

Water Supply Availability Committee/Drought Readiness Council Meeting – October 13, 2021

Phone Conference – Meeting Notes

Attendees

Ryan Andrews – OWRD (Chair)	Scott Oviatt – NRCS
Henry Pai – NWRFC	Paige Haxton-Evans – DEQ
Spencer Sawaske – ODFW	Larry O’Neill – OCS/OSU
Jon Rocha – USBR	Marc Stewart – USGS
Andy Bryant – NWS	Tom Elliott – ODOE
Ron Graham – ODF	Bill Martin – OEM
Traci Naile – OEM	Jeff Marti – WDOE
Salina Hart – USACE	Peter Cooper – USBR
Roxy Nayar – DEQ	Jim Johnson - ODA

Presentations – update on water supply conditions

Scott Oviatt

- 8 SNOTEL sites in active fire perimeter
- Lost benefits of WY 2021 snowpack rapidly
 - Rapid meltout
 - Limited snowmelt runoff late spring
 - Many basins melted out about 2 weeks early on average
- SNOTEL precipitation
 - Hood-Sandy-Lower Deschutes buoyed by February precipitation and warmer temperatures
- Many sites saw lowest or second lowest precipitation on record over past two years
- SNOTEL 30-day precipitation above average along Cascades
 - Below to well below average in eastern Oregon
- Soil moisture content in eastern Oregon showing signs of drought

Andy Bryant

- WY 2021 precipitation well below average statewide
- Precipitation over past 60 days variable throughout state
 - Above normal in parts of western OR and southeastern OR
 - Below to well below average everywhere else; majority of eastern OR
- Some benefits from September precipitation
- Precipitation over March-August period was well below normal and driest on record along Cascades and western foothills, as well as north-central OR
- September temperatures measured average to above average statewide
 - 10-day precipitation projected above average statewide
- 8-14 day outlook projecting above average temperature and precipitation
- Weak to moderate La Nina projected over Oct-Dec

Henry Pai

- April through September natural runoff conditions well below normal statewide

- Observed runoff well below normal for WY 2021
- Projections for Apr-Sep runoff of WY 2022 range below to near normal as of Oct 12
- Rogue R nr Agnes measured well below normal runoff
 - WY 2022 forecast trending below normal
 - Even with median precipitation, runoff wouldn't recover to normal
- Chetco nr Brookings
 - Observed runoff well below normal WY 2021
 - Forecast near normal for WY 2022

Marc Stewart

- 7-day average streamflows normal in western OR
 - Below to well below normal much of eastern OR
- Inflows to reservoirs below normal
 - Particularly so in SW OR
- Steamboat Cr flowing near normal
- Sites in NE OR measuring below normal
 - Similar in SE OR
- Suggest removing D4 coverage at least in Douglas County based on streamflow

Larry O'Neill

- 2020-2021 drought ranks among worst in state record
- Curry County
 - 91% of average precipitation on WY 2021 (50/127)
 - Jan/Feb atmospheric river event
 - Early November significant precip
 - 6-month SPEI ranks equivalent to D1 on USDM
 - PDSI shows near normal conditions
 - Influenced by recent September precipitation
- 17 of past 24 months measured below average precipitation statewide
 - 81% of average for WY 2021 (14/127)
 - 79% of average for WY 2020
- Consecutive years of well below average precipitation created significant water deficit
- 6-month SPEI ending in September measures worst on record statewide
 - 12-month SPEI among worst
- WY 2021 ended as warmest on record
- Drought amelioration tool (NOAA)
 - Based on PHDI
 - Allows understanding of amount of precipitation required to end drought conditions

Ryan Andrews

- Drought request from Curry County
- September streamflows below average throughout much of state
 - Some exceptions in western OR and Baker County
- WY 2021 streamflows below to well below average statewide

- Exceptions in northwestern OR which measured about normal
- Coverage and severity of poor streamflows expanded throughout spring and summer
 - Number of streams measuring well below average or worst monthly streamflows on record increased throughout summer months
- 28-day streamflows about average western OR; well below average much of western OR

Jon Rocha

- Peter Cooper joining to talk about SW OR projects in future
- All USBR Oregon projects transitioned to typical fall/winter operations
- Some projects still delivering water for ecological purposes
 - Tualatin, Umatilla
- Most river basins would need very wet conditions to refill for WY 2022
 - Umatilla, Crooked – 75th percentile of historical volume
 - Malheur, Powder, Owyhee, Rogue, Deschutes – 90th percentile of historical volume
- Rogue near lowest carryover on record
- 2nd lowest storage content for USBR projects on record
- Prineville Reservoir reached close to full demand as early as allowed
 - Suffered from early and quick meltout
- Emigrant Lake
 - Low inflows – not enough to satisfy demands early in season
 - Formulated plans to hold off releasing until critical points in season; during high temperatures

Salina Hart

- USACE systems ready for winter operations
 - Releasing minimum flows
 - Detroit had to evacuate water
 - Green Peter at/below power pool, but releasing for minimum flows
- Cottage Grove below average
- Cougar drafting greater than usual
- Altering refill plans in some systems
- 10% full in Willamette
- Releasing minimums in Rogue
 - 14% full; 44% below rule curve
- Willow Creek not releasing (no minimums)
 - First time shutting off irrigations

Ron Graham

- Emergency board gave extra money
 - \$2 mill on suppression in Spring
- 1992-2001 seasons
 - Large fire activity predominantly east of Cascades
 - Range fuels dry
 - West side quiet

- 2002-2011 season
 - More fires on west side
- 2012-2021
 - More widespread across state
 - Even couple fires in NW OR
- Significant fire activity starting in June 2021
 - Still some activity in Rough Patch and Jack Fires
 - Precipitation suppressed increased expansion of fires recently
- Human caused fires continue to rise (1.4x compared to 2011-2020)
 - 2.4x more total acres burned on ODF land
- 94% of fires kept at 10 acres or less
- \$19 mill into \$25 mill of insurance policy

Discussion

- Next meeting proposed for 11/10
- Submit Curry County drought request to Governor's Office