



Oregon's Drought Readiness Council September 15, 2016 Meeting Notes



OEM's Anderson Readiness Center Salem, OR

Approved Oct. 12, 2016

Attendees:

Brenda Bateman, co-chair of the Drought Readiness Council, WRD
Matt Marheine, co-chair of the Drought Readiness Council, OEM
Ken Stahr, chair of Water Supply Availability Committee, WRD
Wade Peerman, DEQ
Kathie Dello, OCCRI
Tom Elliot, DOE (by phone)
Karyl Salis, OHA (by phone)

1. Welcome and Introductions:

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

2. Agenda Check:

Members postponed discussion of ORS 401 templates until Erik Rau could participate in discussions again.
Members added discussion of the NOAA Atlas 14 to the agenda.

3. Approval of August Meeting Notes:

Members unanimously approved the August meeting notes, but asked about the following items:

- 1) Did the Council indeed connect with Baker County emergency manager to acknowledge receipt of a request for drought declaration? Yes, Brenda and Matt developed a memo acknowledging receipt and sent it by e-mail. Regardless of whether requests are granted or denied, the Council needs to make sure it acknowledges receipt in the first place.
- 2) Was there a request for assistance from Coos County? Yes, but it focused very locally on Tenmile Lake and the community surrounding the lake. It's a request for a water right permit / permission and does not fall under ORS 536 drought declarations or ORS 401 emergency declarations. The Governor's Office (Regional Solutions) and agencies are in discussions with the community.

4. Update on Water Conditions

Ken Stahr, Chair, Water Supply Availability Committee, transmitted a Sept. 15 memo from the WSAC to the Drought Readiness Council, describing the latest water conditions (see attached). Highlights and recap include:

- Spring temperature caused early melt off of snow pack
- Measuring since the beginning of the water year (Oct. 1), Oregon is at or above normal precipitation for most parts of the state.
- During August, Oregon was low in precipitation and warmer than in July.
- Predictions for La Niña conditions have lessened; outlook for precipitation looks more neutral.
- The blob is back and is going to keep us warm for the next few months.
- Drought Monitor? OCCRI would like to extend D1 into south coast area, and perhaps inland.
- Streamflows? Statewide they are 65 percent of normal for August, and likely to drop.
- By basin: Hood, Klamath and Mid Coast are doing the best.
- Most stressed basins are Umatilla and John Day.
- Reservoirs: Owyhee will have 20+% carry-over for next year.

5. Other Business of the Council

a. Drought Requests

- Baker County – Council members continue to hear anecdotal stories about irrigators wrapping up their season. It was hot and dry, particularly in August. There were no urgent requests for reconsideration of drought declarations and no additional information about water conditions or economic impacts to consider. No action taken.
- Harney County – Judge Steve Grasty has signaled that the County may request a drought declaration from the Governor. The County desires a federal drought declaration in order to be eligible for federal tax benefits (e.g., tax breaks for capital gains when liquidating the herd). Jim Johnson at ODA would know more about this. No state declaration would be needed to be eligible for federal tax breaks. Wait to see if a county request materializes. No action taken.

b. Presentation of DEQ's Drought Response Tools – Wade Peerman (see attached one-pager).

- Drought declarations by the Governor kick off a series of tools at DEQ.
- Low flows could trigger action to maintain water quality standards.
- DEQ supports permit holders' use of voluntary efforts to maintain compliance.
- The agency notifies agencies via letter that declarations have occurred, and describes ways to maintain compliance with permit conditions (e.g, use mixing zones, holding ponds or other techniques).
- Communities also have responsibilities. There are funding sources available to help monitor and restore watersheds that have experienced fire / erosion.
- The Safe Drinking Water Revolving Fund (through DEQ and OHA) is available to help protect source water conditions, and increase community resilience. Funds traditionally have been prioritized according to health issues. Now it's also moving into funding future planning projects. These are low interest loans, with grant forgiveness in some cases.
- What about monitoring drinking wells for water quality? For health purposes, OHA takes the lead. If it is a matter of analyzing the source water, however, DEQ would take the lead. DEQ has monitored wells for emerging contaminants, looking for risk factors for Oregon.
- When OHA is assessing drinking water quality, it requires monitoring for coliform, nitrate, and other contaminants. A database of real estate transactions captures data for nitrate, coliform, and arsenic. Samples are sent to accredited labs.
- DEQ monitors 106 water wells in Groundwater Management Areas; 23 of those wells DEQ installed. The agency monitors for nitrates, as well as pesticides and other contaminants.

c. NOAA Atlas 14 Updates.

- WRD staff is working on a one-pager, describing the need for an updated state-wide precipitation analysis. Called NOAA Atlas 14, this type of analysis is used by state and federal agencies to create standards for roads, bridges, dams and other infrastructure that must withstand high flood flows. There are only five states that have not developed a modern NOAA Atlas 14 analysis; Oregon is one of them. To build support for the investment in this analysis, WRD staff will send the one-pager and a short survey to each agency to gather examples about how such information could be used in Oregon.

d. Connecting with County Emergency Managers.

- OEM and WRD staff will plan to connect with county emergency managers during the winter, to make sure they have the latest templates and instructions for requesting ORS 536 and ORS 401 declarations. OEM hosts these calls once a month and could easily facilitate this conversation.

6. Announcements and next meetings

DRC will host its season wrap up next month (Wednesday, October 12th), by phone. 10:00 to 12:00. Call in phone number to be determined. The meeting adjourned at 11:45.