



Oregon's Drought Readiness Council
May 10, 2018 Meeting Notes

Attendees in the Room:

Brenda Bateman, Oregon Drought Readiness Council Co-Chair
Ken Stahr, Oregon Water Supply Availability Committee, Chair
Jim Johnson, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Erik Rau, Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Anna P. Stevenson, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

By Phone:

Sonya Andron, Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Tom Elliot, Department of Energy
Jason Miner, Governor's Natural Resources Office
Kathey Naegeli, USDA, Farm Services Agency
Wade Peerman, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Jason Spriet, Oregon Water Resources Department
Nick Yonker, Oregon Department of Forestry

1. Welcome and Introductions

Brenda Bateman welcomed everyone. Participants introduced themselves.

2. Agenda Check

No additions proposed.

3. Approval of April 2018 Meeting Notes

No changes proposed.

4. Water Conditions

Ken Stahr, Chair of Oregon's Water Supply Availability Committee, briefed participants on recent and current water conditions. See handouts for details. Highlights are summarized below.

- Snow water equivalent (SWE). Low and mid-elevation snow has melted off almost everywhere; many sites are measuring zero, especially in the southeastern part of the state. The Hood/Sandy/Lower Deschutes, Umatilla/Walla Walla/Willow, and Grande Ronde/Powder/Burnt/Imnaha regions are the measuring the highest amounts of snowpack in the state with values that range from 70 to 86 percent of normal.
- Temperature – April was warmer than normal, the past two weeks were as well.
- Precipitation – storms tracked to the north all winter; Oregon's southern band stayed dry.
 - In April the southeastern half of the state was drier than normal and the northwest and northern regions were wetter.
 - The past two weeks have been drier than normal across much of the state.
- The June-August outlook is for drier and warmer than normal weather conditions, but note that forecasts tend to bias towards historic data.
- Streamflows during April were normal and above normal in the north and west of the state but below normal for the rest of the state; most noteworthy in the south and southeast.
- Water Supply Forecasts predict below normal streamflows, especially in the south and southeast regions of the state.
- Most reservoirs started out the supply season in reasonably good shape.
 - Several eastern Oregon reservoirs didn't fill; expect reservoirs to finish the season with little to no carryover.

- Most are delivering water to downstream water users.

General discussion

Q. Are the reservoirs not in quite as good shape as we originally thought?

They've been in good shape. Starting drawdown now.

Expect deterioration throughout the summer. Will end the summer empty.

Q. Should we expect no more bumps to the streamflow from snowmelt?

Small, but not significant.

Q. How's the U.S. Drought Monitor doing?

We're still not getting Oregon's advice inserted into the map. Snow pack isn't well represented.

That's a problem for western states, who rely on the snowpack component to forecast water supplies.

Montana has offered help & advice for getting our voice heard in the Drought Monitor. Take them up on it.

5. Discussion of Harney County Request for Drought Declaration

Precipitation in Harney County hasn't been above normal since last October.

Harney has received less snow and overall volume of water supply than in the 2015 drought year

Streamflows are falling fast, with dry conditions forecast for the remainder of the spring and summer.

Today we're considering the Harney County Request for Drought Declaration, which came in April 19.

- The requests states that county officials are worried about ag and livestock, natural resources, recreation.
- A declaration could set them up for expedited process to request drought permits.
- There has been some confusion between state and federal funding opportunities..
- The Governor's Office has been in contact with the NRCS about getting federal assistance. Is there something more formal we could do? Kathy from FSA is available to help.
- We need to make sure the county understands this does NOT unlock federal funding.
- Harney County emergency manager, Paul Gray, is new, staying in touch with OEM, but not driving the process. He is also in contact with WRD's watermaster, JR Johnson.
- NRCS has shared some field observations reporting that burn permits in Harney County are being denied because March 30 was the last day for burn permits due to dry conditions.
- Fields that are normally flooded are dry right now.
- Ranchers are checking water holes daily for livestock water.
- Make sure the County knows that state agencies are supporting place-based planning in Harney County. Planning, monitoring, and other water related activities have a nexus here.
- Angie Lane, OEM's Hazard Mitigation Officer, has grant funds that could be available for this, from FEMA. OEM will send her contact and brief blurb to Brenda to share with the Governor's Office and the rest of the group.
- The Water Supply Availability Committee confirms that water conditions support the drought request.
- All Drought Readiness Council participants supported recommending a drought declaration.

6. ODFW Presentation

Anna Pakenham Stevenson from ODFW gave a presentation about ODFW programs and messaging during times of drought. The focus is on impacts to fish and wildlife. The Department is trying to do a better job of documenting impacts. See meeting materials for details about ODFW's seven drought strategies:

- Understand the local situation
- Minimize the stress, mortality & adverse harvest
- Adjust opportunity
- Manage invasive species
- Manage ODFW facilities to reduce impacts
- Educate the public
- Predict and prepare

During summer 2018, ODFW plans to hold a workshop for agencies regarding instream needs. More info to come.

7. Roundtable and Discussion

Any agencies with announcements or updates are welcome to note them here.

- Is anyone hearing about other counties looking into declarations? Maybe Douglas, Malheur, Baker.
- Thank you for getting your directors' support for the SNOTEL letter of concern. We will plan to send the final version out through Governor's Office.
- Phil Mote will lecture on "Snow Droughts in Oregon" on May 17 at Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at 1:30. Brenda will send out the link to his paper. ODFW is trying to set up a go to meeting for streaming if folks can't make it.
- Water Resources Department has an intern lined up for the summer to help collect stories and document 2018 drought. Emily York with Oregon Health Authority is talking to tribes as well; connect with her.
- Office of Emergency Management is finding public education to be an ongoing challenge, particularly with flooding and ice jams in Washington right now.
- The Board of Agriculture will meet in Hood River in June.
- The Department of Environmental Quality hopes to hire someone into Wade's old IWRS position soon, and is conducting interviews today.
- Department of Forestry reports low fire potential throughout the state at the moment.
- Oregon Office of Emergency Management is conducting an ECC exercise today, and hosts an OERS Council meeting on May 24th.
- The Governor's Office has been convening a water core team meeting since January. They are developing a shared, proactive strategy to address population growth and climate change across the state. They anticipate conducting an inventory of water-related work already done or underway, and are trying to align independent activities in agencies. One of the primary priorities for the Governor during 2019-2021 will be water quantity, water quality, and infrastructure (green and grey).
- In addition, climate cabinet begins on Monday. Modeled on the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds approach, it will convene agency directors. Agencies will need to demonstrate accountability under a plan. Includes a wider set of agencies, including OSU's Institute for Natural Resources, the Sustainability Board, the Global Warming Commission, and Environmental Justice Commission.
- The Water Supply Availability Committee will meet next Tuesday at OEM at 10:00. Thank you for getting us materials for today's meeting, even though you hadn't officially met yet.

The next meeting of the Drought Readiness Council is scheduled for Wednesday, June 13 from 11 to noon at WRD. Plan on July 19 from 10 to noon at WRD. And, August 9 from 10 to noon at OEM.

8. Adjourned at 11:15