

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON
FOR GILLIAM COUNTY

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-07

A RESOLUTION DECLARING A STATE OF)
DROUGHT EMERGENCY IN GILLIAM COUNTY)

THIS MATTER, coming before the County Court for Gilliam County sitting as the County governing body at a regularly scheduled meeting on this 3rd day of June, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the total precipitation for the area is significantly below average; and

WHEREAS, Gilliam County is faced with potential crop failures both in dry land and irrigated areas that are served by streams as well as a 50% reduction in available range forage for livestock, likely necessitating livestock feed assistance; and

WHEREAS, the County Court of Gilliam County, Oregon hereby declares that a state of emergency exists within Gilliam County; and


NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Gilliam County Court is requesting that Governor Brown declare a state of drought emergency for Gilliam County.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Gilliam County Court is requesting that Governor Brown request that the United States Secretary of Interior and the United States Secretary of Agriculture issue Drought Disaster Declaration for Gilliam County.

Adopted by the Gilliam County Court this 3rd day of June, 2015.



Steve Shaffer, Gilliam County Judge



Dennis Gronquist, Gilliam County Commissioner



Michael Weimar, Gilliam County Commissioner



Gilliam County Soil and Water Conservation District
PO Box 106, 333 S. Main St. – Condon, OR 97823 – Phone (541) 384-2672 x109

May 27, 2015

Gilliam County Court
PO Box 427
Condon, OR 97823

Judge Shaffer, Commissioner Gronquist, and Commissioner Weimar;

The Gilliam County Soil and Water Conservation District formally requests that the Gilliam County Court consider and approve an emergency declaration of drought for Gilliam County. We further formally request that the Gilliam County Court, in coordination with the Gilliam County Emergency Management Department, do pursue the necessary steps to attain a drought emergency declaration from the Governor's office.

According to the May 1, 2015 USDA/NRCS Oregon Basin Outlook Report Gilliam County is listed in the D2-Severe Drought category. Across Oregon, much of the winter's precipitation fell as rain rather than as snow, causing sixty percent of the long-term snowpack monitoring sites to set new records for the lowest and earliest peak snowpack in over 30 years. Due to the warm mountain temperatures, one third of snow monitoring sites in the state didn't receive enough snow to build a lasting snowpack at all this year. The current snowpack deficit means that the mountains are missing several feet of water, normally frozen in the high elevation snowpack, which usually serves as a natural reservoir to feed streams and rivers throughout the summer. Because of the record low snowpack water users should expect water shortages this summer.

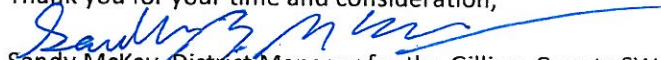
For the John Day Basin: As of May 1, only 1 out of 15 snow monitoring sites in the basin still had snow. The snowpack in this region peaked significantly below normal this winter. In general, SNOTEL sites in the basin peaked 40 to 60% below typical peak snowpack levels and 5 to 8 weeks earlier than normal. In addition, 5 SNOTEL sites in the basin experienced their earliest snowpack peaks on record. April precipitation was 47% of average. Precipitation since the beginning of the water year (October 1 - May 1) has been 86% of average. Summer streamflow forecasts in the basin range from 10% to 52% of average for the May through September period. Forecasted streamflow volumes fall in the lowest third of observed streamflows since 1981. Water managers in the basin should expect significant water shortages this summer.

According to the Drought Report for the Week of May 26, 2015 published by the Oregon State Department of Water Resources the John Day Basin has been placed in the Drought Unavoidable category. This is due to the lack of water storage reservoirs and snow pack in the basin along with the continuing dry forecast.

Throughout Gilliam County the effects of the current drought can be seen in poor crop health and yields, reduced upland grass production, reduced spring flows, and extremely low river and stream water levels. As an example, the John Day River normally runs at 4,500cfs during this time of year; currently it is at 800cfs. Stretches of Rock Creek and Thirtymile Creek are already completely dry.

A county declaration of drought emergency is the first step in receiving the declaration from the Governor. And the Governor's declaration is necessary to allow our local producers' access to State and Federal drought assistance programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration,


Sandy McKay, District Manager for the Gilliam County SWCD



Extension Service Gilliam County

Oregon State University, 333 S. Main, PO Box 707, Condon, Oregon 97823-0707
T 541-384-2271 | F 541-384-2571 | <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gilliam/>

May 27, 2015

Gilliam County Court
P.O. Box 427
Condon, OR 97823

Dear Judge Shaffer, Commissioner Gronquist and Commissioner Weimar,

The USDA currently indicates Gilliam County is suffering a level D2 Severe Drought. This is consistent with the deficit of soil moisture as well as the declining condition of crops and livestock forage in our county.

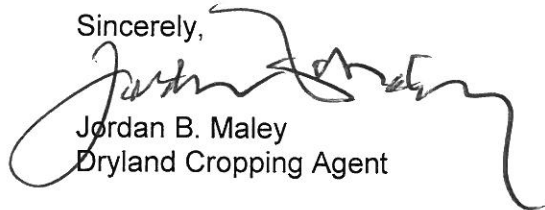
A production estimate for the wheat growing areas indicates the moisture shortfall could translate into at least a 30-bushel per acre yield reduction in fields under summerfallow management. At today's prices, an estimated 2.7 million bushels of lost wheat production translates into a loss of \$16.2 million in gross revenue to producers. While some of this loss will be covered by crop insurance, a part of it will not.

Livestock forage production will likely be negatively impacted in a similar manner to cereal grains, although the actual amount of loss is more difficult to quantify. A 45-55% reduction in available forage is estimated at this time. The cost of the drought to livestock producers will include the purchase of additional feed to make up the shortfall in pasture production and the transportation of water to livestock when natural sources of water become depleted.

The combination of reduced grain and livestock production and other revenue will have an extremely negative impact upon Gilliam County agricultural producers, related service-sector businesses and county government. It is important that we secure the resources necessary to allow our rural communities to survive the drought.

If I can be of further assistance in focusing attention on this critical issue or any other issue of interest to Gilliam County, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan B. Maley".

Jordan B. Maley
Dryland Cropping Agent

Cc: Blake Rowe, CEO, Oregon Wheat Growers League
Justin Faulhaber, CED, Gilliam-Wheeler Farm Service Agency
Misty Bennett, DC, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Sandy McKay, Manager, Gilliam County Soil & Water Conservation District