought status, updated on June's meeting of the ICG and MTC and conducted demo of ADWR's Interactive Drought Dashboard. NRCS described assistance available to farms and ranches to cope for drought and preparation of conservation plans. Participants provided timely agency updates.
3. Arizona Department of Water Resources Updates - Némesis Ortiz-Declet, ADWR
  - a. Short-Term Drought Status – March through May showed drought improvement, except in the northeast portion of Arizona. June and July showed degradation. 82% of the state was either in Moderate or Severe drought
  - b. August – The monsoon season was weak throughout the state. All of Arizona was in some level of drought and 42% of the state was in Extreme drought
  - c. Long-Term Drought Status – Recapping the past 12 months, last summer's monsoon was unproductive. Drought improved during the winter followed by some degradation in spring.
  - d. Season outlook. Drought improvement is unlikely in the future and is expected to worsen. The fall is typically dry.
  - e. Upcoming events. The Monitoring Technical Committee meets October 5 (10am-12pm) and the Interagency Coordinating Group meets November 10 (10am-12pm). The group will consider recommending whether the Governor's drought declaration should remain and will consider approval of the Annual Drought Preparedness Report. It will include a section on LDIG activities and Kathy will prepare a draft of Pima County's LDIG activities for LDIG's review. The Annual report due to ADWR October 5
4. Summer Season Overview – Erin Boyle, NWS
  - a. Next year the NWS will be using new normal and temps based on data from 1991 through 2020. The normal temperature will increase and precipitation will decrease for this period
  - b. The Summer 2020 was the hottest and 7<sup>th</sup> driest with 74 days that exceeded 100°F and only 1.67 inches of precipitation or 3.17 inches below normal.
  - c. June was the 17<sup>th</sup> warmest and 50<sup>th</sup> driest, but more notable, the Bighorn Fire in the Santa Catalina Mountains was ignited on June 5 by lightning. June is typically dry and this year was no exception

- d. July was the hottest month on record with 4.5°F above normal. It was also the 10<sup>th</sup> driest with only 0.46 inches recorded at the Tucson Airport, 1.79 inches below normal. The Bighorn Fire was fully contained on July 23 having burned 119,987 acres across the Santa Catalina Mountain range.
  - e. August was even hotter with temperature 6.7° above normal. It was also the 30<sup>th</sup> driest with 1.16 inches of precipitation.
  - f. The monsoon season had 1.62 inches of precipitation from June 15 through September 7 and will be the second driest if there is no additional rain in September. Lack of precipitation decreased the chances for damaging debris flow and flooding in the watershed affected by the Bighorn Fire. The lack of monsoon rains was also observed across southern Arizona, from Yuma to Wilcox
  - g. The outlook for fall calls for above normal chances of continued warm temperatures and below normal chances dry conditions. There is a 60% chance of La Niña conditions development in fall. These typically result in lower than normal precipitation. The hurricane season has been more active in the Atlantic and less active in the eastern Pacific, decreasing the chances of tropical storms in the southwest. [For more info on ENSO](#)
  - h. The Colorado Basin had had below average moisture in the water year to date (October 2019 through August 2020), but September so far has had moisture 0-30% of average.
5. Colorado River Report – Mitch Basefsky, CAP, provided the following update:
- a. Lake Powell is 47.8% full and Lake Mead is 40.0% full. The water levels at Lake Mead have increased by one half foot, reflecting entities that are leaving water in the lake. The year started positively with normal snowfall, but the warm spring and dry conditions reduced flow.
  - b. The Bureau of Reclamation’s 24-month study, issued in August, estimates the most probable elevation in Lake Mead will be 1085 feet on December 31, indicating continuation of a Tier Zero shortage. Under the best case hydrology, the elevation in Lake Mead could be close to 1090 feet, taking it out of Tier Zero shortage conditions.
  - c. Arizona’s reduction in Tier Zero is 192,000 acre-feet, being met by federal and non-federal partners implementing forbearance and intentional created surplus water. In addition to Arizona, California and Nevada are leaving water in Lake Mead, along with water from Mexico’s allocation approved under the bilateral national treaty. Were it not for the drought contingency plan approved in 2019, we would be experiencing water reductions.
  - d. System Condition Probabilities chart prepared by the Bureau of Reclamation indicate a 100% probability of Tier Zero in 2020, an 94% probability in 2021 and a 90% probability in 2022. A 12% probability of a Tier One shortage in 2022. Under a Tier One shortage, Arizona must reduce its use by 512,000 acre-feet or one-third of the CAP. Releases from Lake Powell are projected to continue at 8.23 million acre-feet. The chart is updated twice yearly and the next update in in October.
  - e. Mark Johnson noted Coachella’s high water use and asked about Arizona’s incentive to reduce residential water demand. Conservation programs and long standing water policies were discussed. Nevada has also implemented progressive water conservation programs.
6. Updates
- a. Asia Philbin reported no updates from the Town of Marana. They are looking forward to Tucson Water’s drought response plan update

- b. Caroline Vargas reported Pima County's RWRD is moving forward on forming a DWID for the Fairgrounds area
  - c. Glen Barnes reported no updates from Community Water Company of Green Valley
  - d. Jaime Galayda reported on Tucson Water's. Consumption data and impacts from quarantine. Consumption has not changed much. The morning peak is flatter, as residents are not leaving for work. Tucson is used to drought conditions and conservation measures so there have not been large fluctuations in water demand. The City of Tucson Mayor & Council is considering declaring a climate emergency. This is a first step that will result in a climate action plan and reference to an update of Tucson Water's drought response plan
  - e. Jeff Glickhorn reported Pima County Office of Sustainability and Conservation is observing county conservation lands affected by Bighorn fire. Despite meager monsoons, they have seen good recovery for perennials. OSC is tracking lands over time. In response to a question about chances the burned ground will stabilize over winter, he said there is a better likelihood if we see large winter storms. RFCD has conducted a flood risk assessment to identify which areas are most affected by the Bighorn fire. The CDO watershed is the most affected area.
  - f. Lee Comrie reported no updates from PAG
  - g. Mark Johnson reported the Tortolia Mountains have experienced four wildfires this summer, ignited by lightning strikes and burning 4,700 acres. Jeff Glickhorn noted three of four fires burned on county conservation lands. OSC looking at impacts on recreation and ranching. Mark and the Tortolita Alliance are interested in collaborating with OSC.
  - h. Nemesis Ortiz Delet announced ADWR's Fifth Management Plan Municipal Group will meet on September 14. More information is available at the [AMA website](#).
  - i. Mitch Basefsky reported CAWCD along with six basin states are following a proposal from Utah to build a 140-mile pipeline to deliver Colorado River water to the St. George area. States are asking Reclamation to proceed carefully and deliberately on the draft EIS. The area using the water is in the lower basin bringing up legal and other issues about water use and accounting
7. Adjournment and next meeting is **Tuesday**, November 10. Notes and presentation materials will be posted on the [LDIG Website](#).