

## Water Supply Availability Committee/Drought Readiness Council Meeting – April 14, 2020

Phone Conference – Meeting Notes

### **Attendees**

Ken Stahr – OWRD  
Scott Oviatt – NRCS  
Andy Bryant – NWS  
Nick Yonker – ODF  
Carrie Boudreau – USGS  
Jon Rocha – USBR  
Mary Karen Scullion – USACE

Larry O’Neill – OSU  
Amy Burke - NWRFC  
Marc Stewart - USGS  
Danette Faucera - ODFW  
Jeff Marti - WA WSAC  
Jake Johnstone - OWRD

### **Presentations – update on water supply conditions**

#### **Scott Oviatt**

- After late-season snowfall, statewide SNOTEL snowpack measuring at 99% of normal
  - Some increase of low and mid-elevation snowpack
  - Snowpack at lower elevation where little or no snow is the norm inflates % of normal
  - Up from 86% of normal on 3/10/2020
- Statewide values are likely inflated due to events in NE Oregon
  - NE OR has greatest amount in Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Wallowa at 128 and 122%
  - Southwestern OR measuring lowest at 78% in Klamath and 79% in the Rogue, Umpqua.
- Snowpack trends showing differences between west and east of Cascades
  - West side will most likely peak well below normal
- Past 7 days showing significant SWE losses almost statewide.
- Statewide SNOTEL water year precipitation measuring at 78% of normal
  - Down from 79% of normal on 3/10/2020
  - NE OR basins measuring just below normal
    - Umatilla, Walla Walla, Wallowa greatest at 99%
  - Rest of state measuring below to well below normal
    - Southern OR basins measuring below 70%
    - Klamath and Rogue, Umpqua basins measuring lowest at 66 and 67%
  - Past 12 days measuring well below normal at majority of individual sites statewide with little difference between regions
- Apr-Sep streamflow forecasts at 50% exceedance probability variable by region
  - Many sites within the Willamette Valley projected near normal (<=> 90%)
  - Central OR sites around the Deschutes Basin projected well below normal around 50%
  - NE OR sites projecting above normal
  - Southern OR sites projecting below to well below normal (53 – 90%)

- NRCS seeking feedback on scheme to calculate metrics based on HUC-6 watersheds as opposed to historical basin boundaries.

### **Andy Bryant**

- Precipitation measuring below normal for much of the state for WY 2020
  - NE OR only region measuring above normal in some locations
  - A few regions in central OR measuring below 25% of normal
  - Majority of state measuring between 25 – 75% of normal
- Precipitation of past 30 days measuring below-normal in most areas
  - Nearly all of western OR measuring below 75% with significant portion of southwest Oregon measuring below 50% of average
- March temperatures were below-normal to normal for much of the state
  - Most of central and western Oregon experienced below-normal temperatures
  - Temperatures were around normal in eastern Oregon with the exception of Baker and Union counties where temperatures were a couple of degrees above normal
- US Drought monitor reporting expanded areas of D1 (moderate drought) throughout much of central and SW OR
- New areas in north central and southwest now showing D2 (severe drought)
  - Majority of the state showing D0 or D1, with small pockets of no drought in NW, NE and SE OR
- Short and Long-term outlooks
  - 8-14 day
    - Likely above-average temperatures and below-average precipitation throughout the state
  - May-July
    - Likely above average temperatures and below average precipitation statewide

### **Amy Burke**

- Observed water year runoff is following patterns mentioned previously
  - Over 100% in NE Oregon and below-normal almost everywhere else
  - Western Oregon valleys and coast 70% of normal
  - Southwest Oregon – Rogue, Umpqua and South Coast well below normal
- Forecast is similar – normal to above normal in the NE with the rest of the state below-normal to well below normal.
- January was the biggest month for runoff on the west side with February being the biggest contributor to the east (particularly the NE). But the February storm event did not reach very far south.

### **Carrie Boudreau and Marc Stewart**

- March streamflows measured below normal for much of western and central Oregon
  - Sites in SW OR were well below normal
  - Some sites in NE OR are still seeing normal to above normal flows.
  - Much lower flows across the state compared to February
- Current 7-day average streamflows are measuring well below normal throughout much of the state

- Sites in the western valleys and coastal areas are experiencing normal to below-normal flows compared to historical streamflows
  - Flows in parts of the South Coast, Rogue and Klamath are lower than normal
- Some sites east of Cascades measuring near normal
  - Some sites in NE OR still measuring flows well above normal
- Overall, streamflow is dropping after recent precipitation event.
- Statewide 7-day average runoff for all sites combined measuring much below normal in the mid 10-24 percentile range (low).

### **Ken Stahr**

- March streamflows measured at 45% of average compared to 1981-2010 historical values
  - Finished March at 66% of average for WY 2020
- Streamflows measuring 37% of normal west of the Cascades and 49 % to the east.
- Regionally, March streamflows showed wide range in % of average for the month
  - Max = Baker County at 76%.
  - Min = Curry and Coos county at 15%
  - Most counties measured below to well below normal
- Some individual sites are currently measuring the lowest flows for the period of record

### **Jon Rocha**

- McKay Reservoir has good snowpack and subsequent baseflows
  - Likely to fill
- Flow forecasts are trending downwards
- Low rain, low baseflows, but some good snowpack
- Releases for irrigation officially began April 1<sup>st</sup>
- Bully Creek Reservoir likely not to fill due to little low elevation snowpack
  - Relaxed flood control space requirements until snowmelt patterns become clearer

### **Mary Karen Scullion – Text submittal**

- Rogue: The Rogue system is currently 72% full and 20% below Rule curve. The current 10 day forecast shows dry conditions and warming temperatures across the basin, which has the potential for snowmelt runoff mid to late week. The snow melt is forecasted to flatten out the inflows to both projects preventing significant recession. Lost Creek will be maintaining releases at 850 cfs in efforts to continue capturing as much inflows as possible, while still providing releases downstream to the fry that have recently entered the system. Applegate will continue to maintain a minimum release of 125 cfs through the week. Current fisheries goals are minimizing the fry rearing habitat. ODFW has mentioned potentially recommending the reduction of release out of Lost Creek to 800cfs after their river survey on last Friday.
- Willow Creek: The Willow Creek Project is currently 101% full and 2% above Rule Curve. The current project objective is to release 13 cfs to satisfy the current irrigation demand of the senior water rights holders, as well as an additional 27 cfs to slow down the current fill rate. There is currently warm

temperatures forecasted the next 10 days across the basin, and we are expecting to see a continuation of the snowmelt that started last week.

- Willamette: The Willamette is 55% full and 26% behind rule curve. Only DOR and FOS are forecast to fill on rule curve this week while the rest continue to lag behind. Monday's forecast shows 10 days of dry weather and a Salem flow of 10 kcfs by third week of April. Current agreement with NMFS & ODFW have no minimum biop target at Salem thru 15 April 2020 and releases of 1200 cfs and 1100 cfs from BCL and FOS for spawning steelhead. The normal target is 1500 cfs in these basins. The normal 16-30 April 2020 biop target at Salem is 17,800 cfs. Updated ressim modeling using RFC's ESP traces which incorporates 10-day precipitation forecast indicates that we are likely to experience a deficit year. This is also borne out by NOAA's Climate Prediction Center's Seasonal Drought Outlook which has had the Willamette basin in a 'Persistent Drought/Drought Likely' category since end of March. There is a FWQT meeting on 16 April 2020 to discuss mainstem targets for the rest of April.

### **Nick Yonker**

- Fire potential remains low throughout the state
  - 7-day significant fire potential is minimal statewide
- Significant wildland fire potential remains normal through June

### **Notes**

- Jake Johnstone – OWRD Field Services SW Region Manager
  - Conditions are very dry, regulatory activities are starting and several counties are discussing drought declarations.
  - Among them are Jackson, Curry, Coos, Josephine and Douglas.
  - Irrigation districts in the Rogue Basin are expecting a below-normal water supply for the season ahead.
- All present are in agreement that if asked, the conditions presented in these counties warrant a drought declaration
  - Committee and Council members will be contacted in the event of a drought declaration request
- Next meeting proposed for Wednesday, May 13, 2020.
  - We will keep trying to use the link provided by Amy and the NWRFC
  - Open to other suggestions...