



Pima County Local Drought Impact Group  
(Drought Monitoring Committee)  
Wednesday, November 2, 2011  
2:30 p.m.  
Pima County Public Works Building  
201 N Stone Avenue  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room

Attendance:	Kathy Chavez	RWRD	Karen Wilson	RWRD
	Mitch Basefsky	CAP	Roberta Lopez-Suter	Tucson Water
	Marie Light	PCDEQ	Chris Brooks	Tohono O'odham
	Brian Powell	PC OCS	Tom Arnold	Tucson Water
	Mead Mier	PAG	John Brost	Nat'l Weather Svc

1. Introductions and Updates – Introductions were made.
2. Recap of September 14, 2011 meeting - K Chavez briefly summarized the September 14, 2011 LDIG meeting. Presentations were made by John Glueck of the Weather Service regarding the 2011 Summer Monsoon Season and its Effects and Andy Wigg, Pima County Regional Flood Control, gave a presentation on the County's ALERT System. A meeting summary of this and other meetings can be found at [http://www.pima.gov/drought/LDIG/index\\_LDIG.html](http://www.pima.gov/drought/LDIG/index_LDIG.html)

Although the short-term drought has worsened for most of Pima County, the long-term outlook has not changed much. For this reason and the higher than average snowfall/snowmelt in the Rockies that have significantly raised the water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead; it was the consensus of the major water providers to remain at Drought Stage 1.

K Chavez also recapped the October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Arizona Drought Monitoring Technical Committee's Quarterly meeting. The committee discussed the draft long-term drought status. It was noted that the portions of Pima County are in severe drought while the adjacent watershed to the west indicates no drought.

3. Mapping Perennial Water on Pima County Property – Brian Powell, Pima County's Office of Sustainability and Conservation

Mr. Powell discussed the goals of mapping perennial water:

- o to identify all permanent, unsupplemented water sources on open space properties
- o to protect the County's water rights at those sites

Water is an essential component of all life. The advantages of perennial surface water include how crucial that water is for biodiversity (aquatic species, wildlife, livestock, etc.); the effect water has on natural processes and ecosystem services such as recharge and air temperature control, as well as quality of life and recreational opportunities.

Perennial water became extremely scarce in southern Arizona between September 2010 and July 2011 – one of the driest rain cycles on record. Only half of the annual precipitation fell and in some areas, no measurable rain at all. The current drought Arizona is experiencing is entering its second decade.

In his survey, Brian visited the eleven sites known to have perennial water to observe conditions at their most stressed time of the year (lowest water levels due to continuing drought and without the benefit of the impending monsoon.)

The largest perennial water flow today is Cienega Creek's flow of 1.5 kilometers, the next largest is Youtcy Spring near Reddington Pass with a 300 meter flow.

There are now eleven perennial water areas on the County's 220,000 acres of open space; that averages one site per 20,000 acres.

As a result of Brian's study, a question that should be answered is what is to be done? Answers include protecting existing water sources, reducing non-climate stressors (grazing, etc.), conservation and possibly developing artificial water sources.

4. Drought Impacts Discussion/October 2011 Long Term Drought Map (All)

The importance of drought reporting was discussed. On the drought maps released by ADWR, the Yuma area constantly shows no effects. Possible explanations may be that the Yuma area is typically very dry (constantly in a drought situation), or the fact that the area has so much Colorado River water, it is not showing drought-related impacts as much as the rest of the State.

All the available weather information predicts another La Niña year, which typically produces less precipitation in winter in the southwest and therefore, a continued drought situation.

The Quarterly meeting of the Drought Monitoring Technical Committee on October 27<sup>th</sup> released data showing ongoing drought conditions in the State. The State Interagency Coordinating Committee meets on November 9 and will likely recommend to the Governor to maintain the emergency drought declaration that has been in effect since 2006.

K Chavez reported that several excellent presentations were made at the 6<sup>th</sup> Southwest Hydrometeorological Symposium held on September 27-28. The Cattlemen's Association feels they are in dire straits because of the prolonged drought. Getting quality feed has become extremely difficult and expensive. Many ranchers are selling their herds earlier to avoid the costs.

A late storm killed the early cotton crop in Pinal County. Cotton has reached record high prices and because of the high payouts, other industries such as dairies have become cotton farms. The dairies that quit production in part because of drought related higher feed prices, suffered a double whammy when they lost their cotton crops.

On a more positive note, Mitch Basefsky reports that due to last season's unusual but welcome snow mass and its timely melt, Lake Mead is at 1,121 feet – 45 feet higher than December 2010. Lake Powell is at nearly a 75% equalization level and is expected to remain at this level through 2012.

5. LDIG Annual Report to ADWR (K Chavez)

Pima County's LDIG submitted its annual report to ADWR. The final ADWR report will be on the LDIG website once it has been released to the Governor. Pima County recommends that Drought Stage 1 remain in effect.

6. Next LDIG Meeting – the next meeting is Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 p.m., at the Public Works Building (201 N. Stone), 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room.

An informal poll was taken of the attendees to discuss meeting time and meeting date, the second Wednesday of the second month. All participants agreed that the current schedule and meeting time was ideal for their purposes.

Agenda ideas are always welcome and were discussed. Recommendations included:

- An update on GRD locations – Mead Mier or PAG representative
- Discussion with State Climatologist – Nancy Selover
- The latest climate change information from Jonathan Overpeck
- Latest CAP news – Mitch Basefsky (Tentatively set for March 14, 2012 meeting)
- A view on drought impacts from a rancher's/agriculture perspective

7. Adjournment