



# Meeting Notes

Project: **Washington State Drought Contingency Plan**

Subject: Task Force Meeting

Date: Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Location: Department of Ecology, Lacey, WA

Attendees: Jeff Marti, Ecology  
Karin Bumbaco, OWSC- UW  
Morgan Mak, EMD  
Jon Culp, WSCC  
Andrew Graham (Facilitator), HDR  
Sarah Pistoiese, HDR  
Gregory McKnight, DOH  
Ginny Stern, DOH  
John Schelling, Commerce  
Jaclyn Hancock, Agriculture (phone)  
Teresa Scott, DFW (phone)

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## Handouts

- Agenda
- Strategy for Addressing Required Plan Elements

## Overview of Plan for Paired Meetings

- Members of the Washington Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) Task Force (Task Force) will meet with groups representing drinking water systems, agricultural water users and tribes/fishery interests. Ecology is working with Task Force members and an advisory group to invite stakeholders to these facilitated discussion sessions. The discussion sessions are intended to address the following areas: actions by State agencies during droughts; how stakeholders experience the “life-cycle” of a drought; how hardship should be defined; how they themselves define drought; mitigation they would like to see happen; and opportunities for collaboration in communication.
- The following discussion sessions are planned:
  - June 15 - Drinking Water Sector (Bellevue, Washington)
  - July 26 and 27 - Agriculture Sector (Yakima, Washington)
  - August 17 - Indian Tribes/ Fishery and instream flow interests
  - September - Recreational Interests
- The first discussion session will be held on June 15 at Ecology’s Bellevue office. This session will be with large municipal water utilities. Task Force members are welcome to attend the discussion session. The Task Force will also meet on June 15 after the stakeholder discussion session.
- Gregory McKnight and Ginny Stern, the Department of Health, have developed a list of medium and small water utilities in Washington State. Greg will send this list to Jeff Marti, Ecology. Jeff will set up a discussion session via conference call with representatives from medium and small utilities throughout the state.



- The Task Force discussed adding an additional stakeholder discussion session which would include representatives from conservation districts, local governments, local health jurisdictions, and local emergency management. Jeff and Andrew Graham, HDR, will discuss this suggestion.
- John Schelling, Commerce, suggested that the Task Force could send stakeholders a survey. Alternatively, the discussion session could include breakout sessions that focus on the different types of stakeholders.
- Karin Bumbaco, OWSC- UW, suggested engaging the WSU Agricultural Extension offices. The WSU Extension offices have good data and research on conditions in their areas.

### **Review of 2005 Plan Edits/ Recommendations**

- During the April Task Force meeting, Jeff asked Task Force members for comments on the 2005 DCP. Jeff has received electronic comments from several members.
- Jaclyn Hancock, Agriculture, noted that the Washington State Department of Agriculture did not get to participate in allocation of State funds during the 2015 drought. Currently, only Ecology is able to distribute drought funding. Jeff said that Ecology may benefit from input from other State agencies. In 2015, Ecology adopted the Emergency Rule which establishes criteria for allocating drought funds. The Task Force can consider the distribution of drought funds while updating the administrative element of the DCP.
- Teresa Scott, Department of Fish and Wildlife, stated that some of the language in the 2005 DCP is obsolete. In addition, Teresa thought that many of the WDFW responsibilities listed in the 2005 DCP simply represent the agency's mandated responsibilities. It would be useful to distinguish the high-level regulatory mandates from the specific actions WDFW takes in a drought.
- Morgan Mak, Emergency Management, and Greg McKnight, DOH, stated that they have not yet submitted their comments on the 2005 DCP. They will provide comments to Jeff this week.

### **Steps for Each Plan Element**

Jeff provided an overview of the *Strategy for Addressing Required Plan Elements* handout. The Task Force had the following comments on the strategy for each plan element. The Task Force agreed to email any additional comments on the strategy to Jeff.

#### *Drought Monitoring*

- Jeff will lead the development of a drought early warning model for the Yakima River basin. This basin tends to generate a lot of the actions needed by Ecology during droughts. Jeff had a call with Chris Lynch, Reclamation, about Reclamation's water supply modeling tool. Currently, Reclamation does not release a water supply forecast for the summer until March. Ecology would like to adapt this model to be able to predict water supply conditions earlier in the year. This would give State agencies more lead time to plan their drought year actions, if needed. Steve Thurin, HDR, is investigating opportunities for Ecology to adapt Reclamation's model to predict the probability of a

drought. Steve will consider how much it would cost to update and maintain the model. Based on Steve's assessment, Ecology would decide if such a model would be beneficial.

- Karin will lead the identification of forecasting/monitoring tools and prepare recommendations for the DCP.
- Jon Culp, State Conservation Commission, suggested the updated DCP identify stages for drought. This would allow the state to take preliminary actions in preparation for a drought declaration.
- Teresa described differences among river basins where the hydrology is dominated by: 1) snowpack melting; 2) rainfall; and 3) a combination of these. This affects the timing and character of drought impacts. Availability of surface water storage facilities also makes a big difference from one area to another. Jon Culp added that mainstem users can be affected differently from users on tributaries. Andrew suggested the Task Force consider a breakdown that characterizes different areas' susceptibility and appropriate drought-response triggers, based on these factors.
- Teresa also noted that agencies may take special actions in some areas, even during a year in which there is not a formal drought declaration.

#### *Vulnerability Assessment*

- The vulnerability assessment would involve developing a record of hardship which would document historical hardships and hydrologic conditions during past droughts. This record would be used as a tool to make decisions about drought declarations and aid. Greg suggested that the record highlight regions that are especially vulnerable to drought and that frequently experience hardship. This should include multi-year drought events.
- Jeff will develop an approach for addressing hardships and distribute it to the Task Force. The Task Force can provide feedback on this approach.

#### *Mitigation and Response Actions*

- Greg stated that the Washington Water Agency Response Network and the Washington Interstate Mutual Aid System establish preexisting mutual aid agreements for agencies in the event of an emergency. Greg and Morgan will prepare a brief handout on this for the next Task Force meeting.
- Ginny suggested that each agency compile a record of existing mitigation and response measures.
- Ginny pointed out that the Executive Water Emergency Committee (EWEC) is comprised of agency directors, and they should retain discretionary decision-making authority on whether to declare a drought depending on particular circumstances in any given year. Therefore the drought triggers should not be overly prescriptive.
- Jeff said that Reclamation's WaterSmart grant program emphasizes actions outside the scope of normal water management activities, to improve drought response.
- The group discussed how mitigation may be different if conceived over a decades-long time frame; vs. shorter time frames. For example, long time periods can allow for



substantial changes to water-supply infrastructure; cropping patterns; or supply contracts.

## **Vulnerability Assessment**

- Jeff described the vulnerability assessment method (VAM) outlined in an article by Matthew Fontaine and Anne Steinemann. Jeff suggested using the VAM for evaluating drought vulnerabilities in Washington. In the VAM, vulnerability is based on three primary variables: exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. This approach could be applied to individual groups and geographic regions.
- Jeff suggested that Ecology could have a database of drought sensitivity and adaptive capacity for each entity. The sensitivity and adaptive capacity of each entity would likely be fairly constant, so these variables might only be updated every 5 or 10 years. The exposure would be determined by the hydrologic conditions each year. Based on these variables, Ecology could identify entities that are especially vulnerable to drought.
- Ginny stated that the scoring would need to be standardized across individual sectors or regions so that the aggregate vulnerability could be determined.
- This method could be used to evaluate past impacts and current conditions.
- Teresa liked this method, however thought that it may be difficult to evaluate the impacts to fish populations. Jeff said that scores can be assigned to evaluate vulnerabilities that are generally qualitative. John liked that this method allowed for vulnerabilities to be quantified. He suggested it be applied following each drought, to build up a record. Statewide associations representing different interest groups could assist in collecting information following each drought.
- The VAM could also be applied geographically. This can be used to develop a vulnerability map that identifies sensitive watersheds, areas with junior water right holders, areas with dry crops, and other highly vulnerable areas. The Task Force agree that this could be a useful tool. Jeff will follow up with Task Force members to get map data.
- Jeff requested that the Task Force members estimate the hours or equivalent full-time employees that were required in 2015 for drought response.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

Andrew listed upcoming meetings and events in May – July. The next Task Force meeting will be June 15 at Ecology’s office in Bellevue. The first “paired meeting” is that morning also in Bellevue (with the large water systems in the Seattle/Everett/Tacoma area).



## Action Items

<b>Who</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>By When</b>
Greg McKnight	Send the list of small and medium water utilities to Jeff Marti.	May 13
Jeff Marti	Set up a discussion session via conference call with representatives from medium and small utilities throughout the state.	May 31
Jeff Marti and Andrew Graham	Discuss whether and how to engage other stakeholders besides those currently identified for paired meetings	May 31
Greg McKnight and Morgan Mak	Send Jeff any comments on the 2005 DCP.	May 13
All	Estimate the number of hours or FTEs used in 2015 for drought response, by agency.	June 8
All	Send Jeff any edit/ comments on the <i>Strategy for Addressing Required Plan Elements</i> handout	June 8
Jeff Marti	Develop an approach for addressing hardships and distribute it to the Task Force for the Task Force to provide feedback on.	June 8
Greg McKnight and Morgan Mak	Prepare a handout for the next Task Force meeting on the WARN and MAS preexisting mutual aid agreements	June 8
Jeff Marti	Follow up with Task Force members to get map data.	TBD