



# Meeting Notes

Project: **Washington Drought Contingency Plan**

Subject: Task Force Meeting

Date: Wednesday, March 16, 2016

Location: Department of Ecology, Lacey, WA

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Attendees:	Jeff Marti, Ecology	Karin Bumbaco, OWSC- UW
	Barbara Anderson, Ecology	Nick Bond, OWSC- UW
	Morgan Mak, EMD	Gregory McKnight, DOH
	Jillian Cady, WDFW	Ginny Stern, DOH
	Josh Giuntoli, WSCC	Mark Anderson, Commerce
	Andrew Graham (Facilitator), HDR	Sarah Pistorese, HDR

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## Handouts

- Agenda
- Comparison of the 1992 and 2005 Drought Contingency Plans
- Summary Requirements for Drought Contingency Planning
- Schedule Overview
- Work Plan Schedule Matrix
- Washington State Drought Contingency Plan Task Force, Proposed 2016 Meeting Schedule

## Key Points Discussed

This is the first meeting of the Drought Contingency Plan Task Force.

### Purpose and Background

- The most recent adopted State Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) was issued in 1992. There was an effort to update it in 2005, but the lead person retired and the updated version was not widely shared among agencies nor was it adopted. There are differences between the protocol outlined in the 1992 and 2005 State Drought Contingency Plans, and actual actions taken during a drought. Following a drought year, the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) typically prepares a Drought Report to the State legislature that documents actual drought response actions taken. When planning for and responding to a drought situation, it is often more useful to reference these Drought Reports than the existing DCP. Jeff Marti would like the updated DCP to be more action-oriented.



## Required Content for Drought Contingency Plan Update

- Required content for the DCP based on the federal WaterSmart grant from the Bureau of Reclamation include the following:
  - Establish a process for monitoring drought conditions
  - Conduct a vulnerability assessment
  - Identify mitigation actions
  - Identify response actions
  - Develop an operational and administrative framework
  - Develop a communication protocol [Ecology has added this item to the list]
  - Develop a process and schedule for updating the DCP
  
- The Task Force discussed specific objectives and consideration for the updated DCP. Specific discussion points included the following:
  - Jeff: In addition to the required content for the DCP, an objective for the updated DCP is to decrease the drought response time by having needed materials “pre-staged”. For example, the updated DCP could establish agreements between agencies, so that these agreements are already in place when a drought occurs, and actions can then be taken more quickly.
  - Jeff: The DCP should define the criteria for a drought declaration, including criteria for “hardship.” The DCP should also define the criteria for ending a drought declaration.
  - Ginny: The extent of the updated DCP should be clearly defined. The Task Force should consider different types of drought and related incidents, such as fire, that may require additional agency support. The Task Force should also consider other social or economic impacts related to drought, such as impacts to health and low-income communities. These could become elements for the hardship determination. The plan should address preparation in addition to response actions.
  - Mark: The DCP may need to identify where drought response is limited due to existing statutory regulations. If needed, the Task Force should consider identifying recommendations to update statutes or rules.
  - The DCP should also consider linkages with Federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Reclamation.

## Agency-by-Agency Roles in Drought Response

- The Task Force discussed each agency’s role in drought response. Specific discussion points included the following:
  - Morgan: In the 2005 DCP, the Emergency Management Department’s (EMD) primary role was communication and outreach. The updated DCP should be consistent with the updated State Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- Jillian: the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) primary role is managing fish hatcheries and maintaining fish habitat and streamflows during drought periods.
- Mark: During the 2001 drought, the Washington Department of Commerce's primary role related to power generation issues. However conditions in the power industry have changed since then. Electric utilities develop plans for critical flows and have back up power supplies to serve customers during low flow periods. Therefore, drought is not a major issue for electric utilities unless redundant power supplies are unavailable. During the 2005 drought, Commerce provided economic analysis and communicated drought relief funding opportunities. Mark noted that Commerce does not perform most of the actions assigned to it in the 1992 DCP. The updated DCP should better define the agency's role in drought response.
- Karin and Nick: The Office of Washington State Climatologist (OWSC) participates in the Water Supply Availability Committee by evaluating water supply metrics and developing forecasts. During the 2015 drought, the OWSC wrote weekly drought monitoring reports documenting drought conditions and impacts. The OWSC is working with the Federal government's NIDIS to develop a drought early warning system for the northwest. The OWSC also does research on the influence that climate change could have on future droughts.
- Josh: The Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) is currently working with the irrigation districts to identify drought mitigation and response measures. The WSCC also participates in community outreach through the regional conservation districts. During the 2005 drought, the WSCC provided some drought relief funding. NRCS is also involved.
- Greg: the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is working with the National Drinking Water Advisory Council to evaluate the impacts of climate change on drought and water system infrastructure. The DOH works with water suppliers to develop water shortage response plans. The updated DCP should consider how drought and water shortages impact other economic and social sectors.
- Ginny: During the 2015 drought, there was not enough communication about water shortages. DOH does not have consistent means to learn which systems have activated their water shortage contingency plans. There are approximately 12,000 public water systems in Washington. These water systems range in size and their response to drought will vary. Perhaps there should be a conscious effort to direct resources more towards low-income communities during droughts.
- Jeff: Other agencies that are not here today are also involved in drought response. For example, the Washington Department of Natural Resources responds to fire, and the State Department of Agriculture performs outreach to irrigators and evaluates drought-related economic impacts.
- Andrew Graham said one thing he and Jeff have discussed is clearly delineating boundaries between drought response and wildfire risk response and communications.



## Work Plan for Preparation of Updated DCP

- Andrew Graham briefly reviewed the work plan and schedule handouts with the group. We will meet monthly, working through a series of topics covering the required elements. Jeff Marti will author most of the document, but we will ask other members of the group to author select sections based on their areas of expertise.
- The work plan lists several technical topics. We would like the task force’s input on whether these are the right topics for focused attention.
- We will have regular monthly meetings, and some of these will be paired with stakeholder meetings. We also plan a field visit to irrigation districts in central Washington.
- An Advisory Group of stakeholders will be convened to provide input on the DCP. We will ask them what they need from State government, what they prefer the state not get involved in, and how the state can support their sector.
- In April, in addition to the regular monthly meeting, the Task Force will meet with the Northwest River Forecast Center to better understand the existing water supply forecast and drought triggers.
- Jeff stated Ecology is able to provide funding support to agencies contributing to the development of the DCP.

### Meeting Schedule and Logistics

Sarah Pistorese handed out the schedule of meetings and described the SharePoint site that will be used to provide information and draft plan content.

### Action Items

Who	What	By When
Jeff Marti	Send out full Work Plan to the Task Force members	3/31
Sarah Pistorese	Send out Summary of Other State Drought Plans for the Task Force to review	4/4
Jeff Marti	Send Greg McKnight the monthly Task Force Meeting invites (done)	4/10
Ginny Stern	Identify a small water system representative to serve on the Drought Advisory Group.	4/15
All	Read Work Plan and provide input as needed	4/15
Andrew Graham	Add communication element to the DCP schedule	4/15
All	Follow up with Jeff if agency funding support is needed	4/15
All	Review 2016 schedule of Task Force Meetings and confirm if these dates work	4/15
All	Review the 2005 DCP and identify elements to keep or delete	4/15
All	Consider what should be evaluated as part of the vulnerability assessment	5/10