



Oregon's Drought Readiness Council October 12, 2016 Meeting Notes



OEM's Anderson Readiness Center Salem, OR

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
Alyssa Mucken, WRD Drought Coordinator

by phone:

Wade Peerman, DEQ
Kathie Dello, OCCRI
Tom Elliot, DOE
Jim Johnson, ODA
Kari Salis, OHA
Anna P. Stevenson, ODFW
Nick Yonker, ODF

1. Welcome and Introductions:

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

2. Agenda Check:

Members added a check in on the status of drought declarations to the agenda.

3. Approval of August Meeting Notes:

Members unanimously approved the September meeting notes, with an edit to the number of DEQ wells mentioned on page two.

4. Update on Water Conditions

Ken Stahr, Chair, Water Supply Availability Committee, presented an end-of-water year summary from the WSAC to the Drought Readiness Council (see meeting materials for slides). Highlights and recap include:

- Umatilla is currently the most stressed basin in the state, hovering at 33 percent of average streamflow.
- At Sept. 30, flows were at their lowest. Last weekend's storms improved streamflows for western Oregon.
- Oregon entered the water year (Oct. 1, 2015) at a deficit. In December through March, Oregon enjoyed a high snowpack and precipitation. A record April warming caused early and rapid run-off, high streamflows, and adequate storage, but a loss of snowpack. Little precipitation followed.
- Irrigation season saw below normal streamflow.
- Cooler temps in July and some precipitation helped.
- We finished the water year at 95 percent of normal streamflow, statewide.
- See meeting materials (slides) for a summary of reservoir storage, 2016 statistics, and anecdotal notes from around the state.
- Today, we're 12 days into the 2017 water year.
- The *U.S. Drought Monitor* shows no recent change in conditions.
- Oregon now has nine counties with federal drought designations, now that some counties have maintained their D2 status in the *U.S. Drought Monitor* for eight weeks running.

5. Presentation on Drought Early Warning System

Kathie Dello of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, Ken Stahr (WRD) and Alyssa Mucken (WRD) briefed the group on a recent event. In September, the National Drought Mitigation Center, and National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) invited agency representatives from Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, Colorado, the Bureau of Reclamation and US Forest Service to Boise, Idaho for a two-day workshop on drought early warning metrics.

Originally convening with a goal to define drought-related “triggers,” the group of 20 came away realizing it needed a better system to measure and document drought-related impacts. It is important to understand who and what is affected by drought, as well as how, and to what degree. The group agreed to approach this work as a region, coming up with metrics for the Pacific Northwest as a whole. Discussion included the following:

- Creating an index requires field testing.
- Indicators don't have to be quantitative.
- Indicators shouldn't be limited to agricultural impacts, but should include ecological and other impacts as well.
- Other states are relying heavily on the *U.S. Drought Monitor*, and have put quite a bit of time and effort into it.
- It's important to debrief/capture anecdotally drought impacts after each season.
- We also need to conduct vulnerability assessments. (see CO & WA examples).
 - They broke their work into sectors: recreation, municipal drinking water, ag, energy.
 - They conducted interviews and groundtruthed their work.
 - They also assessed adaptive capacity (e.g., intertie agreements, storage as back-up supply), and conducted a literature review to figure out how to go about doing this. Colorado's drought response plan is 800 pages, not 20 like Oregon's.
- Oregon doesn't include demand, or conflicting uses, in any kind of drought metric yet.
- Many states have a fund they can tap for work in this area. All the other states seem to have funding to pay their own agency partners to go collect data for the greater good!
- Kathie is currently writing a strategic plan for the Pacific NW; Alyssa will help review.
- Are we incorporating long-term data into the index? In year two or three of drought, that means soil moisture is in jeopardy, trees are dying, etc.
- WRD wants to improve Oregon's surface water supply index.
- It's good to put names to these tools, so that we can gather more budget and political support.
- NOAA and other federal agencies have put MOUs in place to help get political buy-in.

6. Other Business of the Council

a. Drought Declaration Requests

Emergency managers in Baker County requested a drought declaration from the state months ago, and the Harney County Court was considering doing the same. However, Oregon Department of Agriculture explained that both counties were seeking the federal tax breaks that flow from a federal drought declaration, not state declaration.

Discussions included the following:

- This leads to bigger policy question: what is the reason for a state declaration? What benefit does it get people?
- We really need to include the US Department of Agriculture's Farm Services Agency (FSA) in these meetings and conversations, particularly because we need to be documenting vulnerabilities and economic impacts.
- Taylor Murray at FSA would be a good fit for this group.
- Or Peter Halverson or someone out of FSA's Tualatin HQ office. Jim Johnson offered to initiate that contact.

b. NOAA Atlas 14 Updates.

- WRD staff is still working on a one-pager, describing the need for an updated state-wide precipitation analysis, called NOAA Atlas 14. Question: How does this product relate to the skirmishes between NOAA's NMFS Biop & FEMA flood program? Answer: the product, in close coordination with the state, comes from NOAA's Climate Service, and provides analysis independent from the rest of NOAA's floodplain work.

c. 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. Local emergency managers have a call each month; plan to participate in a November call.
- In addition, the Oregon Prepared Workshop takes place every April. OEM plans to put drought on the agenda, to connect with county emergency managers so they get training on state and federal drought declarations. Aim for an event during the second week of April.

7. Announcements and next meetings

- The Drought Readiness Council will be in recess for November and December.
- WRD and OEM will plan to connect with county emergency managers in the interim.
- The Water Supply Availability Committee will not meet in November, but might meet December 13, depending on water conditions.
- Kathie Dello noted that the NW Climate Conference is coming to Skamania Lodge, November 14-16, 2016. This event is designed as a conversation between researchers and practitioners, and focuses on climate change adaptation. There will be lots of networking time. See: PNWClimateconference.org.
- The Drought Task Force is holding its next-to-last meeting today, and has a final report due to the Legislature November 1st.
- The Policy Advisory Group for the 2017 Integrated Water Resources Strategy meeting meets December 6-7 at WRD.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45.

Thanks for your continued support!