

**Climate Assessment Response Committee (CARC) Meeting  
August 16, 2007**

AMENDED PER MEMBER CORRECTION 8/23/07

**Members Present:**

Neil Moseman, Chairman  
Steve Soberski for Ann Bleed  
Mark Kuzila  
Mike Hayes (interim member)

Scott Sprague for Jack Daniel  
John Erickson  
Al Dutcher for Elbert Dickey

**Members Absent:**

Roger Lempke/Al Berndt  
Merwin Fricke  
Barb Cooksley

Chairman Neil Moseman called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Self-introductions were made. Audience members present included: Brian Smith, National Weather Service; Dean Groskurth and Joe Parsons, Nebraska office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service; Brian Fuchs, National Drought Mitigation Center; Eric Hunt, UNL School of Natural Resources; Tim Reimer, Nebraska Farm Service Agency; Tim McCoy, Nebraska Game and Parks; Wayne Vanek, Nebraska Natural Resources Conservation Service; Denise Wallman and Tom Sands, Nebraska Department of Roads; Bill Hord, Omaha World-Herald; Nate Jenkins, Associated Press; and Duane Gangwish, Nebraska Cattlemen.

Mark Kuzila moved to approve the minutes from the March 20, 2007 meeting. John Erickson seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Mike Hayes with the National Drought Mitigation Center presented the first half of the Water Availability and Outlook Report. He showed the U.S. Drought Monitor from a year ago. He noted the dryness and severe drought all the way up the central United States. The current Drought Monitor shows that 61 percent of Nebraska is not in any category of dryness, while last year at this time, the entire state was in some category of dryness on the Monitor. Hayes noted the dryness in the western United States, as well as a deepening drought in the Southeast.

Hayes said Lake McConaughy, while still in the worst, longest period of dryness in its history, has rebounded some this year. It currently is 7 feet above where it was at this time last year, mainly attributed to timely rains in irrigated areas downstream and higher flows in the South Platte River. He said it was a unique year in that the lake was able to keep filling through July, and releases were lower than projected. Inflows, however, were still half of normal, he said.

Hayes said the U.S. Geological Survey streamflow maps for the nation, and Nebraska, reflect the conditions shown on the current Drought Monitor, with heavy streamflow in Texas and low streamflow in the west and southeast United States.

Hayes said the Republican River Basin report included much positive news. Timely rains of good size have boosted the pool on many of the reservoirs. Hugh Butler and Enders reservoirs

volumes' have doubled since January, and Harlan County Reservoir is 14 feet higher than in January. Bonny Reservoir, in Colorado, is the exception, he said, because that part of Colorado has missed the rains that other areas of the basin received. Hayes said the Bureau of Reclamation officials reported 4 of 14 irrigation canals in operation this year.

Hayes showed the USDA Farm Service Agency map for the 2007 CRP Emergency Haying and Grazing program. A few counties in Nebraska's Panhandle have been approved for this program.

Al Dutcher, State Climatologist, reviewed a series of Percent of Normal Precipitation maps for the United States. He highlighted the above-normal amounts shown in the central United States, dating back to the beginning of 2007. He said in Nebraska, over the past two months, a portion of the northern Sandhills, northeast Nebraska, and the Panhandle have been below normal. Omaha had a record dry June, he said. A wetter pattern returned over the past 30 days, he said, and improved conditions.

Dutcher reviewed a water vapor loop map and a vegetation health index map. The 2007 vegetation health index map showed the poor conditions in northwest Nebraska, as well as the northern Sandhills.

Dutcher showed a series of Sea Surface Temperature maps and discussed the possibility of an emerging La Nina pattern in the Pacific Ocean. Dutcher said for Nebraska the forecast for the fall under La Nina conditions indicates a tendency toward warm and dry conditions across the state, with cold/dry conditions favored for eastern Nebraska during the winter and spring, and wet/cold conditions for western Nebraska in the winter and spring, with the highest correlations occurring in the spring.

He said for central Nebraska the outlook is mixed since it lies between both regions. Fall conditions tend to be warm and dry, with a cool bias in the winter and spring. However, no clear precipitation trend appears in the winter or spring.

Eric Hunt, a graduate student with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources, provided a sampling of data from the state's 51 soil moisture monitoring sites.

Moseman updated CARC members on the recent publication of a press release that encouraged Nebraskans to conserve water in the remaining months of summer.

Moseman also noted that NDA has received a couple of calls from individuals who were asking about the release of roadsides for haying due to drought. To gather information related to those requests, Moseman asked Joe Parsons with the Nebraska office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service to provide an update on hay stocks and other related items. Parsons said 58 percent of Nebraska's pasture and rangelands currently are in good/excellent condition, compared to only 6 percent in these categories last year. Hay production is forecasted to be up, from 5.6 million tons last year to 6.6 million this year. Parsons said hay and alfalfa prices have surged over the past year, doubling from \$40-50 per ton to \$80-100 per ton, but currently those are beginning to decline.

Moseman said the Nebraska Alfalfa Marketing Association reports that they believe alfalfa production may be down slightly this year, however, minor quality issues mean that more alfalfa stocks will be retained in Nebraska for beef cattle feed, rather than being sold to out-of-state dairies.

Tom Sands from the Nebraska Department of Roads noted they currently are working on rules to make roadside haying a permanent program next year, per legislation approved this session.

Steve Soberski with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) said they have had to conduct water administration on the Niobrara River this season for the first time in the history of the program. He said currently DNR is administering over 400 appropriations there.

Scott Sprague, with the Department of Health and Human Services, provided the Public Water System Drought Impact Report. He said it shows that 15 communities currently are under some type of water restrictions due to the drought. That compares to 26 communities at this time last year. Of the 15 systems currently under restrictions, only eight are mandatory restrictions.

Mike Hayes told the Committee that a graduate student is planning to do some updating to the state's drought plan, and he asked for the members' support if she calls looking for information and assistance.

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

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