



# Oregon's Drought Readiness Council August 10, 2017 Meeting Notes



## Phone meeting hosted by OWRD Salem, OR

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### Attendees

Ken Stahr, Oregon Water Resources Department, Water Supply Availability Committee (WSAC) Chair  
Samantha Phillips, Oregon Water Resources Department  
Eric Rau, Oregon Office of Emergency Management  
Sonya Pederson, Oregon Office of Emergency Management  
Kathey Naegeli, USDA Farm Services Agency  
Wade Peerman, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality  
Nick Yonker, Oregon Department of Forestry  
Anna Pakenham-Stevenson, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Tom Elliott, Oregon Department of Energy

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Ken Stahr, chaired the meeting, welcoming everyone; participants introduced themselves.

### 2. Agenda Check

No Changes proposed.

### 3. Approval of July Meeting Notes

Members were asked to review notes and send approvals or modifications to Brenda Bateman.

### 4. Update on 2017 Water Conditions

Ken Stahr presented a summary of water conditions from the WSAC to the Drought Readiness Council. Highlights and recap include:

- Mountain precipitation since October 1, 2016 is at 124 percent of average—well above average from a SNOTEL perspective. 52 days with little-to-no measureable precipitation plus warmer temperatures could change things.
- Hot dry conditions over the past month are beginning to affect some areas. More than 50 percent of the state is abnormally dry according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. The climate prediction for mid-August is for a pattern change; we may see some precipitation and cooler temperatures. The climate prediction for August- October is for low precipitation with above average temperatures.
- The past 14 days have seen below normal flows at stream gages, especially in the northwest part of the state. There has been a downward trend since the beginning of July. In 2016, the state was at 63 percent compared to July 2017 at 87 percent. In general, streamflows appear good but the downward trend is a cause for concern for the months to come. Streams without flow augmentation from storage are registering low, while those that do benefit from storage releases are average-to-above average.
- USACE reservoir maintenance is progressing in the Willamette system. Good streamflow has been observed (Albany at 7800 CFS, Salem at 9400 CFS). Minimum flow targets are still projected to be met. Maintenance work will continue through the fall at Cougar and Blue River.

- Fuel conditions for fire potential is growing as high temperatures dry out fuel. Fire activity has increased but is not as bad as in the past few years. There is still potential for a large fire. Smokey air in the Willamette Valley is likely to improve by the end of the week.

## **5. Roundtable**

Wade Peerman (DEQ) updated the council with more details on the Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) occurrences in 2017. DEQ and OHA are the main respondents to monitor outbreaks. HAB season is typically from June through September. If the environmental conditions produce warm waters and dense nutrients, a bloom is more likely to form. Because of decreasing flows, we may begin seeing more outbreaks. OHA could provide additional details.

Kathie Dello (OCCRI) reported through an email that U.S. Drought Monitor has abnormally dry conditions spreading further across the state due to very dry weather. The above average temps for the past three months have reversed the cooler than normal trend that we started the year with. May-July 2017 is the fifth warmest period in Oregon in the 123 year record. (May-July 2015 is the #1) El-Niño conditions look to remain neutral through fall.

Nick Yonker (ODF) reported that large areas of the state are classified at extreme fire danger levels. The weather models show cooler temperatures for the upcoming week with a return to more normal temperatures. Thunderstorms containing precipitation are still occurring. Thunderstorm season is typically from July through September. Total area burned to date remains below average. The actual number of fires is above normal but so far they are being caught early. Fire danger persists.

Kathie Naegeli (FSA) reported on how this year's crops have been affected. Wasco, Hood River, and Marion counties have all applied for crop disaster assistance. Marion County is waiting until the end of the season to quantify the extent of the damage.

Eric Rau (OEM) reported on preparations for the eclipse. The biggest concern is for fire danger with all the influx of people and the potential health issues for two or more weeks after the event. His agency is receiving daily weather updates not only for optimal viewing but also to help in how the crowd will flow and how traffic may be affected.

In conclusion, although there is good supply of water stored in reservoirs, recent low streamflows have hampered late season water supplies from unregulated streams. While this year's water supply provided drought relief, drought could easily return. The conditions we are seeing now are reminiscent of conditions that led up to the 2015 drought. The message to share is caution and conservation.

## **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be Thursday, September 14, 2017 at 10:00 by phone.

## **The meeting adjourned at 10:55**

Thanks for your continued support!