



Memo

To: Drought Readiness Council
From: Water Supply Availability Committee
Date: May 17, 2016
Subject: Update on Water Supply Conditions

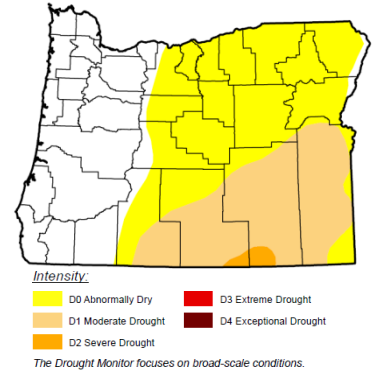
The Water Supply Availability Committee (WSAC) held its regular monthly meeting on May 16, 2016. Water supply conditions across the state have changed considerably since the first NRCS Water Supply Outlook was issued in January. After a record wet December, conditions were looking very favorable, especially compared to 2015. With a significantly earlier snowmelt and federal drought designations occurring in southern Oregon, the Drought Readiness Council should anticipate the possibility of some requests for a state-issued drought declaration.

Some key highlights from the May 16 WSAC Meeting:

- **High temperatures have led to significant snowmelt occurring early.**
Oregon has seen rapid snowmelt occurring all across the state. High temperatures this spring have played a key role in early runoff, anywhere from 2-6 weeks early. Observed temperatures during the month of April were 4 degrees above normal in many parts of the state. These warm temperatures have continued into May, with some relief occurring during these last few days.
- **Several streamflow sites are approaching record lows for this time of year.**
Streamflow across the state has been above average in most locations. Above average precipitation in December led to very positive streamflow conditions. Only two basins—the Goose and Summer Lake Basins and Umatilla Basin are seeing below average streamflow for the water year. April streamflows, however, are starting to reflect the earlier snowmelt runoff, and some streams are starting to recede to baseflow conditions. Coastal streams, in particular, are of concern. The North Coast, Mid-Coast, and South Coast basins are showing 50 to 60 percent of average streamflow for the month of April. Refer to Attachment 1 for hydrographs of the Nehalem River in Tillamook County and the Chewaucan River in Lake County.
- **Streamflow forecasts for April – September have declined significantly.**
The declining snowpack, along with below average precipitation since late March, has resulted in a drop of seasonal volumes for many streamflow forecast points. Many sites are forecasted for below normal or near normal streamflow conditions throughout the summer. The most significant declines in forecasted streamflow are in the Harney, Malheur, and Owyhee basins, where forecasts have declined on the order of 69 – 82 percent since the February 1 forecast.

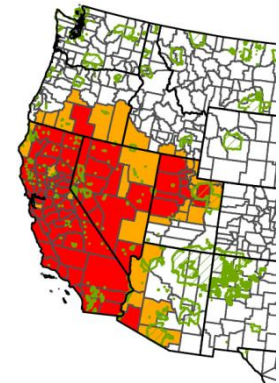
- **Reservoir levels have improved since last year.**
Reservoir storage levels across the state are much higher, compared to this time last year; however, in basins with no reservoir systems, streamflow is trending downward quickly. This same trend was observed at some locations last year.

- **Drought Monitor shows 65 percent of the state abnormally dry.**
These dry conditions are occurring on east side of the state, although unless conditions change, conditions will likely degrade for western Oregon as well. Southeastern Oregon is listed in the D1 category (moderate drought), covering large portions of Malheur and Harney counties, and smaller portions of Lake and Klamath counties. Only 1 percent of the state is listed in the D2 category (severe drought).



- **Temperature Outlook calling for above normal temperatures through July.**
Currently, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is calling for above normal temperatures through the July outlook period.

- **Federal drought designations in place for Lake County & contiguous counties.**
Lake County is under a USDA federal drought designation, along with counties contiguous to its borders. Altogether, 7 Oregon counties have been federally declared, due in large part to primary county designations in northern California. The Drought Readiness Council may see some local county requests for a state-issued declaration.



- **Fire Outlook for the Northwest is normal.**
The National Interagency Fire Center's (NIFC) monthly outlook is currently predicting a normal fire season through the forecast period of August 2016. In June, fire season will likely rise and we will see the onset of a typical fire season. Another monthly outlook will be released on June 1, 2016.

