



Oregon's Drought Readiness Council June 15, 2017 Meeting Notes



OEM's Anderson Readiness Center Salem, OR

DRAFT – Needs Council Approval

Attendees:

Brenda Bateman, co-chair of the Drought Readiness Council, Water Resources Department
Matt Marheine, co-chair of the Drought Readiness Council, Office of Emergency Management
Ken Stahr, chair of Water Supply Availability Committee, Water Resources Department

Rianne BeCraft, Intern, Water Resources Department and OSU Masters Graduate
Jim Johnson, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Pete Halverson, USDA Farm Service Agency
Alyssa Mucken, Drought Coordinator, Water Resources Department
Racquel Rancier, Senior Policy Coordinator, Water Resources Department
Zachary Swick, Office of Emergency Management

By phone:

Luciana Cunha, West Consultants
Smita Mehta, Department of Environmental Quality
Kari Salis, Oregon Health Authority
Robert Predosa, West Consultants

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Brenda Bateman, council co-chair, welcomed everyone and participants introduced themselves.

2. Agenda Check:

No Changes

3. Approval of October Meeting Notes:

Members unanimously approved the October 2016 meeting notes.

4. Update on Water Conditions

Ken Stahr, Chair, Water Supply Availability Committee, presented a summary of water conditions from the WSAC to the Drought Readiness Council (see meeting materials for PowerPoint slides and memo).

Highlights and recap include:

Scott Oviatt's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) slides regarding snowpack.

Snow-water equivalent (SWE) is no longer a reliable graphic for this time of year. As we lose low-elevation snow, statistics become skewed. NRCS has published the last snow report of the season. We should look directly at high elevation sites for a better view of SWE. Snow is still present at high elevation, way above average. Last year, we lost snow pack three weeks earlier than normal. This year, melt out is three weeks later than normal.

Marc Stewart (USGS) and Ken Stahr (WRD) slides regarding streamflow.

We experienced a lot of rain during October 2016 (300 percent of normal). May was fourth consecutive month of above normal streamflow. Last year, we experienced a deficit at 53 percent of normal streamflow. Streamflow throughout the state was average-to-above average during the month of May. Expect streamflows to be normal to above normal throughout the summer.

Oregon has experienced below-average temperatures for past six months, which has postponed agricultural planting and resulted in a shorter growing season. It finally started warming up in May.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) - Reservoir Storage.

Of note: Gerber Reservoir in Klamath is spilling for the first time since 2006. And, Owyhee is full! It has a two-year storage capacity. Reservoirs are in good shape, and still have snowpack left.

Pete Halverson of USDA/FSA.

Crops were late getting into the field. Some didn't get planted at all. They're late planting in Canada too.

Wheat industry is worried about mold. Grass seed is doing well. New hazel nut acres are doing well too.

5. 2015 Drought Impacts

Rianne BeCraft completed her OSU Masters Thesis on:

"Learning from Oregon's 2015 Drought: A Review of Documented Conditions, Impacts & Response Strategies." (See meeting materials for PowerPoint and thesis link.)

- OHA had some good documented findings.
- Rianne conducted four interviews with WRD.
- Today's presentation will focus on impacts to ag, munis, recreation, and fish and wildlife.
- Ag: short growing season, with fewer or different crops, fallowed lands, reduced yields & early harvest.
- Cattle: moved to supplemental feed, or were shipped off early. Reduced number of offspring.
- Increased fires. (\$77M in 2015, vs \$22M average)
- Calls for water; junior users shut off
- All of this increased uncertainty
- Muni: supplemental sources, ASR back-ups, inter-ties. Record high demand.
 - Voluntary and enforceable curtailment measurement.
- Recreation: ski, boating (stranded piers), reduced angling (fish die offs, poor fishing)
- Tree die-off.
- Much of the info gleaned from newspapers, making predictions, but no actual documentation of impacts.
- No info on marine or coastal systems, except for hatcheries.

Five resulting recommendations:

- 1) Conduct drought impact, risk, and vulnerability assessments.
- 2) Develop strategic plan for drought impacts monitoring & reporting.
- 3) Develop long-term sustainable GW management plan with clear objectives and metrics
- 4) Investigate how water conservation and storage efforts have affected water consumption
- 5) Review and discuss Oregon's county drought declaration process, drought emergency tools, and adaptability of Oregon's water code.

Discussion, Q&A:

- Washington Dept. of Agriculture's 2015 report currently being panned, because it contains conjecture, not data.
- Need to get baseline information in place now: yields, sales, revenues, etc.
- Watermaster journals are under-utilized tools to document drought impacts.
- OSU used to track average yield of each crop, prices, and therefore drought impacts by county. FSA used to rely on this. Experienced budget cuts every year for years. Same cuts in data on the land-use side as well.

- Colorado has conducted vulnerability studies by sector.
- The Drought Monitor provides a lot of the science you're looking for. Science combined in one place.
- Census of Agriculture is only taken every five years.
- Did you look at algal blooms and public health? RB: Looked at OHA's climate program.
 - ~ Looked at interviews with their field staff.
 - ~ OHA: we keep harmful algae bloom advisories on the public website. Drought + nutrient tracker.

6. Oregon's 2017 Integrated Water Resources Strategy

Alyssa Mucken: Agencies are working on 2017 updates to the Integrated Water Resources Strategy.

- Drought wasn't part of the 2012 version.
- The governor directed us to include drought in the 2017 version.
- Described the proposed nine new recommended actions: drought, flood, seismic, dam safety, field presence, permitting capacity, groundwater protection, water planning funding, and project implementation funding.

7. Oregon's 2016 Drought Task Force

Racquel Rancier: Drought Task Force Report (2016) came from a legislative task force.

It looked at theory/literature, other states, federal reports, best practices.

One of the over-arching principles is that it's better to prepare in advance.

Drought response plans were first published in the 1980s.

More recently, attempted to address mitigation.

The Drought Task Force looked at both.

Results? 13 recommended actions, focused on: (a, b) data re indicators, impacts, vulnerabilities; (c) review drought declaration process--see report page 14; (d) drought emergency fund; (e) outreach & communications; (f) fund for drought planning; (g) additional WM staff and tools to make distribution more efficient; (h) assistance to local communities; (i) infrastructure barriers; (j) stored water; (k) water efficiency; (l) streamflow restoration; (m) water reuse.

8. Discussion

Smita Mehta: lots of recommendations already incorporated into existing programs! Need to market / describe them better.

Rianne BeCraft: indicators and impacts. Not the same thing. Lots of monitoring occurs as part of drought preparation.

Matt Marheine, new deputy director of OEM. Replacement has been selected! This council remains invited to meet here. Pleased with drought annex that's developed during the past 18 months. Working on flood annex and dam annex as well. Can continue to support outreach through monthly calls with local emergency managers, as well as PIO section. Asking everyone at the table to add to OEM's webpage.

Ken Stahr. Drought creeps up on you. Easy to see in the rear view mirror. We're trying to get better metrics for predictions and impacts in place.

Jim Johnson. Drought is going to become the norm. Need better tools in the toolbox.

Peter Halverson. With USDA drought declarations relying on the Drought Monitor (and not state declarations), that simplified things a lot. Baker County held on to it drought conditions / designation longer than we thought they would in 2016.

Rianne BeCraft. Look at Colorado's drought report for funding opportunities & technical programs. Look at materials from the Western States Water Council.

Racquel Rancier. 2015 felt like the public wasn't paying attention. Need to capture and hold public's and professionals' attention. Need help with communication.

Alyssa Mucken. There's been a staffing transition at NIDIS, DEWS. They convene states who work on drought planning (OR, WA, ID, MT, CO). Alicia Mars has left. Not yet replaced. There's also a newsletter available for drought planners. Forward to this group as part of this meetings' notes (editor's note: see go.unl.edu/dryhorizonssubscribe). And, a Drought and Climate outlook webinar offered June 26, 2017.

9. Announcements and next meetings

The next meeting will be Thursday, July 13 at 10:00.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45.

Thanks for your continued support!