

Water Supply Availability Committee/Drought Readiness Council Meeting – April 13, 2022

Phone Conference – Meeting Notes

Attendees

Ryan Andrews – OWRD (Chair)

Curtis Peetz – OEM

Andy Bryant – NWS

Carrie Boudreau – USGS

Salina Hart – USACE

Henry Pai – NWRFC

Matt Warbritton – NRCS

Scott Oviatt – NRCS

Jim Johnson – ODA

Jon Rocha – USBR

Cole Hendrickson – DEQ

Tom Elliott – DOE

Larry O’Neill – OCCRI/OCS

Presentations – update on water supply conditions

Scott Oviatt

- SWE
 - 83% statewide on 4/13
 - Last time showing SWE map - 5/11 SWE is 155%
 - John Day and Malheur have essentially melted out - median value is 0% but there is some negligible SWE present so value would be infinite
 - Northern Cascades and NE basins have been prime recipients of snowpack
 - Willamette and Rogue-Umpqua had late SWE peaks; Klamath, Lake County, and Harney basins had very early peak
 - Trying to distinguish between peak SWE and % of median value over time - current values misrepresent snowpack by showing high % of median values, but % of median peak would be well below average
 - John Day and Grande Ronde-Burnt-Powder-Imnaha had near normal timing peak
 - Hood-Sandy-Lower Deschutes had late peak above normal
 - Upper Deschutes-Crooked had late peak
 - Umatilla-Walla Walla-Willow near normal peak
- SNOTEL precipitation 97% of median on 5/11
 - Southeastern half of state lagging behind in terms of precipitation compared to northwest half
 - Many sites in Klamath and Lake basins have lowest or second lowest precipitation since October 2019
- Some improvement in streamflow forecasts

Andy Bryant

- Contrast between different parts of the state - which areas have benefitted from spring precipitation
 - NW and parts of NE above average over water year
 - Nearly all of western Oregon has benefitted from precipitation over past month
 - Northcentral above average spring precip
- Precipitation January through March was below to well below average statewide - record dryness in southern part of state
- April precipitation was average to well above average statewide

- Contrast between March and April temperatures - much above in March and much below in April statewide
- So far in May (5/10) trend of below to much below average temperatures continues
- Similar pattern in spatial distribution of precipitation - well above in western and northern Oregon but below average central
- Snowpack changes since early April – minor changes in north, with increases in amounts and areal coverage in south, especially for the Cascades
- Precipitation over next 10 days forecasted above average most of western Oregon, not much in Jackson, Douglas County area
- Below average temperatures expected over next 8-14 days statewide
- Below average precipitation and above average temperatures expected June through August
- Be aware of any convective weather influence in August

Henry Pai

- Observed streamflow runoff
 - Average with some above average in NW OR
 - Trending towards much below average in SW OR
 - Nearly all of eastern OR is below to well below average
 - Mostly improvements from April, but some decline in Wallowas and southcentral OR
- Seasonal volume forecasts for April through September
 - Well above average in NW OR, SW OR doing okay ranging from below to above average
 - Willamette at Salem shows increase since mid-January
 - Willamette at Salem shows 8% increase over past month
 - May streamflows already near average with two thirds of month remaining
 - Rogue at Raygold shows 4%
 - Umatilla nr Umatilla shows 15% increase
 - Owyhee shows 11% decrease
- May streamflows projected above average
 - Exceptions in John Day and Owyhee where below average is still expected

Larry O'Neill

- Drought Monitor
 - Improvements in drought severity and extent over past month
 - Systematically improving conditions in NW OR and northcentral OR (Umatilla and Morrow Counties); well above average precipitation
 - Some improvements in northern Sherman
 - 84% of state still in drought, over 50% in D3-D4
- Substantial improvements recommended for next version of drought monitor
 - D1 to D0 in northcentral OR; other one-category improvements suggested
 - Steady improvements in western OR
- Statewide rankings
 - Wet and cool April statewide (7th wettest, 10th coolest)
 - Since January, state is 23rd driest and 39th warmest

- Last 12-months 27th driest
- 24-months 18th driest
- 36-months is 5th driest
- 11th lowest 12-month SPEI
- Lowest 30-month SPEI on record
- Surface soil moisture is approaching normal throughout the state
- Shallow groundwater still really dry in lot of state; takes longer to recover
- Baker County
 - 12-month SPEI 9th lowest
 - 30-month tied lowest (period ending April 1936)
- Douglas County
 - 12-month SPEI 18th lowest
 - 30-month second lowest
- Wallowa County
 - 12-month SPEI 5th lowest
 - 30-month lowest
 - Wallowa mountains acting as barrier to precipitation reaching rest of county
- Wheeler County
- 12-month SPEI 3rd lowest
- 30-month lowest

Carrie Boudreau

- Some record high streamflows over past 7-days (5/9) in NW OR
- Significant improvement compared to last month

Ryan Andrews

- 11 counties with executive order for drought under ORS 536
 - 4 more counties recommended (Baker, Douglas, Wallowa, Wheeler)
- April streamflow variable throughout state
 - Much of west side average to above
 - Exceptions in Curry, Josephine, Jackson, Linn Counties
 - East side well below average
- Streamflow over water year to date (5/11)
 - Mid Coast above average
 - North Coast, Sandy, Hood Basins average
 - Everywhere else below to well below average
- Recent precipitation beneficial for streamflow
 - Well above average west side with some record high flows over past 7- and 28-day periods
 - Above to well above average in NE OR
 - Average to below average in central
- Hydrographs
 - Umatilla R ab Meacham Cr (Umatilla County) 86% over water year with recent improvements
 - Grande Ronde R nr Perry (Union County) 77% over water year with recent improvements

- Sucker Cr (Josephine County) 55% over water year
- Wasco County
 - Warm Springs R (76%) over water year
 - Beaver Cr (57%) over water year, less improvement lately than Warm Springs R
- John Day R at McDonald Ferry (Sherman County) 52% over water year shows recent improvement due to snow meltout
- Although streamflow response is encouraging, proceed with caution in drought-afflicted areas
 - Little snowpack to sustain flows

Jon Rocha

- Irrigation underway
- Wet conditions suppressed demand for most river basins
- Minor flood risk management at McKay and Scoggins
- Water supply allotments are heavily reduced (Owyhee 50% reduced from 3.5 to 1.8 acft/ac; Malheur 30% to 60%)
- Reservoir conditions support drought declarations to date
- Unity still filling
- Beulah start drafting soon
- Powder expected to draft mid-April but still filling, but well below average contents
- Irrigation underway in Deschutes
- Prineville - USBR sent out letters with water accounting numbers, seeing more inflows lately, less outflows
- Rogue system season expected to last to end of July

Salina Hart

- Improved conditions in all reservoirs; less so in southern OR
- Rogue 82% full, 18% below rule curve
- Depleted carryover at Lost Creek to meet fisheries releases; still quite a rebound over last couple weeks; likely to fill reservoir
- Cooler temperatures really helping
- Willamette rebounded and doing flood risk management
- Stored above rule curve in a lot of reservoirs
- Keep reservoirs at max for conservation season
- Court order to manage pools differently
- Cougar completely empty for downstream fish passage operation; uncertain when will start refilling, maybe end of month
- Detroit was above maximum summer pool level; seismic concerns required to drop pool below
- Willamette doing very well overall
- Willow Creek above rule curve, prolonged inflows

Tim Holschbach

- Delayed fire season due to recent precipitation
- Weather break allowed Oregon to support state partners in southwest

- Keeping eye on water supplies, regularly use open water sources for dip points for helicopters and planes
- Full contingency of resources available for summer fire season

Discussion

- OEM – ORS 401
 - Based on level of drought and counties are experiencing water supply issues already
 - OEM making recommendation to Governor's Office to institute ORS 401 declaration statewide in counties already with 536 declaration
 - Allows OEM authority to coordinate with other agencies and resources ahead of time instead of responding to individual situations
- Next meeting proposed for June 15th