

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR THE STATE OF OREGON
FOR THE COUNTY OF JEFFERSON

IN THE MATTER OF DECLARING A LOCAL)
DISASTER AND REQUESTING A STATE OF)
DROUGHT EMERGENCY DECLARATION)
PURSUANT TO ORS 536.740 FOR)
JEFFERSON COUNTY, OREGON)

ORDER NO. 0 - 033 - 26

WHEREAS, the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners finds that the Jefferson County agricultural and livestock industries, and related economy are suffering 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 Jefferson County are a function of both available water storage in the Willow Creek and Trout Creek resources and the estimated seasonal inflow from winter snow pack is currently mapped as having moderate drought conditions by the U.S. Drought Monitor with many areas of Jefferson County receiving less than average precipitation; and

WHEREAS, the North Unit Irrigation District and the Deschutes Basin Board of Directors have requested the assistance of Jefferson County Commissioners for a drought declaration as indicated in the attached letters; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the available water storage and the estimated seasonal inflow, Jefferson County's irrigated ground from stored water will receive reduced supply and reduced allocations; and

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

WHEREAS, the above conditions will result in loss of economic stability, pasture shortages, decreased feed production, shortened growing season, and decreased water supplies for Jefferson County agricultural and livestock producers. In addition, this multi-year cumulative drought has resulted in decreased fuel moisture and early onset fire danger; and

WHEREAS, the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners determines 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.

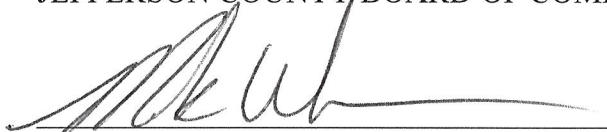
NOW THEREFORE the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners ORDERS as follows:

1. A local disaster is declared within Jefferson County.
2. The Jefferson County Drought Emergency Management Plan has been implemented.

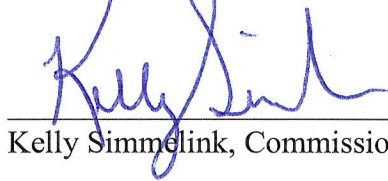
3. Pursuant to ORS 401.165, we find that the appropriate response is beyond the capability of Jefferson County. We are declaring a state of emergency for the purpose of assessment, evaluation and acquiring the ability to provide appropriate available resources.
4. The Honorable Tina Kotek, Governor of Oregon, is requested to declare a Drought Emergency for all of Jefferson County under the provision of ORS 401.165 due to severe and continuing drought conditions beginning at this time and continuing for an unknown period of time; and direct the Oregon Department of Water Resources to make available in Jefferson County: Temporary Transfers of Water Rights, and Emergency Water Use Permits, and Use of Existing Right Option/Agreement; and other federal and state drought assistance and programs as needed.
5. This declaration shall take effect immediately from its issuance.

DATED this 18 day of March, 2026.

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Mark Wunsch, Commission Chair



Kelly Simmelink, Commissioner



Seth Taylor, Commissioner



Deschutes Basin Board of Control



February 9, 2026

Jefferson County Board of Commissioners:

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mark.wunsch@jeffersoncountyor.gov

seth.taylor@jeffersoncountyor.gov

RE: Jefferson County Drought

Commissioners Simmelink, Wunsch, and Taylor:

The Deschutes Basin Board of Control (DBBC) requests that Jefferson County Commission declare a severe drought in Jefferson County. The DBBC also request the Commission send a request to the Governor of Oregon to issue an executive order for all of Jefferson County under the provisions of ORS 536 as a direct result of severe and devastating drought conditions.

There is the potential for the Jefferson 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. The Deschutes Basin Board of Control met and agree to support the Commissioners moving forward with a drought declaration.

The DBBC believes County action 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.

We thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Regards,

Craig Horrell
DBBC President

PO Box 919 - Madras, OR 97741

DBBC Member Districts

*Arnold Irrigation District • Central Oregon Irrigation District • Lone Pine Irrigation District • North Unit Irrigation District
Ochoco Irrigation District • Swalley Irrigation District • Three Sisters Irrigation District • Tumalo Irrigation District*

DBBC President - Craig Horrell, 541-548-6047; chorrell@cod.org



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March 10, 2026

To: Jefferson County Commissioners

Subject: Request for Emergency Drought Declaration

Dear Commissioners,

Oregon is currently experiencing historically dry winter conditions, resulting in drought levels similar to recent years. According to the US Drought Monitor, over 19% of Oregon is under moderate drought (D1) conditions, while 4% faces severe drought (D2). Specifically, Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties are all experiencing moderate drought.

The snowpack in Central Oregon this winter is well below average, with most gauges in the basin showing less than 15% of normal levels and only 34% of Snow Water Equivalent (SWE). Coupled with above-average regional temperatures, soil moisture levels are nearing an all-time low. Wickiup Reservoir, which serves as the primary irrigation water source for the North Unit Irrigation District (NUID), is at only 90% of its capacity. Meanwhile, Prineville Reservoir has reached the minimum fill level necessary to provide 10,000 acre-feet of water for NUID patrons. Given the current conditions, we do not anticipate a significant amount of live flow water in either the Deschutes or Crooked River systems. As a result, NUID water managers expect to rely on stored water much earlier in the irrigation season than normal.

The NUID Board of Directors utilizes accurate information, including models, historical data, forecasts, and professional advice, to determine stable and precise water allotments for our patrons each irrigation season. This involves considering water storage availability, snowpack levels, natural streamflow forecasts, operational restrictions related to endangered species, and the limitations of our current irrigation delivery system.

The NUID Board of Directors is expected to set the district's water allotment in late March. Under current conditions, we anticipate that patrons will not receive a full water allotment, marking the eighth consecutive year of below-average allotments.

In light of these circumstances, I strongly urge the Jefferson County Commissioners to request an Emergency Drought Declaration from Governor Kotek. This declaration would grant access to emergency water management tools, including expedited reviews, reduced fees, and waivers for the five-year beneficial use requirement for maintaining water rights. Additionally, it would open the door to federal financial assistance programs from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other agencies.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. If you need any additional information, please feel free to contact the district office.

0 - 033 - 26

Sincerely,

Joshua Bailey
Joshua Bailey
General Manager