

Water Supply Availability Committee/Drought Readiness Council Meeting – September 10, 2020

Phone Conference – Meeting Notes

Attendees

Ken Stahr – OWRD (Chair)

Ryan Andrews – OWRD

Yamen Hoque – USACE

Jim Johnson – ODA

Scott Oviatt – NRCS

Nick Yonker – ODF

Marc Stewart – USGS

Amy Burke – NWRFC

Roxy Nayar – DEQ

Jon Rocha – USBR

Larry O’Neill – OCS

Danette Faucera – ODFW

Tom Elliott – DOE

Margaret Matter – ODA

Presentations – update on water supply conditions

Nick Yonker

- Nearly every zone in Oregon with state lands managed by Oregon Department of Forestry is at the highest possible significant fire potential
 - East winds, low humidity, and dry summer conditions contributed to recent events
- East winds have slowed recently which provides some respite from fire spread
- Fire management operations have made human life top priority, given extent and complexity of fire situation making it difficult to contain fires
- Increased potential for fire in Columbia Basin
- Beachie Creek and Lionshead fires have combined (Santiam Fire)
- Riverside Fire has been threatening Clackamas County
- Burned acreage on state-owned forest land has potential for record high
- Currently, at least 36 fires are ongoing

Scott Oviatt

- Statewide SNOTEL precipitation measured 81% of normal as of 9/9/2020
- With exception of NE OR, all basins are measuring below to well below normal
 - John Day (90%), Grande Ronde-Burnt-Powder-Imnaha (101%), and Umatilla-Walla Walla-Willow (101%)
 - Klamath basin measuring lowest at 67% of normal
- Many Cascades and Central OR SNOTEL sites measuring in lower 10th percentile for periods of record
 - Several sites measuring at lowest or second-lowest on record
- Soil moisture response shows little difference between WY 2019 and 2020 at some sites
 - Holland Meadows shows similar patterns between the two years, with rapid decline in soil moisture content over summer
 - Available soil moisture for plant uptake or evaporation is near zero
 - Low spring rains did little to replace snowmelt

Amy Burke

- WY 2020 precipitation measuring well below normal for much of the state
 - Exception in portions of NE OR measuring above normal

- Significant deficits up to 20 or more inches below normal exist for much of western OR
- Eastern OR faring better, however deficits of 6-12 inches exist for much of Central OR
- Precipitation over past 60 days measuring well below normal, with much of state below 25% of normal
 - South and SE OR measuring below 50% of normal for many areas
- August temperatures were above to well above normal for much of the state
 - 1-4 degrees above normal
 - Temperatures for first week of September were 6 degrees above normal for the Pacific Northwest
- US Drought Monitor shows expansion of D2 (severe drought) and D3 (extreme drought) coverage
- Mid-late September outlook shows increased probability of above average temperatures and below average precipitation
 - Some precipitation is forecasted for the next 10 days
- Three-month outlook (October/November/December) shows increased probability of above average temperatures and equal chances of above or below normal precipitation
 - La Nina watch is in effect for fall and winter
- Naturalized WY runoff shows below to well below normal runoff for much of the state
 - SW OR shows cluster of gages below 50% of normal
 - NE OR has cluster of gages measuring above normal

Larry O'Neill

- Storm Prediction Center issued extremely critical fire warning in NW and SW OR
 - First issue of this warning for western OR
- Increased coverage and severity in drought conditions
 - Expansion of D3 (extreme drought) coverage in SW, SE, and central OR
 - Strong degradation in soil moisture content
- Evaporative Drought Demand Index indicates possible D3 and D4 conditions in Willamette
- 12-month Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) follows closely to US Drought Monitor

Marc Stewart

- Regulation heavily influencing average flows for some streams in Willamette
- Hydrographs receding rapidly

Ken Stahr

- Streamflows in August measured 70% of normal statewide
- WY streamflows have measured 69% of normal since May
- Only the Grande Ronde administrative basin has measured above normal streamflow, with Umatilla and Sandy basins measuring just below normal
 - Goose and Summer Lakes has measured the lowest at 45% of normal for WY streamflow
- Many counties in central OR measured well below normal streamflow for August

- Crook County measured only 4% of normal streamflow, while many others in Central OR measured below 50% of normal
 - Clatsop (44%) and Baker (27%) also measured well below normal
- 7-day average streamflows were highly variable throughout the state for the first week of September
 - Of note is Crook County which measured 0% of normal
- Streamflows in Klamath County (78% of normal for August) are potentially elevated due to full curtailment
 - This is important to show that streamflows are below normal even without pressures from water users
- Powder River inflows into Phillips Lake are measuring well below normal
- Baker County commissioners signed drought declaration request

Jon Rocha

- Many reservoirs are still drafting to meet demands
 - Most systems are drafting normally
- Reservoir levels are normal to well above normal for Owyhee (125%), Malheur (116%), Burnt (127%), Umatilla (140%), and Tualatin (127%) systems at this point of the WY
 - Powder (39%), Deschutes (48%), Crooked (60%), and Rogue (17%) systems are well below normal
- Irrigation releases are slowly dropping in Owyhee and Powder systems
 - Owyhee system should leave close to average carryover
 - Powder system likely to end WY with low carryover
- Crooked River system operating at bare minimum to meet instream flows
- Historically low carryover potential in Rogue system
- Umatilla system nearing record high carryover
- Scoggins should end WY with average carryover
- Wickiup Reservoir likely to empty

Discussion

- Baker County commissioners signed drought declaration request
 - DRC committee would like to see more information regarding reasoning and on-the-ground impacts
 - Defer decision until able to review more information
- Next meeting proposed for Thursday, October 8th