

Drought Task Force Meeting

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Tuesday, September 4, 2012

2-3 pm CDT

State Emergency Operations Center Amphitheater

In attendance:

Jon Farris, SDDA	Steve Hasenohrl, WFS
Mark Rath, SDDENR	Jamie Crew, SDDA
Terry Woster, SDDPS	Craig Schaunaman, FSA
Doug Hinkle, FMO	Bob Wilcox, County Comm. Ass'n.
Jason Bauder, SDDPS-OEM	Jeff Zimprich, USDA-NRCS
Emmett Keyser, GF&P	Dennis Today, State Climatologist
Aaron Jordan, NG	Steve Harding, Dept. of Military
Paul Merriman, FMO	Tina Titze, SDDPS-OEM

Climatology update:

Dennis Today reported the drought is holding steady with somewhat worsening conditions due to the extreme heat last week. Last week, the temperatures were 10 to 14 degrees above average for this time of the year. Eight weather stations reported the driest August on record. Those stations include Vermillion, Yankton, Centerville, Ft. Meade, Sioux Falls, Marion, Winner, and Menno. In the last 30 days the precipitation was 25 to 50 percent of normal statewide. The U.S. Drought Monitor is expected to be updated this week to include some D4 (exceptional drought) status for portions of the state. South Dakota has not seen these conditions since 2006. The 8 to 14 day outlook continues to call for above average temperatures and below average precipitation. This same outlook applies to all of September and for the next three months. The United States is still moving into an El Nino pattern; however, this El Nino pattern may be a weak El Nino, which may not bring as much precipitation like a typical El Nino pattern would normally bring.

Dennis also reported on the wildfire behavior which continues to be the worst on record and getting worse. Fire behavior is so extreme that organic matter in the soil is burning during a fire.

FSA report:

CRP land had a deadline of August 31st to be cut for hay. Producers are allowed to bale the hay after this date. The FSA is expecting 275,000 to 300,000 CRP acres to be hayed and grazed once all the producers report the acres to their office. Harvest is starting to begin around the state which is about 2 to 3 weeks ahead of schedule.

SDDA report:

Jon Farris reported that the donated hay program has only received one application, so they may expand the program beyond the wildfire burn areas to get more applications for the approximately 500

donated bales they have for the program. He expects the program would be expanded to the counties with D4 status on the drought monitor when that is released this week.

NRCS report:

Jeff Zimprich reported that NRCS has secured contracts with producers and granted \$615,000 for its water program and has requested an additional \$315,000 for the program. Currently, they have \$1.5 million in requests for the program. The NRCS is working to open up WRP acres for haying and grazing; however, at this point that land is not yet opened up for haying and grazing for producers.

DENR report:

Lynne Beck reported that they have granted the extensions requested to irrigators on the James River for irrigation purposes. The west river reservoirs are 40% to 98% full which is good. Ground water aquifers levels are dropping; however, this is normal for this time of the year. A question was asked if any personal wells have dried up and DENR was unaware of any such reports.

Wildfire report:

Steve Hasenohrl reported that the larger fires in the southern part of the state are getting under control and they are turning back control of the fire to the locals by Thursday. The campfire ban is still in effect and they are not anticipating any change to that status this fall. Antelope and grouse hunting season is opening up this month and they will be discussing with GF&P the need for stationing SEAT planes for fire response in these areas. On the National level, Steve reported that South Dakota is the highest area of concern for wildfires. Corson, Dewey, and Ziebach counties are regularly having wildfires over 100 acres. Since the last meeting, the Wellnitz fire on the Pine Ridge Reservation was the largest fire that occurred. A suggestion was made by Dennis Today to do a press release on being careful during the hunting season for starting wildfires. Steve stated that they would put out a press release. The red zone designation for Fall River County is still being reviewed.

Other agency reports:

GF&P: Emmett Keyser reported that GF&P did a press release for producers that need a wildlife fence constructed for their hay. GF&P has fencing they lend producers for this activity and all producers have to do is call GF&P. Emmett also reported that grouse season opens the 3rd Saturday in September. He also stated they have water tankers for firefighting purposes in Pierre, Buffalo, and Custer. Emmett said that the antelope season does offer a fire threat; however, the season typically only last 1 ½ days until everyone has their tag filled. GF&P is expecting 4,300 hunters for antelope season.

National Guard: Aaron Jordan reported they have been using two UH60's at the Wellnitz fire.

The next Drought Task Force meeting will be held Monday, September 17, 2012, from 2-3 pm in the State EOC amphitheater.