



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

## Water Resources Department

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### MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Ken Stahr, Surface Water and Hydrology Manager *KPS*

SUBJECT: Agenda Item G, March 15, 2018  
Water Resources Commission Meeting

### Water Supply and Weather Conditions for Oregon

#### I. Introduction

Oregon is experiencing signals of potential water supply challenges in the approaching summer season. During this agenda item, a panel of experts will provide an overview of current water conditions across the state.

#### II. Current Conditions

While spring weather can certainly improve the drought outlook for the state, current snowpack and weather conditions indicate the likelihood of drought-like conditions for 2018. During this agenda item, three experts who assist the Department with assessing water supply conditions across the state will discuss current conditions and forecasts.

- Andy Bryant, Service Hydrologist  
National Weather Service (NWS) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Kathie Dello, Associate Director of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI)  
and Deputy Director of Oregon Climate Service at Oregon State University
- H. Scott Oviatt, Snow Survey Supervisory Hydrologist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

#### III. Coordination Efforts and Drought Declarations

The Department has been working with the Governor's office, stakeholders, and other state and federal agencies in order to assess drought conditions, impacts, and needed responses.

The Department maintains a "Drought Watch" website and a biweekly water conditions list serve to keep water users, the public, local governments, and others informed of current conditions and assistance tools. The website also includes informational resources to encourage

wise water use measures across the state. In addition, state agencies assist with coordination of State of Oregon drought declarations, as described below.

*State of Oregon Drought Emergency*

The Governor has authority to issue emergency declarations during periods of drought. A state drought declaration provides water right holders access to transfer and permitting tools via an expedited review process.

Drought declarations issued by the Governor are typically administered through a three-step process. First, a county commission will meet to determine whether a Governor's declaration is needed. Second, these recommendations are forwarded to the state's Water Supply Availability Committee for technical review of water and weather conditions. The Drought Readiness Council is responsible for assessing the impact of drought conditions and making a final recommendation to the Governor. The Governor then reviews the request and recommendation, and makes the final decision to issue an Executive Order declaring a drought emergency.

Several state agencies are responsible for coordinating assessment and response actions during a Governor-declared drought emergency. The Oregon Water Resources Department works closely with the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, and other agencies on drought-related activities. Staff will provide an update on the status of any requests for drought declarations at the Commission meeting.

*USDA Secretarial Disaster Designation for Drought*

The Drought Monitor, which focuses on broad scale conditions, is produced in partnership between the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

When any portion of a county meets the D2 (Severe Drought) drought intensity value for eight consecutive weeks, a disaster designation is issued for that county. A county that has a portion of its area in a drought intensity value of D3 (Extreme Drought) or higher at any time during the growing season is also designated as a disaster area. Federal secretarial drought designations are issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and address both primary and contiguous counties. Staff will provide an update at the Commission meeting on the status of any designations.

**V. Conclusion**

Natural resource agencies continue to work closely with the Governor's Office to monitor water supply conditions and, as needed, ensure a coordinated drought response across the state.