



Meeting Notes

Project: **Washington State Drought Contingency Plan**

Subject: Advisory Committee – Initial Meeting

Date: Monday, June 13, 2016

Location: Department of Ecology, Olympia, WA and Conference Line

Attendees:	<u>Task Force</u> Jeff Marti, Ecology Barb Anderson, Ecology Jon Culp, WSCC Jaclyn Hancock - Agriculture Gregory McKnight, DOH Teresa Scott, DFW Ginny Stern, DOH Andrew Graham, HDR Sarah Pimorese, HDR	<u>Advisory Committee</u> Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District Joan Kersnar, Washington Water Utilities Council Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District Tom Ring, Yakama Nation
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Handouts

- Agenda
- Required Elements of a Drought Contingency Plan Update
- Schedule Overview
- Work Plan Schedule Matrix
- Strategy for Addressing Required Plan Elements
- Roster/Contacts

Purpose, Goals and Background

- The most recent adopted State Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) was issued in 1992. An update was drafted in 2005 but was not formally adopted by the State. There are differences between the protocol outlined in the 1992 and 2005 DCPs and actual actions taken during a drought. Ecology and its state-agency partners want to update the DCP to reflect actual response actions needed, and to be more action-oriented. This will provide guidance to State agency staff prior to and during the next drought even if they have not been involved in drought relief previously.
- The DCP update will consider opportunities to improve response time, such as improving forecasting methods and establishing pre-staged agreements and forms. The DCP update will also involve developing a communication plan for drought response.
- Ecology is updating the DCP using a WaterSmart grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Certain content is required under the grant agreement. Ecology will submit the updated DCP to Reclamation by July 2017.

- The Advisory Committee has been convened to provide input in three areas: 1) the process the State is using to update the DCP; 2) the stakeholder outreach effort, and 3) the content of the updated DCP. We ask that they represent not only their own organizations, but also the broader interest groups they are a part of.
- If they are able to attend the stakeholder meeting being held for their “group”, we would very much appreciate their participation.
- *Tom Ring noted that he does not speak for the Yakama Nation Tribal Council; nor can he represent other tribes in Washington. However he is familiar with water resource issues and drought effects along the entire east slope of the Cascade Range and in some other areas of the State through his professional and volunteer activities.*
- *Joan Kersnar noted that she is representing the WWUC. This group includes a wide range of water systems: city-owned, public utility districts, water and wastewater districts, and some private companies.*

Grant Requirements for Updating Drought Contingency Plan

- Reclamation’s WaterSmart grant requires that the DCP include the following elements:
 - Establish a process for monitoring drought conditions
 - Conduct a vulnerability assessment
 - Identify mitigation actions (these are actions implemented prior to a drought)
 - Identify response actions (these are actions implemented during a drought to alleviate impacts)
 - Develop an operational and administrative framework
 - Develop a process and schedule for updating the DCP
- Based on past drought experiences, Ecology has also added development of a communication plan to the elements included in this DCP update. Communication can be challenging since drought affects different resources and constituencies differently, even within the same geographic area. For example, in the municipal supply sector, some utilities may have robust supplies, while others nearby are suffering from shortages. This creates challenges in communicating with the public.
- The focus of this process is the actions State agencies need to take to support public agencies at the local level. Examples include permits for installation of emergency wells, short-term funding for local drought relief efforts; curtailment of water use by junior water rights holders; technical support to drinking water utilities; monitoring and fieldwork to support fish in low-flow streams; special attention to fish passage barriers in streams under low flow conditions, and actions at fish hatcheries to avoid losses of hatchery stock.
- This is not a “state water plan.” It will not address actions taken by non-State organizations nor will it list or propose specific infrastructure projects.
- *Scott Revell noted that something like 90% of the emergency drought wells are located in the Roza Irrigation District, so this is of critical importance to his organization. He also noted that State funding typically comes with a match requirement by the entity receiving it.*

Stakeholder Outreach



The Task Force will meet with stakeholder groups that engage with State agencies during droughts. We currently plan to meet with: 1) municipal water systems; 2) irrigation districts and agricultural interests; and 3) fish and wildlife interests, including Indian tribes. We are working now on the logistics for the first two of these categories, with meetings planned for June and July. Next we will set up a meeting for the third category, for August or September. We are also considering a fourth category to include local agencies such as counties, conservation districts, and environmental health districts. We will use all of the meetings to ask for input on what these groups need from the State, both to prepare for drought in advance, and to respond when drought events occur.

- *Joan notes that when dealing with drinking water systems, the main breakdown isn't necessarily by size of system, but more by the source of their water: whether from surface water; shallow groundwater; or deep groundwater. Ginny Stern said the list of utilities we hope to engage with includes all of those supply categories.*
- *Ecology should hold any meetings with Indian tribes separately from non-tribal groups. This is government-to-government consultation. The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) and Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) would be good to include.*

Review of Work Plan and Schedule

- Ecology kicked-off the DCP update process in March with the first meeting of the DCP Task Force. The DCP Task Force is composed of State agencies with drought-related responsibilities.
- The Task Force has identified technical topics that will be evaluated during the DCP update process, including evaluating climate change and potential improvements in drought forecasting tools.
- Ecology aims to have a draft plan completed by early 2017 and the final plan by July 2017. The schedule handout shows the sequential steps the Task Force will follow.
- *Advisory Committee members indicated there may be validity to recommending changes in the statute that defines drought as a less than 75% water supply, coupled with hardship.*

Major Topics Affecting Different Sectors

Andrew invited commentary from the AC members:

- *Tom Ring noted that geographic areas may need to be at the sub- WRIA level (i.e. Water Resource Inventory Area). For example in the Yakima Basin there are tributaries experiencing very low flows, even though the federal water supply system is currently well above 75%. (Jeff Marti said Ecology does have the ability to make a declaration at the sub-WRIA level).*
- *Urban Eberhart said the State should not have declared the 2015 drought over at the end of 2015. Despite short-term, temporary weather conditions at that time, the drought had not ended and was not forecast to end. It has continued into the present year – when we have rapidly depleted snowpack, prorationing in the Yakima Basin, and very*



low flows in the Yakima River tributaries. The State needs to be able to provide assistance under these conditions, even if they don't meet the statutory definition. Perhaps new rule-making is needed.

- *Urban also said we need new ways of understanding drought, because conditions are changing and the old ways won't work.*
- *Misinformation about drought can be spread, even by well-informed and well-intentioned media outlets. That was evident in late 2015 when a well-known meteorologist publicly criticized the continued drought declaration.*
- *Snowpack density is an important metric. When it's low, it doesn't take much in the way of warm conditions to melt the snow quickly.*
- *Can the Advisory Committee listen in on Task Force meetings?*

Logistics and Next Steps

- We will schedule meetings every other month (6 total) to share information with the Advisory Committee and receive their input.
- Ecology is setting up an external web site where we will post information that Advisory Committee members can access. This will not be linked to other sites – it is intended to provide communication within the Task Force and Advisory Committee.
- When we draft the DCP, we will ask the committee members to review and comment.
- Andrew asked Advisory Committee members to review the work plan handouts and provide any comments to him and Jeff.

Action Items

Who	What	By When
J.Marti	Send out the link to the DCP Update website	June 30
J. Marti	Determine whether Task Force meetings are open to AC	June 30
AC Members	Comment on work plan	June 30