

Drought Task Force Meeting

www.drought.sd.gov

Monday, October 15, 2012

2-3 pm CDT

State Emergency Operations Center Classroom E

In attendance:

Jon Farris, SDDA

Steve Hasenohrl, WFS

Lynn Beck SDDENR

Jamie Crew, SDDA

Jeff Zimprich, NRCS

Craig Schaunaman, FSA

Paul Merriman, FMO

Katie Konda, SDDA

Steve Harding, Dept. of Military

Courtney De La Rosa, SDDA

Emmett Keyser, GF&P

Dennis Today, State Climatologist

Aaron Jordan, NG

Climatology update:

State Climatologist Dennis Todey reported little change in the drought conditions statewide. The Drought Monitor categories have expanded to cover more area in South Dakota. Approximately 53% of the state is now in D3-D4 drought (severe to exceptional), with this drought showing the most D4 we've ever seen in South Dakota since the Drought Monitor was created. Little rain has fallen statewide, with some areas receiving small showers here and there. However, these showers have given us zero soil moisture recovery. At this time of year, the most precipitation we can expect before the ground freezes is two inches (in a normal year). A limited fall recovery is still possible, but the outlooks continue to predict warmer temps and equal changes of precipitation through November. The El Nino that had developed is weakening, which will make precipitation harder to predict. Dennis stated the Drought Monitor will likely change for the worse in the next two weeks for sure.

Dennis also relayed that a monthly webinar focusing on drought impacts in the central US will be held the 3rd Thursday of every month. He will forward the link to the task force members. Dennis also suggested that we start thinking ahead to next year and preparing for the possibility the drought may extend into next year. The National Drought Mitigation Center can provide planning assistance. Dennis, Jon, and Kristi will explore this possibility.

SDDA report:

Jon Farris reported that SDDA will likely request a 90-day extension of hay hauling waivers. The current waivers allow producers to haul hay trailers over the maximum 15-foot height, and also allow producers to haul beyond the one hour before sunrise and after sunset. If requested, the 90 days extension would start on October 20th. Jon also reported on the national drought meeting he attended with Craig Schaunaman on October 9th in Omaha. Jon stated that USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack also attended the meeting and that USDA is open to adjusting rules and regulations for producers and communities. He also reported that information from the National Drought Mitigation Center matches exactly with

Dennis Todey's information, and that NDMC representatives are encouraging states to continue their drought conversations and planning through the winter.

FSA report:

Craig Schaunaman reported that he attended several sessions dealing with livestock issues at the national drought meeting, and that the livestock sector has a great concern with water quality and water quantity issues. He also reiterated Jon's statement that USDA is very willing to work with the agricultural community on relaxing rules and regulations where needed to get us through this drought. Craig also reported that \$530,000 in ECP funding has been allocated for South Dakota projects. Ten South Dakota counties requested a total of \$1.7 million in ECP funds. Craig noted that water-hauling is a low priority right now for ECP projects.

NRCS report:

Jeff Zimprich reported that NRCS has received an additional \$300,000 in funding for drought work, mainly projects supporting permanent water sources. A total of \$913,000 has been requested. A special drought initiative may be forthcoming in the next year, and Jeff will give us more details as he receives them.

DENR report:

Lynne Beck reported the flows along the James River have not changed much. There is steady flow south of Huron. Flows on the Big Sioux were holding steady or up slightly. Lakes are roughly 2.5 feet lower than in the spring. The Bureau of Reclamation dams in the Black Hills are still 35%-98% full. The Missouri River dams that store water are 19-25 feet below their flood control structures. DENR has not seen an increase in complaints from entities with private wells; however, there has been an increase in ground water applications, meaning that more individuals are applying for water use, particularly for irrigation. The amount of water allocated is approaching the State Water Board's set limit, though. Fortunately, South Dakota does not "mine" our water like Nebraska has. South Dakota doesn't allocate any more water than can reasonably recharge. Regarding soil moisture, Dennis Todey indicated that South Dakota will probably get enough precipitation over the winter to sustain row crops next year, but this precipitation will not correct the livestock water issue.

Wildfire report:

Steve Hasenohrl with WFS reported that Wednesday and Thursday of this week will again bring critical fire weather, as a cold front with high winds crosses the state. Four SEATs are still on contract in Lemmon, Mobridge, Pierre, and Hot Springs. WFS will likely hold onto these SEATs until the end of October, and possibly into November. The campfire ban within the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District has been lifted. Campfires are now allowed in designated campgrounds with campfire rings. Steve indicated that if the weather stays reasonably warm and dry

Other agency reports:

GF&P: Emmett Keyser reminded everyone of the pheasant opener this weekend. GF&P will be sending a media release later this week on the fire danger and reminding hunters to be careful and use good judgment, particularly regarding off-road driving. GF&P may co-op with WFS to have a SEAT on contract for the west river deer opener the second week of November.

FMO: nothing new to report. The FMO shares the fire danger concerns with WFS and is ready to assist where necessary.

National Guard: Choppers are still ready to assist with firefighting. The SDNG will be working with WFS over the winter to provide basic wild land fire training to members of the 842nd so they can support firefighting efforts next year as necessary.

The next Drought Task Force meeting will be held Monday, October 29, 2012, from 2-3 pm in the State EOC amphitheater.