

CARC Meeting  
February 13, 2001  
Room 1510, Nebraska State Capitol

Minutes subject to approval at next committee meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Chairman Greg Ibach.

CARC members present were: Greg Ibach, Mark Kuzila, DeLynn Hay on behalf of Elbert Dickey, Jack Daniel on behalf of Richard Nelson, Don Wilhite, John Erickson, Roger Lempke, and Barb Cooksley. Members absent were Merwin Fricke, Dayle Williamson, and Roger Patterson.

Greg Ibach introduced the new committee members. John Erickson with the Governor's Policy Research Office replaces Dave Vogler, who transferred to the Department of Natural Resources, and Roger Lempke with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency replaces Stan Heng, who retired.

The minutes from the September 21, 2000, meeting were unanimously approved.

The distribution of the printed Nebraska Drought Mitigation and Response Plan was discussed. Previously the committee had talked about supplying copies of the drought plan to state senators and the Nebraska Congressional Delegation. The committee agreed that should still be done. In addition Mark Kuzila suggested that all interest groups mentioned in the CARC plan be sent notification that the plan has been published and is available on the CARC website. DeLynn Hay suggested that all CARC subcommittee participants also be notified.

It was noted that there are only about 80 printed copies of the drought plan available and more probably would need to be made.

Greg Ibach told the group the Western Governors' Association is developing drought legislation that it hopes to introduce in Congress this session. The legislation addresses federal drought concerns and coordination with state and local entities. He explained that he is part of the working group and has offered comments that the legislation needs to be more mitigative rather than reactionary.

Don Wilhite said the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) has a seat on the Interim National Drought Council.

Greg Ibach said the Governor's Ag Conference is scheduled for March 6, and NDMC's Mark Svoboda will give a presentation on drought for attendees. He also said this year's ag conference will include a resource room, and CARC/NDMC will have a booth there.

Barb Cooksley updated the committee on the results of two drought seminars, organized by the Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Wildlife Subcommittee, that were conducted at the annual conventions for Nebraska Cattlemen and Nebraska Farm Bureau. UN-L Extension experts gave presentations about drought mitigation options and State Climatologist Al Dutcher provided a written weather update that was handed out. Both seminars were well attended and timely, Cooksley said.

Don Wilhite told the group that the NDMC is a participant in a grant request to The National Science Foundation. The project calls for further calculation and mapping of drought indices and vulnerability. Greg

Ibach, as CARC chairman, wrote a letter in support of the grant request.

DeLynn Hay reported on UN-L drought mitigation activities. A faculty work group has been formed and is scheduled to meet March 2 to identify drought research priorities.

Don Wilhite noted CARC previously had some discussions about the need to expand the number of soil moisture monitoring sites across the state. Currently the High Plains Regional Climate Center's Automatic Weather Data Network includes about 50 stations, with only 12 to 15 of those having soil moisture probes.

Barb Cooksley said she and co-chair Steve Soberski would like to get their subcommittee together to meet with alfalfa producers to analyze how much stock is available.

Governor Mike Johanns arrived and the meeting agenda was suspended so that the weather updates could be started.

Mark Svoboda, with the National Drought Mitigation Center, reviewed the percent of normal precipitation charts for the six month periods of January-June 2000 and July-December 2000. He said going into the spring of 2000 Nebraska had received only 35 percent of normal precipitation. Currently Nebraska is at 70 percent of normal. He noted the southeast had not received quite as much precipitation recharge as the rest of Nebraska.

Svoboda reviewed the mountain snowpack and the spring and summer streamflow forecast as of Feb. 1, 2001. He presented an animation of the U.S. Drought Monitor to show the changes in drought pattern from last year to present. He also reviewed the Climate Outlook, Seasonal Drought Outlook, Standardized Precipitation Index, and Standardized Vegetation Index.

Mike Hayes, with the National Drought Mitigation Center, provided details on the hydrological drought concerns for western Nebraska. Lake McConaughy is holding less acre feet of water than it was at this time last year, 1.5 million in 2000 and 1.09 million at present. In the North Platte River basin, snowmelt/runoff is projected to be at 60-70 percent of average, while the South Platte River basin projection is at 65 percent of average. Hayes said in the Republican River basin, irrigation allotments for the season have already been made to producers at levels lower than past years, reflecting the impact of last season's dry weather.

State Climatologist Al Dutcher gave a detailed precipitation summary, looking at the past 30 days, 60 days, and 90 days. He noted that the state this year has been a bit wetter than last year for these same time periods. In addition, soil moisture probe samples taken in January indicate that there is moisture in at least the top three feet of soil. The southwestern corner of the state, where it was driest at summer's end, has seen the most improvement.

Glenn Engel, with U.S. Geological Survey, distributed a stream flow conditions report. He noted with the icy conditions, it's difficult to get a full reading. He said flows in the northwest and southwest are below normal, with the South Platte River showing extremely low flows. Rivers in the southeast have had some signs of recovery, he said, but are barely in the normal flow range.

Jack Daniel, co-chair of the Municipal Water Supply, Health, and Energy Subcommittee, distributed a handout on Health and Human Services System - Regulation and Licensure Drought Management Activities. He said water levels for public water systems have continued to improve. He said 15 systems have been identified as systems that need attention, and seven of these 15 already are planning to make

improvements.

Governor Johanns departed and the meeting agenda was resumed. Greg Ibach called for recommendations based on the presentations and previous discussion. Committee members asked the Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Wildlife Subcommittee to prepare a proposal, to possibly be presented to the Legislature's Appropriations Committee, requesting funding for additional soil moisture monitoring equipment. The subcommittee also was asked to organize support for the request among various stakeholder groups.

The next CARC meeting was scheduled for April 20.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.