

**CARC Meeting
September 14, 2001
Department of Agriculture, Platte Conference Room**

The meeting was called to order at 1:35 p.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; Merwin Fricke; Steve Soberski, on behalf of Roger Patterson; and Don Wilhite. Members John Erickson; Dayle Williamson; Roger Lempke; and Barb Cooksley were absent.

The minutes from the August 16, 2001, meeting were unanimously approved.

Mark Svoboda, with the National Drought Mitigation Center, began by discussing the regional distribution of precipitation and noted that over the past 15-45 days rains have been more plentiful to the east of Nebraska. He also referred to the USDA Topsoil Moisture Report, comparing the July 15, 2001, report that stated 38 percent of Nebraska topsoil was considered "short" to "very short" of moisture to the August 12, 2001, report that showed 63 percent of Nebraska topsoil in those categories. He said over Nebraska as a whole, so far in September, conditions have improved somewhat.

Svoboda showed the Vegetation Health Map and noted improvement from a year ago. He reviewed the Drought Monitor, noting that, nationally, western Texas and the Pacific Northwest are facing severe, extreme, and exceptional drought conditions. South Dakota has emerged in a dry pattern in the past couple of weeks, while Iowa has improved. Svoboda said Nebraska has abnormally dry areas in the western and eastern one-third of the state and pockets of a D-1, or moderate drought, in east-central and southwest Nebraska.

Svoboda reviewed the five-day temperature and precipitation outlooks and the Climate Outlook Maps detailing temperature and precipitation predictions for October, 2001 and October - December, 2001. He noted that for October and October through December the maps indicate the possibility of below-normal temperatures. For precipitation, the October map shows "climatology," or no prediction, and the October through December map indicates a slight chance of above normal precipitation in the central part of the state.

State Climatologist Al Dutcher also discussed the long-lead forecast and noted that Nebraska is projected to experience below normal temperatures through the winter.

He said the best chance for precipitation would be in the next 24 to 36 hours, and said that 1 to 3 inches would be helpful. He noted the possibility of an early freeze at the end of September; the normal freeze date, in the central and eastern part of the state, is mid-October.

Dutcher reviewed a series of precipitation maps detailing precipitation totals for 30-, 45- and 60-day time frames and looking at those totals as a percent of normal precipitation. He noted that the Panhandle area consistently shows up short of precipitation on each of the maps.

Dutcher said, at this point in the season, he doesn't expect the drought areas in the state to expand rapidly, based on historical statistics. He said forecasters are unsure of what to expect for precipitation this winter, but they are predicting below normal temperatures.

Glenn Engel, with U.S. Geological Survey, distributed a stream flow conditions report and discussed some highlights of the report. He noted the upper Republican River area in southwest Nebraska continues to show extremely low stream flow conditions. In the northeast part of the state, stream flow continues to be normal or above normal.

Steve Soberski, with the Department of Natural Resources, presented a handout on reservoir capacities. He noted that water administration for the irrigation season was near the normal level of activity.

Jack Daniel, co-chair of the Municipal Water Supply, Health, and Energy Subcommittee, asked about the potential for significant snows this season in the mountains to help replenish low reservoirs. Al Dutcher said he anticipated it would be a normal season for snowfall. Mark Svoboda noted the dry soil profile in the western states also means that a great deal of the snowfall runoff may soak into the ground before reaching reservoirs for transfer downstream.

Bill Hamlin, with Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service, reviewed a Nebraska Pasture and Range Conditions Report prepared by his office. He said the results show that the drought last year has impacted the conditions of pastures and range this year. He also noted the areas with poor and very poor pasture conditions seem to match the troubled areas on the Drought Monitor. Hamlin also reviewed topsoil and subsoil moisture graphs and discussed the results of the national and Nebraska 2001 Crop Production Report.

Brian Wolford from the USDA State Farm Service Agency discussed recent contacts with county FSA offices regarding drought conditions. He said five counties have indicated problems: Polk, Butler, Saunders, Cass, and Platte. He noted counties surrounding those five also are experiencing dry conditions. Wolford said his office would continue to monitor the situation.

Jack Daniel distributed a handout on Health and Human Services System - Regulation and Licensure Drought Management Activities. He noted that the communities of Lexington, Wood River, and Funk were dropped from the list of towns impacted by the dry weather because the weather has cooled and water demand has dropped.

Member Merwin Fricke reported on weather, crop, and pasture conditions in the area that he farms near Hastings. He said much of the rains this season have fallen to the east of his property and his corn yield appears to be less than it was last year. Rains have been very spotty, he said.

Member Don Wilhite, with the National Drought Mitigation Center, noted that his office, in conjunction with several other climate/weather agencies, has applied for an Environmental Trust Grant. He said the grant, if it is awarded, will be used to purchase additional automated soil moisture monitoring probes to add to the existing weather network.

DeLynn Hay said wheat planting is progressing in the western part of the state. He said that while it is dry there, he felt conditions were better than last year.

After discussion, the group decided to allow Chairman Ibach to monitor conditions and take mitigation actions as necessary. A new meeting was not scheduled.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

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