

CARC Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 23, 2013
10 a.m. 901 Hardin Hall East Campus

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Committee Members In Attendance: Bobbie Kriz-Wickham (Chair), Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Brandi Flyn, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources; Mike Hayes, National Drought Mitigation Center; Jack Daniel, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Mark Kuzila, UNL Conservation and Survey Division; Jeremiah Blake, Governor's Policy Research Office. Rick Koelsch, UNL Cooperative Extension joined the meeting at 11 a.m. Members Absent: Al Berndt, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency; Barb Cooksley, livestock producer; Merwin Fricke, crop producer; Legislature Agriculture Committee Chairperson; and Legislature Natural Resources Committee Chairperson.

Staff and Audience: Brian Fuchs, National Drought Mitigation Center; Mark Svoboda, National Drought Mitigation Center; Al Dutcher, Nebraska State Climatologist; Lindsey Salestrom, Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Jordan Dux, Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nick Streff, Nebraska NASS; Kelly Brunkhorst, Nebraska Corn Board; Phil Erdman, U.S. Senator Johanns' Office; Ryan Champman, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality; Wayne Vanek, Natural Resource Conservation Service; Doug Klein, Nebraska Farm Service Agency; Scott Sprague, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Eric Zach, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Jason Lambrecht, USGS; Barb Mayes Boustead, National Weather Service Omaha/Valley; Martha Shulski, HPRCC/UNL; Tapan Pathak, UNL Extension; Dustin Wilcox, NARD; and Kristen Hassebrook, Nebraska Cattlemen.

Minutes from the June 25, 2013, meeting were reviewed and approved.

Mark Svoboda started the meeting with the current conditions. He reviewed the June 18th Drought monitor map and compared it to the current map of Oct 15th. Good improvement was shown across much of the state; however, the southwestern portion is still lagging behind in recovery. Drought has begun to redevelop to the east into Iowa.

Dryness class changes over the last month were shown on a map with 1-3 category improvements across much of the state. Since the start of the calendar year, there has been 1-5 class improvement across the state.

At the beginning of the year 27% of Nebraska was in D4, which has now been reduced to 3%. In June, 88% of the state was in drought, 68% of the drought area was rated as severe. Current conditions show 68% of the state in drought with 39% rated as severe.

The Percent of Normal Precipitation map showed marked difference between north and south halves of the state using January -October data. The northern section of the state

has received above normal precipitation while the southern half remains drier than average.

Soil moisture maps show that it was dry down to 1 meter at the start of the year, but we saw a little improvement in June. Today there is some good moisture at 1 meter, but it is still dry 3-4ft down. The soil is showing trends of improvement.

The ENSO Forecast is predicting a likelihood of a neutral weather pattern for the winter, with the long range forecast for next summer trending toward El Nino. However, Svoboda said it is still a long way out and could flip flop.

Barb Mayes Boustead with the National Weather Service said they are predicting that November, December and January will be warmer, with equal chances at warm or cold from January through March. There is also the possibility of a bigger snow winter out west.

The Drought Outlook through Jan. 31 shows drought persistence in Nebraska for the majority of the state.

In summary, drought coverage is down 24% for the nation. Fifty-seven percent of Nebraska is in drought, which is down 43% on the year. There has been marked improvement in the D3-D4 areas. Soil moisture is improving regionally statewide. A big winter is still needed to make up the moisture levels in the profile. Persistence of drought is expected through the winter.

Brian Fuchs delivered the water supply outlook. Lake McConaughy is down to 3228.1 feet, which is 48.1% of max - a drop since last meeting at 61%. Currently the lake sits a bit lower than it did at this time last year.

The 14-day average streamflows compared to historical show that southwest Nebraska is not showing recovery from the drought, but the rest of the state is normal to above normal.

The Republican River Basin shows the Hugh Butler at 16.8% full, Enders 30.8%, Harry Strunk 43.6%, and Swanson 25.1%. The lower values were expected due to irrigation.

Harlan County is at 44.3% full with 139,290 acre-feet in storage. These numbers reflect that the system is still stressed.

Summary of the water supply report: drought conditions have eased, there is a better water supply situation but it will take a long time to show recovery. Overall the Republican River Basin supply has declined with no glaring improvements but still is sitting better than last year.

Al Dutcher provided the Water Availability and Outlook Committee Report, looking at Nebraska climate conditions.

Departure from Normal Temperature maps show July temperatures were mostly normal to lower with a few small pockets of above normal. July precipitation maps show a wide spread of low precipitation, but there was a pocket of above normal in the Northwest. August temperatures were mostly above normal with normal precipitation, with the northern half mostly above normal, and most of the south below normal for moisture. September temperatures were mostly above normal and precipitation was above normal in south, but low in the northeast. East central Nebraska may see yields affected by this -mainly soybeans. It has been a slower harvest due to recent rains, but a decent pocket of harvest weather is coming.

For October, Dutcher said, normal temps are coming down rather rapidly and likely to continue through the rest of the month. The eastern portion should be mostly normal, but lower in the western part of the state. Precipitation in the east is much above normal; however, the western section is below normal. Places in eastern Nebraska are approaching record precipitation levels for October.

The 7 Day soil moisture under grass map shows some improvement at 50-100cm, but 10-25cm deep is showing a large improvement. Trees are looking less stressed.

October added a good 2-3 inches of moisture in the profile in northeast Nebraska. Every place but Falls City has a higher soil moisture rating than they did in March. A good frost will help keep the moisture in place. Depending on what type of winter we have will reflect on the recovery. A couple more precipitations events before a freeze will be beneficial.

Sea Surface Temperature maps show no strong signature either way. Extended periods of warm and extended periods of cold are expected to continue. There is a positive outlook if El Nino develops for southwest to reduce drought.

The November temperature forecast calls for most of Nebraska to remain under equal chances for above, below or normal conditions, with the southeastern tip a potential for above normal. The precipitation forecast says the southern half will be above normal chances, while the northwestern – central sections will stay with equal chances.

The Long-Lead Precipitation Outlook is mostly equal chances, no dry or wet signature. Dutcher called it one of the better forecasts we've seen for keeping the drought from re-emerging.

Bobbie thanked the speakers for their reports and remarked she was glad it was much more positive than the last few meetings.

Nick Streff of NASS gave an overview of what NASS had been reporting on after the government shutdown.

For the small grain harvest, wheat finished at 35 bushels per acre, the lowest since 2002. This is due in part to lower yields and lower harvested acres.

There was not an October report so he gave September numbers which were 164 bushels per acre corn, 47 bushels per acre soybeans, both up from last year. November 8th will be the next report. He wasn't sure about reporting of hay yields.

Current crop progress and conditions were corn at 32 % harvested, well behind 88% last year and the annual average of 44%. Soybean harvest is 80% complete behind 94% last year but near the 81% average.

Winter wheat is 96% seeded, which is near 97% for last year and the 97% average.

NASS will be starting the county yield estimate survey for row crops in mid November.

Doug Klein gave a report on Nebraska FSA activities regarding blizzard events and tornadoes. The tornadoes didn't have much effect on ag other than a few buildings, but crop damage was minimal. The early October blizzard in Northern Sioux and Dawes counties were devastating for a few individuals; FSA offices out there do not have livestock numbers tallied yet.

CRP acres were available for emergency haying and grazing this summer during the drought; many producers took advantage of it. There is no farm bill approved yet to authorize livestock indemnity or forage programs, so they are still waiting to see what FSA will end up with for programs.

Doug noted that producers facing livestock losses from the blizzard should do the best they can to keep track of losses and efforts taken to mitigate the losses.

Phil asked if FSA was receiving that information. Doug said if a producer comes in with documentation, the office is to stamp it, make a copy and return the original to be kept as a record, but more paperwork will be required if money becomes available.

Jordan Dux asked about how much money might be appropriated for the programs, and whether a funding matrix would be applied if losses exceeded the indemnity funding available. Doug noted it depended on final wording in any legislation that is approved.

Bobbie asked if there were any other reports from committee members. Jack Daniel said only 15 water systems across the state were compromised at some point this summer. Timely rains helped many of the systems that had been impacted previously. NRDs were more active this year as well.

Lindsey gave a brief update on the RMA grant application for the Pasture Rangeland and Forage program and noted that the proposal did not receive an award.

Bobbie discussed the status of the LB583 report process. She gave a brief overview of the discussion during the last meeting and noted she had followed up, as agreed to at that meeting, with a review of the transcript from the Legislative floor and discussions with UNL officials.

She presented the Committee with a draft Request for Information Form (RFI) as a proposal for how to proceed with finding someone to do the report for the Committee. The RFI is a formal State of Nebraska document that helps agencies search for the right individuals to conduct state projects.

Discussion followed on several points, including whether the RFI was the appropriate way to proceed. Al Dutcher asked about the monetary side of the project, and Bobbie mentioned the Legislature awarded slightly over \$44,000. The Committee decided to include the figure in the RFI document.

Rick Koelsch asked about what role CARC will have in the review of applications. After discussion, it was determined that the group would like to see the applications and have a role in determining next steps.

Bobbie said it was not her intent to take any authority from the committee; she just wanted to encourage the committee to move quickly as the timeframe for completing the study is small.

Mark Kuzila said he did not like the RFI format and said it was not easy to follow. Bobbie commented this was how the RFI for the state is formatted.

Rick asked what information was to be provided by those interested in completing the study. After discussion it was determined that the RFI would be amended to include a request that applicants include their credentials.

There were questions and discussion about the meaning of the term "cyclical." Mark Svoboda said he felt any interested parties would want to know what the term meant. Bobbie said she was open to suggestions from the Committee, but without any specific wording, would generally look at a definition reflective of the Legislative floor debate.

There was some discussion about why an RFI was needed instead of an RFP.

The group discussed concerns about the likelihood of securing positive responses to the RFI from credible researchers.

Brandi Flyr mentioned that time restraints are also a limiting factor. Al Dutcher said he was worried about how the report will be used once completed.

There was some discussion about distribution of the RFI. Bobbie said it will be sent out through the normal State of Nebraska DAS process. Bobbie said she also would like committee members and advisers, particularly those who are researchers, to help

distribute it in approach circles. Some committee advisers said they would be reluctant to send it to colleagues.

Mark Kuzila suggested the RFI be sent to climate and university researchers nationally and allow them to distribute it so that the RFI will reach as many as possible. Rick mentioned the office of outreach and research at university campuses across Nebraska.

Mark Kuzila made a motion to move forward with releasing the RFI on Monday, following editorial changes to include the dollar amount allocated for the study, to include a request for appropriate credential information of those responding to the RFI, and to include depth to the phrase "cyclical climate change" in the RFI. Jeremiah seconded the motion. No further discussion. All voting members present voted aye. No opposed.

Bobbie asked for any final discussion.

Meeting adjourned 11:52 a.m.