

JANICE K. BREWER
Governor



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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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December 10, 2012

Mr. Kevin Kinsall, Natural Resources Policy Adviser
Office of Governor Jan Brewer
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Re: Recommendation to Maintain Drought Emergency Declaration (PCA 99006) and the Drought Declaration issued by Executive Order 2007-10

Dear Mr. Kinsall:

I am writing to provide the update and recommendations of the Drought Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG). The ICG is an advisory body to the Governor on Arizona drought issues and is comprised of state, federal, tribal and non-governmental organizations. This group meets in the spring and fall to evaluate drought conditions and consider recommendations to the Governor. The ICG is an important part of the state's overall drought preparedness strategy, as described in the *Arizona Drought Preparedness Plan* and the progress reports prepared annually. The ICG met on November 6, 2012 and recommends that the state's Drought Emergency Declaration (PCA99006) and Drought Declaration for the State of Arizona (Executive Order 2007-10) be continued.

During the November 6 meeting, reports on Arizona's climate conditions and outlook, drought status and drought impacts were provided by the State Drought Monitoring Technical Committee, Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs, Arizona State Forestry Division, Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The main points below form the basis of the ICG's recommendations:

- The entire state continues to be in some level of drought, with the driest conditions continuing in the central and southeastern part of the state. Two watersheds in the southern portion of the state are in extreme drought. Of the twelve remaining watersheds, three are in severe drought, seven are in moderate drought and the two watersheds in the northern portion of the state are abnormally dry. The overall condition for the 2012 water year is moderate drought.
- The winter of 2012 was extremely dry across all of Arizona as well as the entire Colorado River Basin. Although the 2012 monsoon was wetter than average in four watersheds, it was only near or slightly wetter than average in the remaining ten watersheds, and not wet enough to reverse the effects of the previous dry years. The current outlook indicates a

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neutral winter with regard to El Niño conditions, in which case conditions will not worsen this winter. The outlook for winter 2012-2013 is slightly better chances for above average temperatures, and equal chances for above, below or near normal precipitation. The outlook for summer 2013 is increased chances of above average temperature, and equal chances for monsoon precipitation to be above, below or near normal.

- The impact of drought on range and farmland resulted in a U.S. Department of Agriculture disaster designation for all Arizona counties. The average forage production across Arizona was approximately 63 percent of normal for 2012. In spring, Mohave County had dry vegetation, high forage loss, high wildfire danger, low reservoirs and dry springs. Even though monsoon rainfall resulted in significant greening, many areas are still very dry, including the Kingman area. In Pima County, Stage One Drought continues with drying stockponds and dry grasses in pasture land.
- Wildfires had less overall impact on forest health in 2012 than 2011, however: areas of reburn are becoming a concern, defoliating insect activity has increased (possibly exacerbated by drought), and the continuing drought increases the state's vulnerability to wildfires statewide. Also, the intensity of wildfires and their proximity to development is increasing.
- The continued drought has resulted in poorer habitat conditions for wildlife and increased mortality through starvation, predation, and reduced production and recruitment. These impacts tend to be cumulative, resulting in reduced populations. The economic impacts of declining wildlife include reductions in customer outlay for licenses and equipment, fewer federal funds for management and increased agency management actions (such as water catchment maintenance and water hauling) despite reduced funding.

These updates confirm that Arizona remains in long term drought with projections for warmer temperatures and increased wildfire risk. Based on this information, the ICG unanimously recommends that both drought declarations be kept in place:

The meeting summary and presentations are online at:
<http://www.azwater.gov/AzDWR/StatewidePlanning/Drought/ICG.htm>.

Sincerely,



Sandra A. Fabritz-Whitney

CC: Chuck McHugh, Co-Chair

Enclosures:
PCA 99006
Executive Order 2007-10
2012 Arizona Drought Preparedness Annual Report