

CARC Meeting Minutes (Draft)
Tuesday June 24, 2014
10 a.m. 901 Hardin Hall East Campus

Meeting called to order at 10:03 a.m.

In Attendance: Committee Members; Bobbie Kriz-Wickham (Chair), Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Brandi Flyr Department of Natural Resources; Mark Kuzila, UN Conservation and Survey Division; Jeremiah Blake, Governor's Policy Research Office; Rick Koelsch University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension; Barb Cooksley, Rancher.

Staff and Audience: Mark Svoboda, National Drought Mitigation Center; Al Dutcher, Nebraska State Climatologist; Lindsey Salestrom, Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Jordan Dux, Nebraska Farm Bureau, Dean Groskurth, Nebraska NASS; Phil Erdman, US Senator Johanns Office; Doug Klein, Farm Service Agency; Kristen Hassebrook, Nebraska Cattlemen; Scott Sprage, DHHS-DPH; Robert Swanson USGS; Scott Josiah, Nebraska Forest Service; Ken Hubbard, UNL-SNR; Tyler Williams, UNL Extension; Kelly Brunkhorst, Nebraska Corn Board; Nicholas Bergin, Lincoln Journal Star; Craig Derickson, USDA-NRCS; Dean Edson, NARD; Jake Petr, UNL student/NWS Hastings Volunteer; Shawn Rossi, NWS Hastings; Barb Mayes Baustead, NWS Omaha/Valley.

Minutes from the March 2014 meeting were reviewed and approved with a small spelling change.

Mark Svoboda started the meeting with the current conditions. He reviewed the March 25 Drought Monitor map and compared it to the current map of June 17. Improvement was shown across much of the state; however, the central and southwestern portions are still lagging behind in recovery with some long-term moisture deficits designated in these areas. Overall a nice improvement was shown even in the hardest hit areas. All surrounding states, except those to the south have little to no drought.

Dryness class changes over the last month were shown on a map with a large portion of the state showing 1-3 class improvement. The 30-90 day map also showed good improvement.

24% of the High Plains region is in drought - a 4% reduction since March. A large portion of the reduction was in Nebraska. Less than 30% of the state is in D1-D4.

The Percent of Normal Precipitation map showed much of the Panhandle receiving higher amounts of moisture than the rest of the state. Some areas have received double the amount of precipitation, especially due to good rains in the Platte Valley. Good improvements are reflected from the Sandhills to Iowa.

The top 1M of soil moisture has made large improvements. Some dry patches remain along the Kansas border; however, overall the state is much, much better than last fall.

The U.S. Drought Outlook so far has been right on target. The current release shows the weather pattern will continue with drought removal and improvement likely.

The ENSO chart is showing a move from Neutral to El Niño possibly starting in late summer. This means a cooler, wetter winter in the South and may allow for tropical storms to bring more moisture inland.

In summary, spring and early summer rainfalls have been very beneficial. 35.6% of the contiguous U.S. is currently in drought.

Mark Svoboda also gave the water supply outlook. Lake McConaughy is 66% full and is expected to rise through the first part of July. Inflows are not following the normal curve and the lake continually gains elevation. This has allowed for water officials to move some of the water around for other uses.

March inflows were higher compared to last year as we are finally seeing some response to the wetness.

The 14 day average streamflows compared to historical flows show good flows across the majority of the river systems.

The Republican River Basin shows the Hugh Butler at 19.7% full, Enders 21%, Harry Strunk 62.7%, and Swanson 27.9%. All are higher than March numbers, except for Enders which has had some water moved for stream augmentation projects.

Harlan County is at 53.7% full with 168,622 acre-feet (AF) in storage. The historical storage for this time of year is 262,219 AF.

A summary of the water supply report was given, expressing that drought conditions have eased. Good snow conditions in the Rockies and spring precipitation have allowed for a better hydrological situation, especially on the Platte Basin. Storage in the Republican River basin has improved slightly.

Al Dutcher gave the WAOC Report and an overview of Nebraska Climate Conditions.

The Departure from Normal Temperature 60 day map shows April - June temperatures were mostly lower than normal. Eastern Nebraska was near average and western Nebraska was 1-3 degrees below normal.

30 Day trends show average temperatures across most of the state with a few pockets 2-4 degrees higher. This has helped crops catch up from late planting. There is some concern that bacteria and fungi problems may develop on crops due to hot days and high humidity in July.

The 30 Day precipitation chart depicts nearly all of eastern and central NE having received 5-8 inches of moisture with extreme northeast NE receiving up to 12.5 inches in some areas. The panhandle and the southern border of the state have received 1-5 inches. Rains have created some problems with spraying for weeds in fields and putting up hay. Pollinations will be between July 7th and 11th this year. Should drying happen, storm damaged pivots may be a problem.

The Water Year Precipitation Departure map was not completely accurate due to missing data in the central part of the state, however, the rest of the state showed above average amounts except for a 1-6 inch deficit along the Kansas border.

The Greenness map defines a hail signature in northeast NE from recent storms; however, vegetation in the panhandle looks good.

Sea surface temperatures suggest an El'Nino pattern; yet cooler sea temperatures in the Southern Pacific may not allow that to happen. The equatorial Atlantic is cooler as well. Hurricane activity is predicted to bring moisture up earlier than normal.

The consolidated ENSO forecast says that most systems are predicting a moderate El'Nino. July temperatures are predicted below normal in the panhandle with better precipitation. Temperatures appear above normal October – November, and show a classic El'Nino signature.

The 3 month precipitation outlook (August-October) supports wetter weather and heavier snows.

Barb Cooksley gave a report on her pastures, saying they look good with 5.5 inches of rain from 10 rain events. Her area has not received the wind or hail.

Dean Groskurth covered May haystacks, which are up from last year. Wheat yields are averaging 40 bushels/acre and look good, however, Kansas wheat is struggling.

Kelly Brunkhorst asked about the greenness map Dutcher had discussed in his presentation and the amount of estimated acres affected by the hail. Al answered he did not know exact numbers but judging from the map possibly 100,000 acres. It was uncertain if those acres needed to be replanted.

Scott Josiah gave a presentation on the drought's impact on trees. The drought has caused an increased risk for fires and an increase in mortality to trees due to stress and pests. Trees can take 5-9 years to fully recover from drought.

Drought conditions have limited burns which has created a lot of undergrowth. The undergrowth has fueled wildfires to burn with enough intensity to kill surrounding trees.

Many non-native plants have been lost due to drought and night time temperatures play a factor in plant mortality – even those being watered.

Doug Klein with FSA gave a report on the Livestock Forage Program. For 2012-2013 5,400 applications have been submitted with \$54M in benefits issued. 2014 applications are still coming in, and FSA has been encouraging producers to contact their local office – the sooner the better.

Reports have been submitted detailing damage to buildings and equipment due to storms, but not enough acres were affected for a Secretarial Disaster Designation. This is because less than a 30% loss has occurred per county.

Doug also mentioned that the Livestock Indemnity program can apply to tornados and hail.

Craig Derickson with NRCS briefly discussed EQIP and the Drought Initiative sign up that just ended. He said that some EQIP funds were given to assist in Northeast NE livestock losses.

Bobbie summarized the grasshopper report, saying there were lower counts due to more moisture.

She also touched on the climate report being produced by UNL. Don Wilhite had told her the report is scheduled to be done in September. Copies will be provided to the CARC members before he presents his materials to the group. It was also mentioned the report would be the topic of the Heuermann Lecture scheduled for September 25 at 3:30 on Innovation Campus.

A future meeting date was not confirmed.

There was no further discussion. Meeting adjourned at 11:40am.