



Oregon's Drought Readiness Council
Feb. 14, 2019 Meeting Notes
Needs Council Approval

Participants in the Room:

Sonya Andron, Co-Chair, Oregon Drought Readiness Council & Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Brenda Bateman, Co-Chair, Oregon Drought Readiness Council & Water Resources Department
Ken Stahr, Chair, Water Supply Availability Committee & Water Resources Department
Daniel Stoelb, Oregon Office of Emergency Management
Nick Yonker, Oregon Department of Forestry

On the Phone:

Kathy Brucker, USDA Farm Services Agency
Kathie Dello, Oregon Change Climate Research Institute, Oregon State University
Tom Elliott, Oregon Department of Energy
Jennifer Flynt, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Roxy Nayar, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Don Petit, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Erik Rau, Oregon Office of Emergency Management

1. Welcome and Introductions

Brenda Bateman welcomed participants and everyone introduced themselves.

2. Agenda Check

No additions proposed.

3. Approval of December 2018 Meeting Notes

No changes suggested.

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.

- In just a few days, snowpack has increased by 8 percent across the state.
- Still, basins are still short on snow-water equivalent, particularly the Willamette Basin, Rogue, and Klamath.
- Precipitation is increasing but still below normal in many places, particularly west and central Oregon.
- Temperature – January was warmer than normal. However, in February temperatures have been 5 to 10 degrees (F) below normal. We're headed for a record cold February.
- Despite recent events, the three-month outlook is for below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures.
- Streamflow is about 58 percent of normal for the water year.
- Percent of average streamflow for January: the lowest streamflows are found in Crook County. January flows for Wheeler County were 33 percent of normal. February flows only slightly improved.
 - Compare that to Bridge Creek above Coyote Canyon: Nov. – Jan. set low flow records. Although flows improved in February, they were still below average. Recent snowfall is hopefully stored in snowpack, and is not seen at stream gages yet.
- Storage. Scoggins is at 80 percent of capacity, but below where it's supposed to be for this time of year. Same for Malheur – lower than should be for this time of year. True across the board; lower than normal.
- Seasonal Water Supply Forecast from river forecast center shows shortages on the west side.
- U.S. Drought Monitor – some improvement since January.

- D3 designations gone from Eastern Oregon and Klamath.
- Compressed D2 designations as well.

5. Consideration of County Requests for Drought Declarations

The state received a request from Wheeler County on January 17 for a Governor's drought declaration. Wheeler County has no access to storage on large scale. When requested, conditions were much lower than normal. At this point, we're seeing large increases in snow-water equivalent (SWE) and water supply, plus colder than normal temperatures. The Water Supply Availability Committee recommends that it is too early to call a governor's declared drought, and would like to revisit this in March. Conditions could change throughout the season.

What is it about their access to water that compels them to ask this early? Likely local messaging. The county is not really a user of Department tools. Brenda agreed to circle back to Wheeler County and to the Governor's Office to let them know what the Council is thinking, and see if they have any urgent needs before March.

Erik Rau talked to Wheeler County emergency manager in January, as well as other counties. Most of the Eastern Counties were apprehensive about the upcoming season, but waiting a bit longer and watching conditions before making declarations.

It is not unreasonable to wait a month to take any action. The group agreed.

6. Roundtable & Discussion:

- Should the Council host a 2019 meeting for agency public information officers? Yes, shoot for March or April.
- Is it time to insert conservation and curtailment messaging into executive orders that declare drought? We could extend an invitation to Lisa Jaramillo of the Water Resources Department to talk us through what curtailment and conservation materials are available to use as resources.
- Brenda asked Governor's Office to update or re-direct its 2015 drought page.
- WRD's drought storymap was an organized survey of 2018 impacts. We need to decide whether to do something similar in 2019. There are no additional resources to pay an intern. Maybe we could use national-level tools. Bring in NMDC to brief us on what they're doing with their drought storymap.
- Kathie Dello. The Farm Bill contains language to evaluate the methods used by U.S. Drought Monitor. It authorizes \$5M for USDA to review its data sources to consider climate change and western snowpack. It will involve working with USDA's Farm Services Agency as well.
- Also from Kathie, Danielle Moresi defended her dissertation at OSU in January. We should talk through some of her results, as they could provide additional layers to the climate toolbox.
- Don Petit. Are there implications for wildfire season or harmful algal blooms (HABs)? Nick: We're still looking at an above normal fire season. There's too much to make up. Ken S: if we don't have a respite, we would expect to see HABs like in previous years. Don: Reservoir data looks like we're making up ground if conditions continue the way they are. What about coastal range? Does that data not show up? Ken S: Not in NRCS slides.
- Jennifer Flynt, regarding PIOs. There is a joint agency water protocol, communications response plan due in early summer. OHA is the lead on that effort. They are hosting a call soon, will forward information and help connect the groups.
- Tom Elliott. Often we see the weather system split, sending precipitation to our north and south. In early February, luckily, the pattern shifted. We're in a weak El Niño right now.
- Erik Rau. Plan to call into OEM's emergency manager meeting coming up and brief participants on protocols for drought declaration. We should focus the discussion with county emergency managers on the big picture and available resources.
- Sonya Andron. Oregon Prepared will be taking place March 18-20 at the River House in Bend. Registration is now open. Have 450. Will close at 500. Agenda is competitive with other events and registration is \$50.
- Daniel Stoelb. OEM has just released its weather ops dashboard. It contains information from the weather service regarding current and forecasted conditions. You can access this new dashboard here: <https://arcg.is/1nzn811>. On this new dashboard, you'll see the following information:

- Twitter updates from all four weather service forecast offices;
- Current weather conditions, featuring highest current temperatures, lowest current temperatures, and top wind speed from RAWS weather station data;
- Current weather watches and warnings for Oregon;
- 72 hour cumulative total precipitation forecast;
- Flood gauge dashboard showing forecasted gauges in Oregon that are at or near flood stage;
- 72 hour cumulative snowfall forecast;
- Current snow depth;
- And current wind conditions from windy.com.

The data in these views are updated automatically, so keep it displayed on a screen to monitor current conditions.

- Also from Daniel, there is a new ArcGIS Online Sub-Organization. We now have a new website that displays all of our public-facing applications for GIS. Please check out <https://dev.navigator.oregon.gov/agol/oem/>. As we release new content, you will see them show up there.
- Ken Stahr. The weather ops dashboard is using state-run stream gages that are picked up by the river forecast center, who has built models around some of them to predict high flows.
- Nick Yonker. We had a Thunderstruck presentation from Tom Jenkins last December. Another staff member is available to talk about three-month forecast predictions. If you are interested, we could invite him for a late spring appearance.
- Kathie Dello. We could also invite Nick Siler in astrosciences at OSU. He notes that snow pack declines have been mitigated by natural variability, but it's just going to get worse from here. Could we make his work available to a wider audience? The group said yes.

7. Next Meeting Date

March 14 (WSAC scheduled for March 12)

April 11

8. Adjourned

11:07