



Oregon's Drought Readiness Council August 9, 2018 Meeting Notes

Participants in the Room:

Brenda Bateman, Chair, Oregon Drought Readiness Council
Ken Stahr, Chair, Water Supply Availability Committee
Erik Rau, Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Nick Yonker, Oregon Department of Forestry
Daniel Stoelb, Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Emily York, Oregon Health Authority, Climate Program
Kathie Dello, Oregon Climate Change Research Institute

On the Phone:

Tom Elliott, Oregon Department of Energy
Bruce Gilles, Department of Environmental Quality
Kathy Naegeli, USDA, Farm Services Agency
Roxy Nayar, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Anna Pakenham Stevenson, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

1. Welcome and Introductions

Brenda Bateman welcomed participants and everyone introduced themselves.

2. Agenda Check

No additions proposed.

3. Approval of July 2018 Meeting Notes

Received a few handwritten copy edits from Dept. of Forestry.

4. Oregon Office of Emergency Management

After-Action Report – May 2018 Emergency Message

Daniel Stoelb from OEM presented an after-action report from this spring's emergency message that was broadcast throughout the Willamette Valley. The text of the report is here:

http://www.oregon.gov/oem/Documents/2018_IPAWS_AAR.pdf

OEM sent this alert on behalf of Marion County, using the infrastructure and messaging resources available to OEM. This is an opt-in voluntary system for providers to decide whether to participate.

Under this system, categories of emergency are limited. "Civil Emergency" is a catch-all category that comes with generic text and a limit of 90 characters. The generic text can be overwritten, but was not in this case. The technology used in these communications is out-of-date and not user friendly.

Some questions that arose from this debrief included:

- What is OEM's role?
- What should trigger OEM's response?

Some observation included:

- There is currently no template for how to write a message.
- There is currently no allowance to include URLs or pics.
- There is no capability to test the message.

- There were both technical and decision / supervisory errors.

5. 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.

Precipitation. Precipitation since the beginning of water year is below average, statewide. In the past 30 days, precipitation has been extremely low, compared to average.

Temperature. During July, Oregon was about 6.3 degrees (F) above average for temperature. It was the ninth warmest July on record for Oregon, with excessive heat advisories in place across the state.

Long-term outlook for both temperature and precipitation, through November, stays similar. Temperature retains a high probability of above-normal temperatures. Precipitation retains a high probability of below normal precipitation.

Drought Status. The U.S. Drought Monitor was last updated on Aug. 7. D2 now covers the entire coast. It also extends into Baker and Malheur County. 66 percent of the state has reached D2, and 100 percent of the state is in D0.

Soil Moisture. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is now measuring and reporting on soil moisture. Soil moisture in the Klamath's Annie Creek dropped off sharply in May, earlier in the year than normal. At Billie Creek, soil moisture also dropped steeply in June, but remained normal. Sites differ depending on their access to snowpack this year.

Streamflow. Streamflow differs greatly. Results can differ across large basins as well. (Look at the Deschutes and Willamette Basins for example.). 48 percent of average is what we saw for streamflows across Oregon in July.

Q&A: Should water management be focused on sub-basins? That depends on where we have gages and data. We need sufficient number of gages with a long-term period of record. Note that Gilliam County doesn't have any gages at all. Other counties are represented by only one or two points.

Storage. Willamette is at 73 percent of average. Reservoirs are behind rule curve. Managers are releasing water throughout the system to try to maintain flow and temperature. Reservoir levels are dropping quickly around the state, as demands are high. Owyhee Reservoir came into the season with decent carry-over, but did not get much inflow. Water levels will end the season well below where they began, without carry-over for 2019 water year.

6. Consideration of County Requests for Drought Declarations

For Federal declarations, under the new farm bill, you need one week in D3 or 8 weeks in D2 to get federal funds. Being a contiguous county doesn't get you much.

Contiguous counties can get emergency farm loans. Counties will need fast track drought declarations to get access to the full farm program (grants). Fast Track means hitting D2 and staying there.

Ranchers can also graze CRP ground if they're in a primary county, and if their cattle are already there. So Willamette cattle can't MOVE over there.

Morrow County. In Morrow County, hydrographs are also low, just not lowest on record. Morrow is "campaigning" to increase drought status. Documented impacts do help make the case. Folks can request administrative or secretarial drought declarations; then FSA can just ask for automatic designation.

The Water Supply Availability Committee agrees that Morrow County is in drought conditions.

The Drought Readiness Council members concur.

Lincoln County. Lincoln County is experiencing record low mean daily streamflow in the Siletz. 2018 Flows are similar to what we saw in 2015. It is safe to say that we are seeing “record-low streamflow” in Lincoln County.

Gibson Farms has sent a note requesting a drought declaration, as has the Farm Bureau.

The Water Supply Availability Committee agrees that Lincoln County is in drought conditions.

The Drought Readiness Council members concur.

Q&A - why don't more counties ask for drought declarations? It may be that they have better access to storage. Sometimes a drought declaration doesn't necessarily help; or businesses don't want to signal to customers that they are affected by drought.

The Drought Monitor includes many kinds of drought, including ecological, and then no one asks for additional tools.

Some are in primary federal designations and are getting the help they need already.

7. OHA's Climate Program

Emily York, Climate and Health Program at Oregon Health Authority

See accompanying PowerPoint for details from the Oregon Health Authority.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- This program operates under a federally funded grant from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- The program is looking beyond individual behaviors to environmental conditions that shape our health.
- The focus is on clean air, water, food, safe places
- Drought related effects observed by OHA include exhaustion / heat stroke, jeopardized water systems (quant & quality), and harmful algal blooms in recreational waters (measured by symptoms in emergency rooms).
- Droughts are slow moving, and effects are difficult to measure or to track cause. 3 north central counties are messaging and working together on communications (Wasco, Sherman, and Gilliam Counties). This is a good opportunity to connect with well owners and other water users, about protecting their health.
- We must build long-term preparedness to slow-moving hazards. Work on systems & policies.
- Climate and Health Plan is organized by OHA's capabilities.
- Improved hard infrastructure is necessary, yes, but also social cohesion.

8. Roundtable and Discussion

Brenda Bateman – Our summer intern, Julia, is working hard on conducting interviews / documenting drought impacts.

Erik Rau - outside of fire season, we typically send resources to California in November and December. We've already sent two batches of resources this year. They were recalled because of fires here in Oregon.

Prairie City is having difficulty with water service. They think they have it handled by now. Not sure what the problem was. Trucking water in from other areas around the County.

Talking to Malheur County about potential declarations as well. They have a new emergency manager, who asked about the declaration processes a little while ago.

Nick Yonker – With regard to wildfire, we’re under precaution level 5, the highest. Resources are critical here in Oregon, with red flag warnings across the state. We have a high Haines Index (dry conditions - plume dominated fires, upward), now moving into wind events as well. Potential of lightning tonight, particularly in northeast Oregon. Hot again next week.

Brenda Bateman - Agencies are being called upon to turn heavy rigs back into the state motor pool to provide support to fire fighting efforts. Trying to make sure they can move vehicles around quickly.

Kathie Dello – OCCRI just hit “send” on a multi-state grant request to NASA (OR, WA, ID). It would expand on the development of drought indicators. We’re proposing data mining of NASA and other data. Applicants need to have strong management and water resources expertise on their team. We will develop the research questions together and then co-produce the tool.

OCCRI is also hosting climate data standards workshops for projections, scenarios, and models. In case a carbon bill passes the state legislature in 2019, we’ll be ready to go on adaptation.

OCCRI is also hosting a Carbon 101 briefing for the state legislature.

With regard to the PNW Drought Impact Reporter, David Rupp - can give a presentation this fall!

Anna Pakenham Stevenson ODFW will be hosting an instream needs workshop at the end of September. We can discuss the agenda next time.

9. Next Meeting Date

September 13 from 10:00 to noon at OEM.

10. Adjourned at 12:00