

Oregon's Drought Readiness Council

May 17, 2016 Meeting Notes



Attendees:

Lauri Aunan, Governor's Office
Brenda Bateman, WRD (Co-Chair)
Tom Elliott, DOE
Bruce Gilles, DEQ
Bev Hall, OEM

Rick Kepler, ODFW
Matt Marheine, OEM (Co-Chair)
Alyssa Mucken, WRD
Wade Peerman, DEQ
Erik Rau, OEM

Ken Stahr, WRD
Nick Yonker, ODF
Emily York, OHA

Observers:

Lanaya Blakely, WRD (by phone)
Racquel Rancier, WRD (by phone)

Welcome and Introductions:

Brenda Bateman & Matt Marheine, council co-chairs welcomed everyone and participants introduced themselves.

Reviewing the Committee's Objective:

"To assess how water conditions may affect various sectors across the State of Oregon; to review local requests for assistance, and to make recommendations to the Governor regarding the need for state drought declarations."

Brenda asked committee members to review the Council's objective and offer any suggested changes. Feedback included:

- Add a phrase at the end noting "or emergency declarations, based on drought."
- Add another responsibility, "ensuring coordination among state agencies, with helping water users and others access drought-related information and assistance programs."

Resulting Text:

"To assess how water conditions may affect various sectors across the State of Oregon; to review local requests for assistance; to make recommendations to the Governor regarding the need for state drought declarations or emergency declarations, based on drought; and to ensure coordination among state agencies, as they help water users and others access drought-related information and assistance programs."

Overview

Lauri Aunan, from the Office of Governor Brown provided an overview and context for the meeting.

- 2015 was by several measures, amongst the driest and hottest we've seen in Oregon.
- These conditions sparked a number of institutional responses, which provide some of the context for today's discussions.
- In 2015, Governor Brown drought declarations for most or Oregon's counties, and also signed EO 15-09, directing agencies to reduce non-essential water use by at least 15 percent by the end of 2020. (Progress toward this goal has been documented in a [November 2015 Report](#), on-line)
- She directed WRD, OEM and state agency partners to update the state's drought annex.
- And, she directed WRD and partners to build drought resiliency into its 2017 update of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy; these development efforts are underway now.
- In 2016, the Oregon Legislature also directed WRD to convene a Drought Task Force, with members nominated by the Governor and Legislature.

- This Task Force will look at the state’s toolbox of “short-term drought response tools” and make recommendations to improve or add to this toolbox. The report is due to the Legislature in November 2016.
- WRD will staff this task force, which will begin its work this summer.
- Water conditions of 2015 are the “new normal,” and we need to make sure our institutional structures and capacity are well-positioned to anticipate, respond, and assist, in times of drought.
- Your work here at the Drought Readiness Council is critical, helping to ensure that the state is weighing the right information as it considers drought declaration requests from the counties, and makes recommendations to the Governor.

2016 Drought Annex

Matt Marheine of OEM and Alyssa Mucken, WRD’s Drought Coordinator unveiled the state’s [2016 Drought Annex](#) and provided initial comments. This is a sound document resulting from inter-agency coordination and information sharing. Next steps include implementation and the need to reach out to water users and local governments, so that they know the content of the document and the process used to develop it. This is a slimmed down version, compared to previous editions. Its focus is on roles and responsibilities of state agencies during a drought.

Highlights of the 2015 document include:

- Definition of drought
- Description and membership of the Water Supply Availability Committee and Drought Readiness Council.
- Short summary of general indicators to measure and identify drought.
- Clarifying authorities for declaring standard drought (WRD’s Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 536) vs. emergency (OEM’s ORS 401)
- Description of tools that are only available during drought declaration.

Discussion:

- This is a streamlined, easy-to-read annex.
- Thanks to WRD and OEM for all their work on this.
- We have the ability to update this at any point. As we find items that need additional clarification, we can update as necessary. Please pay attention to problem areas, track them, and get your thoughts to Erik and Alyssa. We do a review each year, and work with the Governor’s Office to re-promulgate every four years.
- If agencies develop new policies around this issue; please let partner agencies know. You can use this forum.
- Connect with WRD to make sure you’re not building anything institutionally that is in conflict with broader efforts.

Update on Water Conditions

Ken Stahr, Chair, Water Supply Availability Committee, transmitted a memo from the WSAC to the Drought Readiness Council, describing the significant and rapid changes in water conditions (e.g., snowpack, temperature, streamflow forecasts, reservoir levels, fire conditions, etc.). See attached. He also described the process WSAC is using to develop decision-support tools.

Reporting. WSAC will plan to publish condition reports monthly; WRD can fill in with brief water condition reports in the weeks between. Send a note to Kenneth.l.stahr@state.or.us if you would like to be added to the Department’s water conditions list-serve.

Decision-Support Tool. WSAC is working on a phased plan to identify climate indicators that will help us understand water conditions in Oregon and identify emerging issues. Once the tool is available, the WSAC will incorporate the information into the monthly reports.

Discussion:

- Like the format. Easy to read and use in presentations. Consider adding sample hydrographs to upcoming water condition reports.

- Even under good water conditions, we're committed to publishing these regularly. We want to keep communications open with our partners and stakeholders. Expect to see these reports on a regular basis...drought or no drought.
- Is WSAC's memo from yesterday available to the public? It's good and should be widely shared. Yes, it will be made available as part of these meeting materials. The content will also be made available as part of the Water Conditions Report.

Products of the Council

- Question 1: When counties come to the Council requesting drought declarations, can we provide them with a consistent and easy-to-use template?
 - Don't just call out WRD in paragraph three; extend to all agencies.
 - Yes, but only if they operate within their authorities.
 - Confirm that the county itself has declared drought
 - County should note any actions already taken; note remaining gaps.
 - Broaden "river" to "natural resources".
 - Make this template one of several resources available to local governments (also sample executive orders, drought annex, one-pagers with list of available tools, etc.)
- Question 2: As the WSAC develops decision-support tools for Oregon Communities, what suggestions or questions does this Council have for them?
 - We want to make sure our communications help folks identify drought conditions and need for drought declaration.
- Question 3: Are there other work products the Council should be considering or developing (e.g., new template for drought executive orders, etc.)?
 - Agency Actions. Where can we memorialize the actions we've taken (e.g., fishing closures by ODFW, OPRD fire ban, etc.)? Probably on each agencies' website, with links *from* the Governor's website and *to* WRD's website. Also, capture these in notes from the Drought Readiness Council, and as examples in the state's guidance/resource documents.
 - Public Information. How do we inform people of these actions in real time? We'll need a more formal communication plan at the Drought Readiness Council. Get notes from agencies' public information officers, who had some discussions around this during 2015.
 - General communication messages. These would include generic talking points about the effect drought has on recreation, agriculture, etc. It could also include fact sheets or brochures that agencies has developed (e.g, how to use water wisely). As noted above, develop one-pager with description of available drought tools. Again, check in with PIOs.
 - Impacts of Drought. How can we gather and share information about what is going on locally? Capture anecdotal content from county declaration letters; ask them specifically what drought impacts they've observed or what they're worried about. Make sure those communities requesting drought declarations have the opportunity to visit with the Drought Readiness Council and tell their stories.
 - Executive Order Template for the Governor to Use When Declaring Drought. OEM will develop a first draft, removing ORS 401 language and replacing with ORS 536. The county should first (1) declare an emergency at the county level, and then follow that with (2) a letter to the Governor requesting a standard, county-wide drought declaration under ORS 536. This unlocks a number of water-related tools at WRD; these tools are not available outside of a drought. Should conditions worsen to the point where the situation is life-threatening or no longer manageable at the local level, and water needs to be hauled or other tangible assistance is needed from OEM's network, the county may send (3) a follow-up letter to the Governor requesting an emergency declaration. OEM can provide assistance to guide counties through this process.

Recap:

- 1) county declares emergency once.
- 2) county sends request to state under ORS 536 to unlock drought tools.

3) county sends request to state under ORS 401 to deliver water.

- Federal Assistance Programs. Create a library of websites, key federal contacts, etc.
- Develop key contact list: WSAC and DRC members, state, federal, tribal partners. Funding partners, etc.
- Solicit Feed-back: encourage the communities to use the tools we pull together and note any tools that are or are not helpful in their request letters.

Announcements and Next Meeting

- Expect to see a doodle poll out that checks availability for Thursday, June 16 and 23. Generally, let's try to schedule during the second week of June. WSAC will attempt to hold their meetings on Tuesdays; let's try to follow them on Thursdays.
- May 31st is Rick Kepler's retirement. Thank you for your service!
- Taking his place at ODFW will be Anna Pakenham Stevenson. Welcome, Anna.

The meeting adjourned at noon.



Memo

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

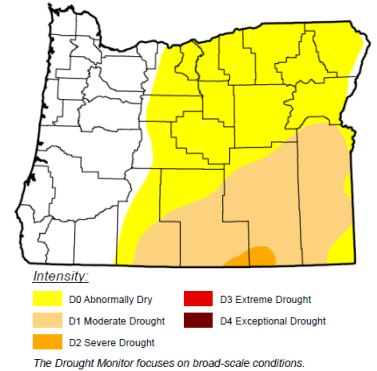
The Water Supply Availability Committee (WSAC) held its regular monthly meeting on May 16, 2016. Water supply conditions across the state have changed considerably since the first NRCS Water Supply Outlook was issued in January. After a record wet December, conditions were looking very favorable, especially 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.

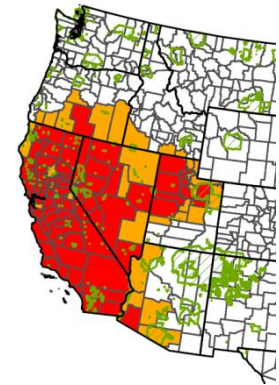
- **Reservoir levels have improved since last year.**
Reservoir storage levels across the state are much higher, compared to this time last year; however, in basins with no reservoir systems, streamflow is trending downward quickly. This same trend was observed at some locations last year.

- **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.

