

Bill Harvey

Commission Chair
bharvey@bakercounty.org

June 6, 2018

Mark Bennett

Commissioner
mbennett@bakercounty.org

Dr. Brenda Bateman
Technical Services Division Administrator
Oregon Water Resources Department
Co-Chair, OR Drought Readiness Council
725 Summer Street NE, Suite A
Salem, OR 97301
Via Email: brenda.o.bateman@oregon.gov

Ms. Sonya Andron
Operations and Preparedness Manager
Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Co-Chair, OR Drought Readiness Council
P.O. Box 14370
Salem, OR 97301
Via Email: Sonya.Andron@state.or.us

Bruce A. Nichols

Commissioner
bnichols@bakercounty.org

RE: Baker County Drought

Dr. Bateman and Ms. Andron:

Baker County, by and through its County Elected Officials, requests that the Governor of Oregon issue an executive order for all of Baker County under the provisions of ORS 536 as a direct result of severe and continuing/projected drought conditions.

There is the potential for the Baker County agricultural and livestock, natural resources, recreational, tourism, and related economies to experience widespread and severe damage resulting from extreme weather conditions within the county.

2/2018 – In northern Baker County a landowner was able to drive fence posts into the ground. Normally this is not done until mid to late March because of the frost in the ground.

2/7/2018 – Field burning is occurring in central west Baker County. This is months earlier than normal.

2/12/2018 – Baker County Road Dept. dug a 10' hole with no moisture and the soil was like cement powder dry dirt.

2/12/2018 – Blowing Dust is observed in the Hereford area

3/2018 – First week of March the spring runoff is already done when usually it keeps flowing until the first of April (northern 1/3 of Baker County).

4/15/2018 – Spring livestock turnout sites have no water (Southern 1/3rd of Baker County)

4/16/2018 – People are already irrigating which normally doesn't happen until the first of May, last year it was the middle of May before irrigation started (in northern 1/3 of Baker County)

4/18/2018 – Sutton Creek area (central Baker County), several springs have not come back yet.

4/27/2018 – Green grass is carrying fire and the sagebrush torches; very dry.

4/25/2018 – Range grasses have slowed growing and are heading out, we have about half the growth compared to normal. Pasture growth has slowed as well. (Northern Baker County)

4/25/2018 – Grass production is half of last years. Soil moisture in dug holes is virtually nothing after 1 foot in depth (central Baker County)

4/25/2018 – Dug a 6-foot test hole and only had 3 inches of moisture. 2 springs are dry and storage ponds are dry as well. Field grass measurements 30% of normal with 27 monitoring points. Idaho Fescue is currently measured at 3 inches when it averages 7 inches at this time (southern Baker County)

5/8/2018 – Water hauling for livestock is occurring in southern Baker County

5/10/2018 – NOAA visited from Boise and observed the southern slopes have cured out in the southern half of Baker County.

The county has already formally declared a drought, and has attached a copy of the adopted resolution for your files. Producers have taken the following actions to anticipate or mitigate effects of the drought:

- Fed livestock longer to allow range land grasses to grow. Livestock turnout was delayed by 2 plus weeks.
- Hauled water for livestock.
- Summer fallowed ground because of the lack of water.

If these trends keep going the way they are, producers will have less pasture for the fall and will be forced to supplement the cattle with hay to keep them going. This is because they will not be able to get the regrowth after haying. They may not be able to get the same number of cuttings as well which means they will have to look for additional hay for their livestock.

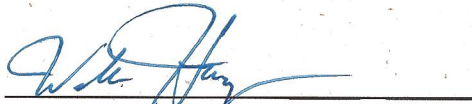
Baker County Drought Committee made up of local producers throughout the county as well as representatives from the irrigation districts, USDA, NRCS, OWRD, and NOAA met on April 25, 2018 and discussed the current conditions and recommend the county move forward with collecting observations, impacts, and declare a drought emergency exists in Baker County.

The Baker County Board of Commissioners have determined that additional action by and support from the state is needed. This may include assistance from the Oregon Water Resources Department and other Oregon executive branch agencies, operating within their statutory authorities.

Baker County Board of Commissioners therefore requests an executive order from the Governor, declaring drought in Baker County.

We extend in advance our appreciation for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,



William "Bill" Harvey, Chair
Baker County Board of Commissioners



Mark Bennett, Commissioner
Baker County Board of Commissioners



Bruce Nichols, Commissioner
Baker County Board of Commissioners

COUNTY OF BAKER
BOARD of COMMISSIONERS

DECLARATION OF LOCAL DISASTER

WHEREAS, the County of Baker on this 6th day of June, 2018 has determined that the Baker County agricultural industry, and related economy is suffering widespread and severe economic damage, from extreme cyclical weather conditions and continuing drought within the county.

and

Baker County's precipitation is 2 inches below normal for the water year beginning October 1. For the month of May, Baker County's wettest month and a long term average of 1.46" only received .92 of an inch.

and

Phillips Reservoir, the largest water reservoir in the county, only filled to 67 percent of capacity. Unity Reservoir went on stored water two weeks ahead of schedule. The streamflow forecasts in the May 1, 2018 Oregon Basin Outlook Report for the Burnt, Powder, and Pine drainages are likely to be well below normal.

and

The extended weather forecast for Baker County projects "higher than normal temperatures, and below average precipitation".

and

These disaster conditions have resulted in loss of economic stability, pasture shortages, shortened growing season, and decreased water supplies for Baker County agricultural producers.

WHEREAS, the Baker County Board of Commissioners, has determined that extraordinary measures must be taken to alleviate the 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 DECLARED by the Baker County Board of Commissioners:

Section 1. That a local disaster is declared within Baker County.

Section 2. That by this declaration, the Baker County Emergency Operations Plan, Drought Annex plan has been implemented and initiated a

limited activation of the Emergency Operations Center.

- Section 3. Baker County has examined its fiscal resources and found them inadequate to provide relief.
- Section 4. That a drought declaration under Oregon Revised Statutes 536 be used to allow the Water Resources Department to use a number of water-related tools that include temporary drought permits to use groundwater.
- Section 5. That this proclamation shall take effect immediately from and after its issuance.
- Section 6. The Board of Commissioners, request that the Honorable Kate Brown, Governor, of the State of Oregon declare: "that a severe, continuing drought" exists in Baker County.

-and-

Request the Honorable, Sonny Perdue, Secretary, of the United States Department of Agriculture, to expedite assistance to local agricultural industries/producers who have suffered extensive and ongoing loss from the drought and associated wildfires.

DONE AND DATED this 6th day of June, 2018

Baker County Board of Commissioners



William "Bill" Harvey, Chairman



Mark E. Bennett, Commissioner



Bruce A. Nichols, Commissioner