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Governor

SANDY FABRITZ-WHITNEY
Director

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June 11, 2013

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

**Re: Recommendation to Maintain the Drought Emergency Declaration
(PCA99006) and Drought Declaration (issued by Executive Order 2007-10)**

Dear Mr. Kinsall,

K. Kinsall

This letter provides updates on Arizona's drought conditions and recommendations to the Governor from the Drought Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG). The ICG, comprised of state, federal, tribal and non-governmental organizations, is an advisory body to the Governor on Arizona drought issues. This group meets in the spring and fall to evaluate drought conditions and provide 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 May 20, 2013 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 May 20th meeting, reports were provided by Salt River Project on the conditions of the Salt and Verde River watersheds; Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) on the Colorado River Basin; State Drought Monitoring Technical Committee on drought status, climate conditions and outlook; State Forestry Division on the wildfire outlook, and USDA Farm Services on the new, streamlined disaster designation process. The main points described below form the basis of the ICG's recommendations:

- The entire state continues to be in some level of drought, with two watersheds in extreme drought, six in severe drought, three in moderate drought, and three abnormally dry. The driest conditions occur in the south central and southeastern parts of the state.
- The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook predicts that from mid May to the end of August drought will persist or intensify in most of the state with drought conditions developing in central Arizona and along the Colorado River through August of 2013.
- The water year (surface water supply from October 1 to September 30) to date is worse now compared to the past three years. Even though Gila County received nearly normal precipitation, the frequency and timing of events has not been ideal for spring green-up, particularly at the lower elevations. In the driest parts of the state, Graham and Greenlee Counties report unprecedented water restrictions and the possibility of shortages, no ground moisture except where irrigated, low forage production, diminished surface water and dry stockponds.
- The temperature outlook for this summer is above normal, with the greatest odds for above-normal temperatures in the Four Corners and the weakest odds in the Yuma area. There is no significant indicator for the summer monsoon precipitation, as the small scale signals which drive the precipitation patterns are difficult to forecast this far in advance. Significant rainfall during the summer could help alleviate some drought conditions.
- The current outlook for the upcoming winter is neutral for El Niño and La Niña, however, the Pacific Decadal Oscillation suggests possible decreased precipitation.
- The Salt and Verde watersheds experienced the third consecutive winter with below median runoff, even though precipitation in these watersheds was 84% of normal between October 1 and May 1. The total system is 63% of capacity compared to 66% one year ago.
- The current Colorado River reservoir system storage stands at 52% as of May 6, 2013 compared to 62% at this time last year. It is projected that Lake Powell and Lake Mead storage will generally decline through 2014. The Bureau of Reclamation's August 24-month study will determine the water year 2014 release from Lake Powell and whether 8.23 million acre-feet or 7.48 million acre-feet will be released. The lower release could lead to a shortage

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declaration by Secretary of the Interior for the Lower Colorado River Basin as early as calendar year 2016.

- The continuing drought conditions have increased the state's vulnerability to wildfires statewide, especially in the southern half of the state. Fire restrictions on all state-owned and state-managed lands will be in effect as of May 22. Contributing factors include high temperatures, low humidity and persistently dry vegetation that provide conditions for rapid spread of wildfire. Other factors that contribute to the increased wildfire threat are the predicted warmer than normal temperatures, windy periods as upper level systems pass by and the typically "dry" thunderstorms (lightening with little rain) early in the monsoon. Although the number of fires has been going down over the decades, fire sizes are going up.
- Currently all counties in Arizona have a disaster designation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture due to the impact of drought, high winds and wildfires on range and farmland. In July 2012, the USDA announced a streamlined disaster designation to deliver faster and more flexible assistance to farmers and ranchers. Notably, the USDA will utilize the information provided by Arizona to U.S. Drought Monitor to help determine designations. Extreme (D3) or Exceptional (D4) drought conditions qualify as automatic designations, while severe (D2) drought for eight consecutive weeks during the growing season qualifies for nearly automatic designation.

The updates confirmed that Arizona remains in long term drought with most of the state experiencing moderate to severe drought. Projections include warmer temperatures, increased wildfire risk, and persisting or intensifying drought. Based on this information, the ICG unanimously recommends that both drought declarations be kept in place.

The meeting summary and presentations are posted on the [ADWR drought website](#).

Sincerely,



Sandy Fabritz-Whitney, ICG Co-chair

cc: Chuck McHugh, ICG Co-chair

Enclosures:
PCA99006
Executive Order 2007-10