

JACKSON COUNTY

Oregon

Administrator's Office

Danny L. Jordan
County Administrator

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May 24, 2023

Ryan Andrews, Hydrologist
Oregon Water Resources Department
Co-Chair, Oregon Drought Readiness Council
725 Summer Street NE, Suite A
Salem OR 97301
ryan.m.andrews@state.or.us

Traci Naile
Operations and Preparedness Manager
Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Co-Chair, Oregon Drought Readiness Council
P.O. Box 14370
Salem OR 97301
traci.naile@state.or.us

RE: Jackson County Drought Declaration

Dear Mr. Andrews and Ms. Naile:

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners request that the Governor of Oregon issue an Executive Order for all of Jackson County under the provisions of Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) Chapter 536, Water Resources Administration, as a direct result of severe and continuing drought conditions.

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

A call for water was made for Klamath Lake. This call for water impacts water users on tributaries to Upper Klamath Lake who have a water right younger than 1908. Fourmile Lake, a tributary of Upper Klamath Lake, supplies water for the Medford and Rogue River Valley Irrigation Districts. Historically, the Irrigation Districts use about 6000-acre feet of water each year out of Fourmile Lake, but this season they may only receive one-third (1/3) of that total.

A reduction of this magnitude will result in a greater dependency of live stream flow and stored water from other reservoirs such as Emigrant, Howard Prairie, and Hyatt Lakes, which currently are less than 45 percent of average for storage. While conditions have improved from last year, the continued water supply deficit has significantly strained reservoirs with almost no carryover supply.

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners signed Order No. 109-23 (attached) declaring a local drought State of Emergency. In addition, Jackson County has taken the following actions to mitigate the effects of the drought:


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Local coordination with Regional Watermaster and local water districts to coordinate and recommend mitigation strategies with the approval of this declaration. The Oregon Water Resources Department may exercise emergency water rights authority following a Governor's drought declaration by issuing temporary emergency permits, transfers, instream leases, approve special option agreements, authorize temporary substitution of a supplemental ground water right for a primary surface water right, temporary exchange of the source of water allowed under a water right, and grant preference of use to water rights for human consumption or livestock. These emergency actions are noted in ORS 536.750 and Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) 690-019-0040, 0055, 0058, 0059, 0070, 0080, and 010.

By declaring a local Statement of Emergency, the Board of Commissioners has 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. The Jackson County Board of Commissioners, therefore, requests an Executive Order from the Governor declaring a drought emergency in Jackson County.

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

Sincerely,



Danny Jordan
County Administrator

DJ:hp/ljs

Attachment (Order No. 109-23)

By Email Only

cc: By Email to Holly Powers, Jackson County Emergency Manager (powershd@jacksoncounty.org)
By Email to Shavon Haynes, District 13 State Watermaster (Shavon.L.Haynes@oregon.gov)

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

STATE OF OREGON, COUNTY OF JACKSON

IN THE MATTER OF DECLARING A LOCAL)
DROUGHT STATE OF EMERGENCY AND)
REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR TO DECLARE)
A STATE DROUGHT EMERGENCY FOR)
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON)

ORDER NO. 109-23

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 substantial 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 (Howard Prairie, Hyatt, Emigrant, Agate, Fish, and Fourmile Lakes), and the estimated seasonal inflow from winter snowpack; and

WHEREAS, a call for water has been made for Klamath Lake as water right claim K-622 requires there to be an elevation of 4,143.00 feet at this time of year; however, it is currently at 4,142.70 feet; and

WHEREAS, this call for water impacts water users on tributaries to Upper Klamath Lake, who have a water right younger than 1908; and

WHEREAS, Fourmile Lake, a tributary of Upper Klamath Lake, supplies water for the Medford and Rogue River Valley Irrigation Districts; and

WHEREAS, historically, the Districts use approximately 6,000-acre feet of water each year out of Fourmile Lake but this season they may receive a third of that amount; and

WHEREAS, when full, Fourmile Lake is the source of approximately 50 percent of the total storage available for Medford Irrigation District, and a lesser portion for Rogue River Valley Irrigation District; and

WHEREAS, a reduction of this magnitude will result in a greater dependency of live streamflow and stored water from other reservoirs such as Emigrant, Howard Prairie, and Hyatt Lakes, which currently are less than 45 percent of average for storage; and

WHEREAS, due to consecutive years of drought, out-of-stream uses, and Endangered Species Act (ESA) required releases, above-average snowpack is not forecasted to supply the needed amount to offset drought conditions; and

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

Now, therefore,

The Board of County Commissioners of Jackson County hereby ORDERS:

1. A local state of emergency is declared in Jackson County for the purpose of assessment, evaluation, and acquiring the ability to provide appropriate available resources due to drought conditions.
2. The Drought Annex of the Jackson County Emergency Operations Plan has been implemented.
3. Pursuant to Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 401.165, a copy of this signed Order shall be sent to The Honorable Tina Kotek, Governor of Oregon, with a request to the Governor to declare a State Drought Emergency for all of Jackson County under the provisions of ORS 536.740 due to elevated 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.
4. This declaration of a local state of emergency shall expire on December 31, 2023.

DATED this 24th day of May, 2023, at Medford, Oregon.


JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Colleen Roberts, Chair



Rick Dyer, Commissioner



Dave Dotterrer, Commissioner

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