



Oregon's Drought Readiness Council  
June 13, 2018 Meeting Notes

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**Attendees in the Room:**

Brenda Bateman, WRD, Oregon Drought Readiness Council Co-Chair  
Ken Stahr, WRD, Oregon Water Supply Availability Committee, Chair  
Jim Johnson, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)  
Kathie Dello, Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI)

**By Phone:**

Tom Elliott, Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE)  
Bruce Gilles, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)  
Jason Miner, Governor's Natural Resources Office (GNRO)  
Roxy Nayer, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)  
Scott Oviatt, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Wade Peerman, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)  
Erik Rau, Oregon Office of Emergency Management (OEM)  
Kari Salis, Oregon Health Authority, Drinking Water Program (OHA)  
Nick Yonker, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)  
Emily York, Oregon Health Authority, Climate Program (OHA)

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**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Brenda Bateman welcomed everyone. Participants introduced themselves.

**2. Agenda Check**

No additions proposed.

**3. Approval of May 2018 Meeting Notes**

No changes proposed.

**4. Water Conditions**

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

From Scott Oviatt at USDA/NRCS:

- Of the close to 100 SNOTEL sites in Oregon, there are only three remaining sites with any measureable snow water equivalent (high elevation).
- There was less than average snow this year, and it melted out in May (1 to 3 weeks early).
- At this point, we've stopped looking at snow-water-equivalent.
- We start referring to precipitation, temperature, and streamflow as our primary data sets.
- Precipitation was 89 percent of normal on June 12, 2018.
- We use June-Sept. forecasts of water availability to predict the remainder of 2018.
- These forecasts are estimating below-normal streamflow for the rest of the year

Sent from Andy Bryant at the National Weather Service (NWS):

- It has been very dry for the past two months, with the exception of last week.
- Over next two weeks, expect temperatures to be warmer than normal.
- Same for three-month outlook: drier and warmer than normal in the Pacific Northwest.
- The U.S. Drought Monitor shows abnormally dry condition (D0) on the coast, spread of moderate drought (D1), and introduction of severe drought (D2) in the southwest corner.

Q. What are the boundaries of the Drought Monitor, if not counties? Response: The folks drawing the lines are not in Oregon, which results in a mix of art and science, and they do not follow political boundaries. We submitted an Oregon map accounting for governor's declarations, and soil moisture. You have to move through D0 and D1 to get to D2, so some weeks show some pretty rapid progression through the stages.

From Ken Stahr of WRD:

- The "percent of average streamflow" map looks pretty dire throughout the state.
- With regard to storage, reservoir inflows are now much lower than outflows. There may be enough storage for 2018, but will result in very little carryover into 2019.

From Kathie Dello of OCCRI:

- Some models are showing El Niño in the Fall, which would be bad news.

From Kari Salis of OHA:

- The City of Portland is going to its groundwater source because of low spring run off and reservoir levels.
- The City of Corbett has access to a couple of streams, which are low.
  - While use is down, there's no conservation / curtailment messaging yet.

From Erik Rau of OEM:

- These conversations reflect what emergency managers confirm they are seeing on the ground.

From Jim Johnson:

- Note that in 2015, Oregon was in its third year of drought.
- The difference between 2018 and 2015 is storage (2018) and multiple years of drought (2015)

## **5. Discussion of Request from Baker and Douglas Counties for Drought Declaration**

Douglas County

- Streamflows - Water conditions on the Umpqua are low and shaping up to mimic 2015.
- Galesville Reservoir near Azalea didn't fill this year.
- There is little available for instream flow augmentation.
- Fire - Dry on the west side.

Baker County - northern county facing more favorable conditions

- Streamflow - The Powder River melted out in May and also reflects the conditions we saw in 2015.
- Storage - We're at 74 percent of storage capacity in the Powder Basin.
- Fire - Had some thunderstorm moisture in May, but not enough.

Observations supplied by OWRD District 8 Watermaster, Rick Lusk:

- We're seeing July conditions in Baker County right now. People were able to drive into Fish Lake two weeks ago. Usually can't get in until July. Same on Elk Horn.
- The Department distributed/regulated water there April 3rd. Started regulation up again in early June.
- Usually it's June when you to begin to regulate. It was three weeks sooner than usual this year.
- Right now we're regulating back to a water right priority date of 1890. By Monday it will be 1884.

The recommendation from the Water Supply Availability Committee is that conditions support the drought request in both counties. The NRCS district conservationists in both counties confirm they are seeing these conditions on the ground. All members of the Drought Readiness Council support a drought declaration recommendation.

## **6. Roundtable and Discussion**

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

OHA: OHA is writing emergency rules for water providers to monitor cyanotoxins in raw and finished water. Monitoring hasn't been required in Oregon, only on a voluntary basis, based on the sighting of blooms in recreational waters. The rules will focus on susceptible water suppliers. OHA is working with DEQ to identify systems with Chlorophyll, PH, dissolved Oxygen, HABs sightings, or cyanotoxins detected in the past. The rules will affect 120 drinking water providers, until Oct. 31, 2018. Cyanotoxin is not a federally regulated toxin. There are only guidelines from EPA—no well-established standard methods for labs to use. The levels found in Salem are significant because it is the first time we've detected cyanotoxins in finished water in Salem. The state veterinarian is getting lots of questions regarding livestock and irrigation. Please direct folks with questions to OHA's drinking water home page; there's a tab related to the City of Salem.

ODF: We're below normal for fire conditions so far this year. Expect changes in July and August.

NRCS: Mike Strobel is drafting a response to Jason Miner with regard to the agencies' letter of support for SNOTEL.

Governor's Natural Resources Office:

ODF recently hosted a fire and drought briefing for electeds (Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State). The SNOTEL letter did come up in the discussion and the Governor expressed concern. In Cabinet, directors talked through the role of each agency with regard to harmful algal blooms. Expect continued requests for drought declarations.

OCCRI:

OCCRI is currently applying for drought-related grants from NASA.

Need to get the state's PIOs coordinated around drought messaging.

Please convene a PIO briefing on drought to help with messaging, terminology, trends; participants agreed.

Ken - WSAC will continue to meet on its standard Tuesdays at OEM thru summer.

Brenda - The Drought Readiness Council will meet in July and on August 9 will meet from 10 to noon at OEM.

**7. Adjourned at 12:00**