

HOOD RIVER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



DAVID MERIWETHER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RON RIVERS - CHAIR
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LES PERKINS - DISTRICT NO. 4

June 25, 2015

Honorable Kate Brown
Governor, State of Oregon
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem OR 97301-4047

Andrew Phelps
Director, Oregon Office of Emergency Management
P.O. Box 14370
Salem, OR 97309

RE: Hood River County Drought Emergency Declaration

Dear Governor Brown:

Hood River County Board of County Commissioners requests a State of Oregon drought declaration for Hood River County under provisions of ORS 401.165, as a result of severe and continuing drought conditions, beginning at this time and continuing for an unspecified period of time.

Attached is Hood River County Drought Emergency Resolution # 2041, submitted with more detailed evidence of the urgent need for action at this time.

With limited reservoir and water storage facilities, annual water supplies in our County are dependent on Mount Hood and Cascade range snowpack. According to the May USDA Oregon Basin Outlook Report, this peaked 80% below typical peak levels this winter and the Hood River water basin has below normal streamflow with a dry forecast for the future. Our area Snowtel for 2015 is the lowest on record since 1979 and the Tucker Bridge stream flows are the lowest recorded rates since 1988. Twenty of our neighboring counties in central and eastern Oregon, including Hood River's contiguous county, Wasco, recently received Oregon and USDA drought emergency designation for related conditions.

Hood River County is a tourism and agricultural hub within Oregon and the local economy depends heavily on the production of fruit and other farming products. Hood River produces more winter pears than any county in the United States. Hood River's high-value irrigated agriculture consists of 26,952 acres of pears, apples, cherries and other crops.

A Small County with a big mission:
Providing Quality of Life for all.

In addition, forestry is a vital source of income to Hood River County, with nearly 31,000 acres of land dedicated as County Forest, used for timber production and as a certified Tree Farm to support the present and future needs of residents of Hood River County. A decline in timber industry revenues and recent loss of federal forestry timber dollars to Hood River County has already resulted in significantly lowered revenue for community services.

Three of our county's largest irrigation districts are being impacted by current and ongoing extreme water shortages and the NRCS/USDA three month forecast indicates worsening conditions. Hood River County has declared a local drought emergency and requests a state drought declaration and support from the Oregon Department of Water Resources, in response to extreme conditions.

The absence of snow pack severely affected our winter tourism season, as the normal ski season was one of the shortest and most poorly attended in history. The current NOAA seasonal drought outlook indicates drought will persist and intensify across our region.

As a result of the severity and sustained loss of rainfall and snow melt, and unusually hot temperatures, Hood River County has determined that proper and effective response is beyond the capabilities of Hood River County and we have exhausted local resources. State and federal assistance is needed. This is a long term trend which necessitates taking action to deliver relief and to help build a more sustainable future for our community.

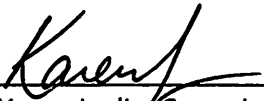
Sincerely,
Hood River County
Board of Commissioners



Ron Rivers, Chair



Maui Meyer, Commissioner



Karen Joplin, Commissioner

Robert Benton, Commissioner



Les Perkins, Commissioner

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSONERS
OF HOOD RIVER COUNTY, OREGON**

IN THE MATTER OF:) **RESOLUTION NO. 2041**
)
A RESOLUTION DECLARING A)
LOCALIZED STATE OF EMERGENCY)
AND REQUESTING STATE DECLARATION)
OF DROUGHT EMERGENCY FOR HOOD)
RIVER COUNTY)

WHEREAS, ORS 401.309 and the Hood River County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) authorize the county governing body to declare a state of emergency within the county or within a designated portion of the county; and

WHEREAS, on this 24th day of June 2015, Hood River County finds that its agricultural industry, farmers and related economy, which comprises a significant portion of the area's economic vitality, will suffer from widespread and severe economic damage, loss of water supply, potential injuries and loss of property resulting from extreme weather conditions within the county; and

WHEREAS, annual water supply available for irrigators within Hood River County is heavily dependent on snowmelt, and snowpack as of April 1, 2015 at the Red Hill Snotel site was approximately 5% of average and streamflow as of June 16, 2015 near the mouth of the Hood River (USGS gauge at Tucker Bridge) was approximately 40% of average; and

WHEREAS, climate forecasts show that this is a long term, chronic water supply problem for our rural agricultural community and ongoing efforts are required to ensure community resiliency; and

WHEREAS, the East Fork Irrigation District, Hood River County's largest irrigation supplier, covering 9,494 irrigated acres, is forecasted to have significantly reduced water supplies in the next month; and

WHEREAS, Farmer's Irrigation District, supplying water to approximately 5,700 acres, is also extremely concerned about water deliveries critically needed to high value orchard crops, and furthermore, necessary to contract compliance to PacifiCorp to produce a minimum amount of hydroelectricity per year where any shortfall resulting in termination of the contract would greatly damage Hood River Basin economy; and

WHEREAS, additionally Middle Fork Irrigation District has long term concerns about its ability to maintain adequate water supply given long term forecast, weather model predictions and upcoming regulatory requirements to protect endangered species in the middle fork watershed; and

WHEREAS, the extended weather forecast for Hood River County projects higher than normal temperatures, and below average precipitation; and

WHEREAS, the above conditions result in loss of economic stability, decreased agricultural production, shortened growing season, decreased fuel moisture, and early onset fire danger; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, 2013 and 2014, Hood River County experienced challenging wildfire conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Hood River County Board of Commissioners determines that extraordinary measures must be taken to alleviate suffering of people and livestock and to protect or mitigate economic loss, and to be responsive to the threat of wildfires.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

1. Pursuant to ORS 401.309 and the Hood River County EOP, a State of Emergency is presently declared within Hood River County.
2. The Hood River County drought Emergency Plan has been implemented.
3. Pursuant to ORS 401.032(2), the governing body for Hood River County finds that appropriate response is beyond the capability of Hood River County and we have exhausted local resources. We are declaring a State of Emergency for the purpose of assessment, evaluation and acquiring the ability to provide appropriate available resources.
4. The governing body for Hood River County respectfully requests the Honorable Kate Brown, Governor of Oregon, declare a Drought Emergency for Hood River County under the provisions of ORS 401.165 due to severe and continuing drought conditions beginning at this time and continuing into the future for an unknown period of time; and direct the Oregon Department of Water Resources to make available in Hood River County Temporary Transfers of Water Rights, Emergency Water Use Permits, and Use of Existing Right Option/Agreement; and other federal and state drought assistance and programs as needed.
5. This Resolution shall take effect immediately from and after its adoption.

DATED this 24th day of June, 2015.

HOOD RIVER COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Ron Rivers, Chair



Karen Joplin, Commissioner



Maui Meyer, Commissioner

Robert Benton, Commissioner



Les Perkins, Commissioner