

Climate Issues Report  
Committee Meeting Information  
May 19, 2011  
Webinar and in the WDA Conference Room  
Cheyenne, WY

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT  
State Forester Bill Crapser, Co-chairman  
Doug Miyamoto –Co-Chairman  
Kirk Miller USGS  
Todd Ballard, USDA NASS  
(Heather Dupree – NASS)  
Barry Lawrence – WWDO  
Mark Sattleberg - USFWS  
Leanne Stevenson, WDA  
VIA WEBINAR  
Steve Ferrell, Governor's Office  
Steve Gray, State Climatologist  
John Lawson, Bureau of Reclamation  
Dan Clark – DEQ  
John Keck – U.S. Park Service  
Gregor Goertz – Farm Services Agency  
(Cindy Hottle – FSA)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Co-Chairman Doug Miyamoto called the meeting to order and those present or on the teleconference introduced themselves. The following summarizes the committee proceedings by agency. Please refer to the materials index for meeting sign-in and complete agency reports.

**Climate Office**

Steve Gray talked about what is happening at lower elevations. In December, 2010, several areas received upward of 200% of average perception. In January was quite a bit dryer. Some areas only received 25% of average perception. February was a little bit wetter. Fremont County received quite a bit more than average. In March there was quite a bit of low level dryness. Yellowstone received quite a bit of snow in March, but Fremont County was extremely dry. April saw some major storms throughout the southeast portion and the 300% in Carbon County was extreme. In the past 30 days showed dryness in the Fremont County area, but most of the precipitation was in the Southeast and portions of Weston County. Peak perception usually comes during the month of May, which is critical to grasses, forbs and the growing season. This spring has been quite cool. Over the past 30 days the temperatures have been quite cool, which has affected the snow runoff. Mountain snowpack is above normal all over the region. We have been experiencing La Nina conditions which mean the conditions in the southern portion of Wyoming are dryer than the Northwest. Portions of Colorado and Utah received more perception than usual. He explained that several federal programs relate their programs to the U.S. Drought Monitor. In May 2010 there were several counties that experienced drought to sever drought conditions. In May 2011 the monitor is showing there is essentially no place in Wyoming showing drought conditions.

### **Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec)**

John Lawson reported that we should have record water this year. His office has been working closely with the Corp of Engineers.

#### **North Platte Basin**

For 3 years we have exceeded 30% more than average. Several of the reservoirs have not recovered fully and now we have a situation developing that makes it a difficult one for his office. Last year's precipitation in May was a total surprise. He is hopeful the 1,700,000 they are projecting is close and they don't have the same surprise they had last year. They are trying to get Pathfinder Reservoir full so they can begin to spill. They anticipate having Pathfinder full by this weekend and will probably be spilling that water by the next week and will take until mid July to eliminate the amount needed out. Glendo reservoir they are planning to cut back on their releases in anticipation of the cutbacks up stream. They are in the process of having some safety construction going on and he said it couldn't come at a worse time, because they didn't expect to have the reservoir that full. Several areas in Wyoming and Nebraska are at flood stage. They will be out of storage space by mid July.

He said they are having an extremely hard time managing the water and are going to have to stay on top of everything in order to manage the flows they are forecasting.

#### **Big Horn Basin**

##### **Boysen Reservoir**

The 800,000 expected is going to be going up with all the additional perception we are seeing. The snowpack is at 125% and they are looking at the snow continuing to build in the area. They will probably be moving their forecast up to 900,000. The spillway gates are open and are reducing the water in anticipation of the in-flows increasing.

##### **Buffalo Bill Reservoir**

They are forecasting 970,000 acre-feet for 2011. The average is 660,900. They are watching that closely and if it continues to increase, they will probably have to increase their forecast.

### **WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (WDA)**

Leanne Stevenson reported the cool wet spring is impacting producers. Late turnout in some areas is going to happen more and more. They are saying the grass is not there yet, which is making it a late season and we don't know if the season will be extended. Grasshoppers might be worse this year due to the increase of eggs laid last year, but they are expecting the hatch to be later due to the cooler weather. The beetle kill impact is creating issues for livestock and wildlife as to them being able to move through the downed timber. Irrigation water should not be an issue.

### **STATE FORESTRY**

Bill Crapser reported the bark beetles are moving into higher elevations and into white pine which they have never seen before. The moisture we have had is helping to make the pine trees less stressed which will help. There are some issues with some invasive species. He said throughout the nation they are all

seeing some new adaptations to some species due to the climate changes. They are seeing the white bark pine starting to move up and aspen being reduced.

**GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT**

No attendance and no report.

**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE**

Steve Ferrell said their office is still in the process of figuring out what they are going to do and should be getting an answer back to us regarding this programs' continuance.

**U. S. Geological Survey (USGS)**

Kurt Miller reported on some tools they have available. The USGS water alert allows you to subscribe to a service that allows you to have data sent to you. Another tool is SteamMail which will send the information directly to your email. The flood and high flow conditions map allows you to see at a glance where there is flooding. Another tool is their flood-tracing charts. These charts will show you the most current reading, the most recent years flow, and the four highest crests. He talked about the report he prepared showing the Peaks of Record.

**U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**

Mark Sattleberg said they are looking at some of the changes to the trees and they are looking at the national models to develop their local model and asked the committee for input.

**Farm Services Agency (FSA)**

Gregor Goertz reviewed the chart showing the disaster declaration process. Before a declaration is issued, there has to be a 30% or greater loss. The Committee reviews the request and sends it to the Governor and in turn he will send it on to the national level. If the declaration is given, the programs FSA administers will be eligible to those producers in the declared areas.

Cindy Hottle talked about some of the other programs available through their office that does not require a declaration to receive the assistance.

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**

No one in attendance, but they do have a report.

**State Engineer's Office**

No one in attendance and no report.

**State Parks**

No one in attendance and no report.

**U. S. Park Service**

John Keck was on the webinar but had no report.

### **Water Development Office**

Barry Lawrence indicated that most of their projects are climate driven. He said Level 1 is their reconnaissance studies. Level II is their Feasibility studies in both the new development and storage. Their 2011 construction projects were approved by the Legislature. He explained their weather modification program which is a research program. They suspended their operations early in the Medicine Bow and Sierra Madres areas because their criteria are to have 120% on April 1 and met that number March 6, 2011. The Wind River Range was never suspended and they are close to the 120%.

### **NASS**

Todd Ballard said everything from crops to livestock is behind because of the cooler weather. 30 of their 33 stations have reported below normal temperatures. He said range conditions are above normal, but need some warmer temperatures. Flooding is a concern again this year for some producers.

### **Discussion and Actions needed as a result of the reports:**

Leanne said WDA will send the website out to everyone when the notes are sent.

Steve Ferrell said he would like to know what the thoughts of the committee were as to the continuance of the program. The Governor's Office is going to be reviewing the committees. Bill Crapser said he and John Lawson have probably been on the committee the longest and he said he is questioning whether State Forestry and WDA should be heading the committee. Leanne Stevenson said she agrees with Bill Crapser regarding the structure of the committee. She said sharing the information in this way is helpful. One of the initial products was the drought plan put together and revised in January 2003. She questioned if the plan needs to be reviewed in the future. Doug asked the members to review the plan and WDA will make it available on the website when the reports and notes are posted.

John Keck agrees that if the issue is climate change he agrees the leadership should be adjusted. Bill Crapser said he knows there is an original charter. Leanne said she may have that and will get it to Steve Ferrell if found.

The meeting was adjourned.