

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

STATE OF OREGON, COUNTY OF JACKSON

IN THE MATTER OF PROCLAIMING THAT A) ORDER NO. 45-21
LOCAL DISASTER IS DECLARED AND)
REQUEST THE GOVERNOR TO DECLARE A)
STATE DROUGHT EMERGENCY FOR)
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON)

WHEREAS, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners finds that Jackson County’s agricultural and livestock industries, and related economy, are anticipated to suffer widespread and severe economic damage, potential injuries, and loss of property resulting from extreme weather conditions within the County; and

WHEREAS, annual water supplies available for irrigators and ranchers within Jackson County are a function of both available water storage in the Rogue and Applegate Rivers, in various reservoirs (Willow, Howard Prairie, Hyatt, Emigrant, Agate, Fish, and Four Mile Lakes), and the estimated seasonal inflow from winter snowpack; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has estimated that in this water year, October 1, 2020, through March 1, 2021, the Rogue Basin is at 87 percent median snowpack and 8 percent of total average precipitation, and as of March 1, 2021, storage for the reservoirs was below average with ranges of 14 to 85 percent of average; and

WHEREAS, long-term snowpack monitoring sites in the Rogue Basin have recorded below average levels for snow water equivalent, including four snow courses on Mt. Ashland that have been measured continuously for over 40 years; and

WHEREAS, as of March 1, 2021, the USDA reports that streamflow forecasts increased slightly from the month prior, however water managers in Jackson County should prepare for normal to below normal water supplies if conditions remain similar; and

WHEREAS, Jackson County has approximately 40,000 acres of irrigation district lands irrigated, in part, from stored water, and many of irrigation districts may choose to delay opening day and may be forced to curtail water sources later this summer; and

WHEREAS, as of February 2021, irrigation storage, as part of the United States Bureau of Reclamation Rogue Basin Project, is at 16 percent of average; and

WHEREAS, in addition to irrigation district lands, there are approximately 170,000 acres of irrigated lands that have individual water rights that will be affected by low reservoir and streamflow levels; and

WHEREAS, many farmers, ranchers, and vineyards rely solely upon natural water sources, which are not augmented by local reservoirs, and these natural tributaries to the Rogue and Applegate Rivers are in extreme jeopardy of drying as they rely upon annual snowpack to run; and

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

WHEREAS, all of these conditions will result in the loss of economic stability, pasture shortages, decreases in feed production, a shortened growing season, and decreased water supplies for Jackson County's agricultural, vineyard, and livestock producers; and

WHEREAS, in addition, this multi-year cumulative drought has resulted in decreased fuel moisture and early onset fire danger; and

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

The Board of County Commissioners of Jackson County hereby PROCLAIMS:

1. A local disaster is declared within Jackson County.
2. The Drought Annex of the Jackson County Emergency Operations Plan has been implemented.
3. Pursuant to Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 401.165, the Board finds that appropriate response is beyond the capability of Jackson County and is declaring a state of emergency for the purpose of assessment, evaluation, and acquiring the ability to provide appropriate available resources.
4. A request to The Honorable Kate Brown, Governor of Oregon, to declare a State Drought Emergency for all of Jackson County under the provisions of ORS 536.740 due to severe and continuing drought conditions beginning at this time, and continuing for an unknown period of time, and direct the Oregon Water Resources Department to make available in Jackson County: temporary transfers of water rights, emergency water use permits, use of existing right option agreements, and other Federal and State drought assistance and programs as needed.
5. This Proclamation shall take effect immediately from and after its issuance.

DATED this 31st day of March, 2021, at Medford, Oregon.

JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

/s/ Rick Dyer

Rick Dyer, Chair

/s/ Dave Dotterer

Dave Dotterer, Commissioner

/s/ Colleen Roberts

Colleen Roberts, Commissioner

Due to the existing novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the need to promote physical distancing, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners is conducting meetings through electronic and telephonic means. On January 5, 2021, the Board of Commissioners approved Order No. 1-21 authorizing the use of their electronic signatures on Ordinances, Orders, and other documents. Following the motion and roll call vote, Commissioners Dyer, Dotterer, and Roberts authorized the use of his/her electronic signature on this Board Order No. 45-21.