

C-W DROUGHT MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY

Monday, February 7, 2011

Member Organizations Present:

Abitibi-Bowater
Catawba River Water Supply Project
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities
Chester Metropolitan District
City of Gastonia
City of Hickory
City of Lenoir
City of Morganton
City of Mount Holly
City of Rock Hill
City of Statesville
Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC
Invista
Lincoln County
Lugoff-Elgin Water Authority
NC DENR Division of Water Resources
NC Wildlife Resources Commission
SC DNR
Town of Granite Falls
Town of Mooresville
Town of Valdese
USGS

Other Organizations Present:

City of Conover
HDR
Kearns & West, Inc.
NC DENR Division of Public Water Supply
Town of Fort Mill
Union County
York County
Union County

Introductions, Agenda Review, and Announcements

1. Ed Bruce, CW-DMAG coordinator, opened the meeting, called the roll, and reviewed the agenda.

Low Inflow Protocol (LIP) Triggers

2. Bruce provided an LIP trigger update. The storage index is “Normal” but is lower than it was at this time the past two years. It was noted that the effect of the required drawdown at Lake James on the storage index is minimal, because that loss of storage is balanced by increased storage in the other lakes, principally Lake Norman. Most of the other lakes are above their Target levels. Bruce pointed out that the US Drought Monitor maps indicate that the drought is again focused primarily in the southeast. The four-month and six-month streamflow averages are in Stage 3. He added that the streamflows are hovering close to the Stage 2/3 boundary, but are a long way from Stage 1. Groundwater levels are continuing to trend downward and are discharging at the time when they normally are recharging. It was suggested that, in the future, it would be helpful if Bruce indicated the LIP stage on the groundwater graphs more clearly.

Duke Operations and Meteorological Update

3. George Galleher gave an update on Duke’s system hydrological information. In 2010, the system rainfall was at 89 percent of its long-term average, which dates to 1971. January was about 40 percent of the long-term average, but the gap is showing improvement so far in February with several recent rains. Precipitation is forecast for the next five days, but this drops off six to ten days out. NOAA’s long-term forecast is for below average precipitation. Duke’s meteorological consultant likewise predicts 20-40 percent below average precipitation for February and March, but an equal chance of above, below, or normal precipitation in April. Colorado State University is predicting an active hurricane season. La Nina is predicted to extend at least through May and that typically indicates less-than-normal precipitation in the Carolinas. Galleher noted that spring fish spawning releases will start in February, and these will be lower than normal because the Basin is in Stage 1. He briefly discussed how the CRA defines the calculation of these reduced releases.

Media Communications

4. Bruce suggested that the CW-DMAG consider whether to issue a press release in the near term. Bruce noted that, since last October when the basin entered Stage 1, the storage index has been stable, but streamflows have declined significantly. There is the possibility that the Basin may enter Stage 2 in the next few months. Bruce is concerned that, if this occurs, the CW-DMAG may lose some credibility with the public if they do not provide adequate warning. Public perception may be that the drought is improving due to recent precipitation, whereas, in reality, it would take several months of significant rainfall to make an actual impact on the LIP indicators and likely also the drought monitor.
5. Several water suppliers suggested that since the public was not thinking about planting or drought, and we are not yet asking the public to increase their conservation efforts, the CW-DMAG should wait until a “call to action” is needed particularly because demand is not driving the drought. Another made the point that the public should be thinking about drought because it may get worse. After discussion the CW-DMAG concluded that they would wait another month before reconsidering the drought conditions and need for a press release. If the storage index worsens significantly in a few weeks, a call can be scheduled earlier.

Next Call - The next CW-DMAG call will be held in March.