

Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group Meeting Summary

May 20, 2008

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Environmental Services Facility

Member Organizations Present:

Abitibi-Bowater
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities
Chester Metropolitan District
City of Camden
City of Gastonia
City of Hickory
City of Lenoir
City of Morganton
City of Mount Holly
Town of Mooresville
City of Newton
City of Rock Hill
Duke Energy Carolinas
Lincoln County
Lugoff-Elgin Water Authority
NCDENR-PWSS
NCDWR
Town of Granite Falls
Union-Lancaster Catawba River Water
Treatment Plant
USGS

Other Organizations Present:

City of Fort Mill
HDR Engineering
Kearns & West
University of South Carolina
URS
York County

Introductions, Agenda Review, and Announcements

1. Ken Kearns opened the meeting with introductions and reviewed the agenda.

Update on NC Table Top Emergency Drill

2. Don Rayno and Jack Moyer (URS) provided an overview of the recent NC Table Top Emergency Drill simulating water shortages in the Raleigh-Durham area. Moyer explained that about 75 people from state agencies and utilities attended. The State originally planned for two meetings, but it was decided that a second exercise with state officials and media was not necessary. Rayno asked if there was interest in holding a similar exercise for the Catawba basin.
3. Edmisten, who observed the exercise, noted that a lesson learned was that utilities need to establish agreements on buying water from neighboring utilities before the area is in a drought.
4. The CW-DMAG concluded that a table top exercise for the Catawba region could be beneficial, but that an objective needs to be determined before moving forward. Kearns suggested that preliminary work with the area's emergency planners would likely be necessary to make an exercise useful.

LIP Trigger Update

5. Ed Bruce showed a presentation of the LIP triggers including the Catawba-Wateree Storage Index (SI) and stream flow gauges. Despite low rainfall, reservoir levels remain above the Target for this time of year. Bruce noted that the stream flow indicators and U.S. Drought Monitor are below where they were a year ago, and the rate of improvement from last fall is beginning to flatten out.

Duke Operations and Meteorological Update

6. George Galleher provided an update on area meteorology conditions and Duke's hydro operations. Below-average rainfall is expected throughout June. Duke has returned to making only minimum releases.

Use Restriction Results Committee Report

7. Kearns summarized that the Water Restriction Results Committee was created to look at ways to communicate the effectiveness of the water-use restrictions. He shared the combined per-meter residential water use data collected from most of the area's water suppliers. The chart showed above-average water use during the summer (2007) until water use restrictions were put into place, and then usage dropped to well below average. Kearns concluded that, without restrictions, the water use would likely have remained above average because 2007's fall period remained hot and dry. After some additional analysis, the CW-DMAG will determine how to release the information in the next few months.

Water Consumption Committee Reports

8. Barry Gullet reported on behalf of Lauren Kirkpatrick for the Water Consumption Committee. The analysis of water use numbers for car washes is complete. The committee still needs to investigate water consumption for:
 - new pools in the basin area,
 - HVAC,

- fire pump testing,
- outdoor fountains, and
- pressure washing.

Consideration of April 1 Temporary Recommendation Stage 3 on One-Day-a-Week Irrigation and April 17 Recommendation for other Outdoor Water Uses

9. Bruce noted that the CW-DMAG needed to decide whether or not to extend the one-day-a-week outdoor water use that was recommended in April. Bruce noted that, while it appears the weather situation may be similar to last year, Duke has additional flexibility compared to a year ago. Duke has started the minimum releases earlier than last year, and they have access to almost three additional feet of water stored in Lake Norman that was not available last year. In anticipation of continuing dry weather, Bruce noted that Duke will attempt to keep reservoir levels at or above the Target Storage Index as long as possible.
10. Based on conditions, Bruce recommended extending the one-day-a-week outdoor water use for another 30 days with the caveat that it could be ended at that time if conditions worsen. The CW-DMAG agreed with the recommendation.

LIP-Related Comments to FERC

11. Mark Oakley explained that the Community of Lake James wrote a letter to FERC recommending changes to the LIP. To prepare for his meeting with the Community of Lake James, he asked how the CW-DMAG will consider input such as this in its review of the LIP. The CW-DMAG noted that comments from groups should be provided to Ed Bruce (the DMAG coordinator) in the future, and the CW-DMAG meetings are open to the public. The CW-DMAG reaffirmed that it thinks the LIP has worked very well during this drought and will review lessons learned when the drought has abated. At that time, the DMAG will actively solicit public input.

Rock Hill City Manager Letter to DMAG

12. Bruce distributed a letter he received from Rock Hill noting that one-day-a-week outdoor water use is inconsistent with LIP. The letter also noted the need for better public communications and the City's continuing participation with the CW-DMAG and WMG for continued improvements. Bruce will draft a reply with the reminder that the LIP restrictions are suggestions for meeting water-use reduction targets, and that the CW-DMAG recommendations are now based on a better understanding of actual water use numbers for outdoor activities.

Issues Related to LIP Consistency

13. Bruce noted that the CW-DMAG has been working to develop guidelines for water use restrictions that might one day be turned into consistent ordinances across the basin. He suggested that consistent guidelines be developed before approaching a LIP review.

WMG Update

14. Gullet stated that the WMG hasn't met since the last CW-DMAG meeting, but the Group did receive its 501(3)(c) non-profit designation from the IRS. Bruce added that the USGS is still looking for a location for a new groundwater monitoring well in the Lake Wateree area. The next WMG is June 10 at the Lee S. Dukes Water Treatment Plant.

Round Table

15. Bruce shared the Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement's CW-DMAG membership criteria and the current membership list. He asked the group to send any updates to him. He will also request updates in an e-mail.
16. Gullet informed the Group of draft legislation that would give local governments the authority to regulate water use regardless of source and would require that all in-ground irrigation systems to have meters.
17. Gullet noted that, despite the outdoor watering one day a week, CMU's water production is still significantly lower than previous years and way below last year.
18. Kearns proposed that the Use Restriction Results Committee continue to look at better ways to communicate drought information and expand its membership to include additional input.

Conclusion

19. The next DMAG meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 25 at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities' Environmental Services Facility in Charlotte.
20. Kearns adjourned the meeting.