

## **CARC meeting Minutes - Draft**

June 25, 2013

10 am Hardin Hall, UNL East Campus

Meeting called to order by Bobbie Kriz-Wickham, Chair at 10:03 am.

Meeting was started by introduction of Board Members and audience attendees, including: Bobbie Kriz-Wickham, Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA); Brandi Flyr, Department of Natural Resources; Jeremiah Blake, Governor's Policy Research Office; Barb Cooksley, Rancher; Jack Daniel, Department of Health and Human Services; Mark Kuzila, UNL; Al Dutcher, Nebraska State Climatologist; Brain Fuchs, National Drought Mitigation Center; Mark Svoboda, National Drought Mitigation Center; Rick Koelsch, UNL Extension; Neil Moseman, Senator Fischer's Office; Jordan Dux, Nebraska Farm Bureau; Phil Erdman, Senator Johanns' Office; Terry Landsvork, National Weather Service-Omaha; David Pearson, National Weather Service – Omaha; Jim Meyer, National Weather Service; John Stoppkotee, National Weather Service-North Platte; Rick Ewald, National Weather Service –Hastings; Daniel Nietfeld, National Weather Service – Omaha; Scott Sprage, DHHS – DPH; Kristen Hassebrook, Nebraska Cattlemen; Kelly Smith, National Drought Mitigation Center; Don Wilhite, SNR/UNL; Martha Shulski, HPRCC/UNL; Neil Dominy, USDA/NRCS; Eric Zach, NGPC; Dan Steinkruger, USDA/FSA; Doug Klein, USDA/FSA; Jason Lambrecht, USGS; Dean Edson, NARD; and Lindsey Salestrom, NDA.

Meeting minutes from the March 25, 2013, meeting were approved.

Mark Svoboda began his report by reviewing the drought monitor from March, 2013. Compared to March, the current monitor map showed improvements; however, 88% of the state is still experiencing drought conditions. The drought epicenter has been pushed to the 4 corners region of the country according to the national map. Four to five drought class improvements are indicated in southeastern Nebraska and other regions in the nation. Unfortunately, there has not been enough rain to eradicate the drought, and this includes much of Nebraska. Svoboda said the entire state is still vulnerable at this point to relapse into more extreme drought conditions, should there be an extended hot or dry spell.

In reviewing the percent of normal precipitation map, Svoboda said it has been a much better start to the year this year for Nebraska compared to 2012. It is also much wetter in the northern plains.

Nebraska, South Dakota and Minnesota had some of the worst soil moisture ratings in March, but now are generally showing good soil moisture recovery; this excludes the western half of Nebraska, where it is still dry.

Some improvement in the vegetation drought response index has been identified with a fairly indicative split of conditions east to west in Nebraska. Svoboda showed a map dissecting the proportion of pasture/hay acres located under drought conditions. Some

range pasture and hay improvements were noted, but much of the hay land still falls into the drought pockets in the state. Much of the winter wheat growing area in Nebraska is in severe to extreme drought areas as well.

Svoboda said while there were late season snows in the Rockies, and the streamflow predictions have improved from last year, there is still a concern for the North Platte River basin and the Missouri River basin.

For the U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook, there is an area of predicted drought removal in eastern Nebraska, an area of predicted drought improvement in the central part of the state, and suggested drought persistence in the western portion of the state throughout the growing season.

Brian Fuchs with the National Drought Mitigation Center gave the water supply update.

Lake McConaughy is 61 percent full, a decline from March (64.9 percent) as it needed more late season snowpack. Fuchs said this is concerning since irrigation has hardly started. The lake was at 81 percent of capacity last June.

The 284 cubic feet per second inflows into McConaughy are much below last year and are predicted to remain on a downward pattern until at least September. He said upstream reservoirs need to refill before McConaughy can refill.

Fuchs reported the USGS 14-day average streamflow, as reported June 23, 2013, compared to historical streamflow shows the western portion of the state struggling with some areas of the state much below normal.

In the Republican River Basin, all reservoirs have declined except for Swanson, which is holding steady. The current conditions at Harlan County Reservoir show the conservation pool is at 66.8 percent, but still trending well below where it should be.

Fuchs said drought will continue to impact water supplies across the state, especially with irrigation kicking in. Lake McConaughy is 14.4 feet lower than this time last year. Storage in the Republican River Basin has declined overall. It was noted that hydrology is slower to respond than soil moisture.

Al Dutcher, state climatologist, followed with his water availability and outlook report. He noted there has been a fairly positive growing season moisture trend in Nebraska, but the southwest is falling behind on precipitation as the area has been missing out on a lot of the rains that have hit the eastern section of the state.

The April temperature trend of cool conditions helped drought conditions dissipate, while snowpack in the Dakotas helped keep temperatures lower, Dutcher said. 1967 was the last year that it snowed in May until this year, which caused some delayed planting, but this helped the soil moisture recover.

Dutcher said in the last 30 days conditions are warming up, and crops need more water as they begin to grow. The week of May 15-22 a large percentage of crop emergence took place – meaning these crops should pollinate around the 16th of July, which is a little later than normal. Producers in the east are farther behind than us – (Iowa corn pollination at the end of July).

Dutcher said the long-range forecast for July-September give Nebraska equal chances of above, below or normal precipitation. For the temperature in that same time period, Nebraska has an above normal chance of above normal temperatures, much like the rest of the southwest United States.

He noted that sea surface temperatures right now are not trending in any clear pattern for an El Niño or a La Niña, which could actually be positive after the previous two years of back to back La Niña conditions.

National Weather Service representatives say they are predicting a cool off the first part of July, and no strong indication of precipitation. It will be hit and miss rain for this summer and a normal weather pattern makes these showers hard to predict.

Doug Klein with the Nebraska State Farm Service Agency Office (FSA) noted all counties in the state are covered by secretarial drought designations, making low interest loans an option for producers. New designations would be needed for other perils, such as hail and tornadoes.

Klein said the State FSA Office has had minimal inquiries for emergency haying and grazing CRP requests, although they expect to get additional ones. The normal period to begin such practices is July 15<sup>th</sup>. In order to qualify the area needs at least a D2 classification on the U.S. Drought Monitor after July 15<sup>th</sup> for the state to approve. There is a 25 percent annual rental reduction, and haying requires producers to leave 50 percent, and grazing can only use 75 percent. He also noted the Emergency Conservation Program, designed to assist with water needs for livestock in pastures (hauling water, deepening wells, piping, tanks), has not had much activity yet. County committees must ask for it. Klein suggests that producers shouldn't wait until the last minute for help, they need to stay a step ahead of dire conditions before asking. Some money is currently available.

Klein said there has been a lot of crop insurance program activity regarding wheat in southwest Nebraska, as some fields are being chopped or baled, therefore appraisals are needed. During discussion, FSA noted that CRP emergency haying and grazing was used so much last year that there has not been regrowth and there have been redevelopment issues in some parts of the state. Bobbie mentioned some folks had asked about programs at the Nebraska Cattlemen meeting earlier in the month.

Dean Groskurth, with the Nebraska Office of NASS, reported on crop progress and haystacks. The May 1 haystack report was sent out; numbers are down 43 percent from a year ago and the lowest since 2001. The whole country is down 34 percent.

Nebraska currently has the smallest wheat crop since 1944. Corn condition is 75 percent good to excellent; soybeans are 86 percent good to excellent. A handout was provided for more crop statistics.

Bobbie mentioned that NDA has the hay hotline available for producers to list hay again this year.

Doug Klein with FSA mentioned state offices reporting early weaning of calves so that only cows are on pasture due to carrying capacity being low in pastures.

Jack Daniel with Health and Human Services reported no community water system issues have come up to date yet. Dean Edson with the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts noted the NRDs are continuing to keep the lines of communication open with community water system managers in an effort to avoid water concerns between domestic and ag uses.

Mark Kuzila with UNL Conservation and Survey Division spoke of a news release in May about preliminary groundwater levels at selected sites in Nebraska following the drought of 2012. The numbers reflect 2012 data; 2013 data is not yet available. The address is:

<http://snr.unl.edu/data/water/grownwatermaps.asp>

Rick Koelsch mentioned the Extension drought team continues to conduct educational activities on beef production and alternative feeds.

Bobbie mentioned possibly a partnership with UNL for a Risk Management Agency grant related to education about drought risk management insurance tools.

Bobbie gave an overview of LB 583, a bill approved within the Legislature and signed by the Governor, that assigns CARC to complete a report on cyclical climate change. The initial report is due Sept 1, 2014, and a final report due December 2014. Don Wilhite gave an overview of the potential for UNL's assistance with conducting this study.

Martha Shulski said Colorado and California have done something similar to this. Rick mentioned Iowa had done something similar in relation to agriculture.

Dan Steinkruger mentioned that cover crops were revised this year in the insurance program. New annual forage product is available to insure annual planted forages for the 2014 crop year, similar to the pasture program, rainfall index. It has a sales closing date of July 15. This is a new pilot in Midwestern states.

A Doodle poll was suggested for setting the next meeting date, to be held in a few months.

CARC adjourned at 11:45 a.m.