

GOVERNOR'S DROUGHT MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

Co-Chairman -- Ron Micheli, WDA

Tom Ostermann, State Forester

Purpose:

Minimize the effects of drought on people and resources by:

1) Identifying the local, state, federal and private sector entities that are involved with state drought management and defines their responsibilities

2) Providing timely and accurate information so that good decisions can be made before a crisis situation develops

3) Defining a process to be followed for monitoring, impact assessment, and response

4) Identifying long and short term activities to prevent and mitigate drought

5) Acting as a catalyst for creation and implementation of local drought planning processes.

Principles:

1) The plan is always a document in progress

2) The plan must make information available

DEFINITION OF DROUGHT

1. Drought, unlike floods, is not a distinct event;
2. Drought is often a result of many complex factors acting and interacting within the environment. This interaction is such that drought has no distinct start or end, thus complicating the problem of a drought definition.
3. The impacts of drought vary by affected sectors, thus making definitions of drought relevant to specific affected groups.

WYOMING DRY CONDITIONS

Current situation:

-Over 83% of Wyoming is experiencing below normal precipitation

-Some areas are experiencing below 40% of normal precipitation

-Fourteen counties have applied for disaster designations (north, west, and central Wyoming)....12 counties have received a disaster designation

-65% of Pasture and range conditions are rated poor to very poor

-Hay production down 23% from 1999

-Many BLM and Forest Service grazing allotments were closed early to livestock grazing

THE GOVERNOR'S DROUGHT MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE HAS SIX SUBCOMMITTEES:

MONITORING SUBCOMMITTEE

Purpose:

- 1) Responsible for the monitoring of all available climatological data, soil moisture readings, reservoir storage levels and other pertinent information.
- 2) Employs needed “triggers” to implement further actions by other work groups.
- 3) Dissemination of information such as the Wyoming Water Supply forecast, the Wyoming Basin Outlook Report, Wyoming Reservoir Storage Report, Weekly Crop-Weather Report, and National Weather Service and USGS Internet Websites.
- 4) Chairman: Bill Gentle

SUBCOMMITTEES (CON'T)

Drinking Water, Health and Energy Subcommittee

Purpose:

1) Makes assessments and develops mitigation strategies for drought related impacts on drinking water systems, energy delivery systems, and public health conditions.

2) Chairman: Gary Beach

Actions:

- Have requested every municipality to develop a water conservation plan.

-Analysis of public health impacts (camps, sewage, food service)

-Analysis of Energy Supply Impacts (Energy costs)

SUBCOMMITTEES (CON'T)

Wildfire Protection Subcommittee

Purpose:

1) Make assessments, identifies major vulnerable areas of concern, and develops mitigation and response alternatives for drought impacts on wildfire occurrence.

2) Chairman: Tom Ostermann

Actions:

- Send advisory notices and interagency fire prevention messages
- Assist in determining fire restrictions
- Position fire suppression resources and utilize “severity” funds
- Work with the military in positioning “Black Hawk” helicopters and fire crews
- Work with WEMA and WDA in declaring wildfire and drought disaster designations

SUBCOMMITTEES (CON'T)

Tourism and Economic Implementation Subcommittee

Purpose:

1) Monitors the effects of drought on the various economic indicators derived from data representing all sectors of the state economy, including tourism.

2) Chairman: Cindy Garretson Weibel

Actions:

SUBCOMMITTEES (CON'T)

Communications Subcommittee

Purpose:

1) Provide a wide range of drought information to internal and external audiences

2) Chairman: Phil Rosenlund

Actions:

- Website
- Brochure
- News releases

SUBCOMMITTEES (CON'T)

Agriculture and Natural Resource Subcommittee

Purpose:

1) Defines methods to mitigate drought and disseminate information on management practices that can be implemented prior to a drought that will mitigate the effects of drought.

2) Chairman: Grant Stumbough

Actions:

-Assist in Implementing FSA programs

- 1) Non Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program
- 2) Emergency Conservation Program
- 3) Crop Disaster Program
- 4) Emergency Watershed Protection Program (NF)
- 5) Livestock Assistance Program (NF)

-Tax Deferments

- 1) Tax deferment for one year for gain on sale of livestock due to drought (must be in a disaster designated county)
- 2) When forced to sale breeding livestock due to drought, will have up to two years to buy replacement stock (of equal value) with reporting a gain

3) Workshops scheduled (Buffalo, Lander, Rock Springs)

-Water Developments

- Met with Forest Service and BLM
- Streamline the NEPA and Cultural Review process
- Temporary versus permanent water developments
- BLM and Forest Service Surveys
- BLM Range Suitability Concerns
- Wyoming Water Development Commission (Drought proofing)
- Pond Maintenance (Cooperative agreements)

-Local Drought Committees

- Grassroots input

-Letter to Secretary of Agriculture

- Ranchers need drought relief programs!

CONCLUSIONS

- Drought Management Task Force is trying!
- A State Climatologist has been hired
- Six Subcommittees are working
- Need more drought relief programs
- Need more water developments
- Producers need to be proactive!