

## **Water Supply Availability Committee/Drought Readiness Council Meeting – September 15, 2021**

Phone Conference – Meeting Notes

### **Attendees**

Ryan Andrews – OWRD (Chair)

Henry Pai – NWRFC

Spencer Sawaske – ODFW

Jon Rocha – USBR

Andy Bryant – NWS

Ron Graham – ODF

Traci Naile – OEM

Scott Oviatt – NRCS

Paige Haxton-Evans – DEQ

Larry O’Neill – OCS/OSU

Carrie Boudreau – USGS

Tom Elliott – ODOE

Bill Martin – OEM

Jeff Marti – WDOE

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

#### **Scott Oviatt**

- Statewide SNOTEL water year precipitation measuring 79% of long-term average as of September 15
  - Max = Hood-Sandy-Lower Deschutes @ 90%
  - Min = Lake County-Goose Lake @ 60%
- Spring drought since March 1
  - 198-day precipitation measuring well below average
  - Only Owyhee basin measuring > 50% (53%)
  - All stations measuring lowest or second-lowest ranking on record during this period
- Soil water content below to well below average
  - Holland Meadows below 25<sup>th</sup> percentile
  - High Ridge nearing record low; lower 10<sup>th</sup> percentile
  - Silver Creek at lower end of average conditions
  - Silvies below 25<sup>th</sup> percentile

#### **Andy Bryant**

- Water year precipitation measuring below 75% of average throughout much of Oregon
  - Only portions of NW/NE Oregon measuring > 75%
  - Portion of Harney County measuring below 25%
- Significantly low precipitation in western OR over past 90 days (< 5%)
- Record driest March through August in Cascades and north central OR
- Temperatures were above normal in August throughout much of state, but still cooler than extreme temperatures of July and June
- Rain in forecast over next 10 days (ending 9/24)
  - Approximately four inches forecasted in north Cascades
- 8-14 day outlook indicates probabilities favoring below average temperatures and equal chances above/below normal precipitation throughout much of state
- Seasonal three-month outlook (October-December) favors equal chances of above/below normal precipitation throughout much of state, with exception of NW OR (above normal)

- Temperature outlook differs along swath from SW to NE OR, where equal chances above/below normal temperatures favored in northern portion and above normal temperatures favored in southern portion

### **Henry Pai**

- Recent precipitation has not affected WY 2022 forecasts
  - Willamette at Salem projected below normal
  - Rogue at Raygold projected below normal
  - Owyhee at Owyhee Dam projected much below normal
  - Umatilla near Umatilla projected just below normal

### **Larry O'Neill**

- Ongoing drought ranks among three worst (1924, 1977) based on Palmer Drought Severity Index
  - Record high temperatures, mildly dry fall, record dry spring/summer; early, rapid snow meltout all contributed
  - PDSI captures elements of water balances (evapotranspiration and precipitation)
  - Worst PDSI in 6/9 climate divisions in OR
- 76.7% of Oregon in extreme/exceptional drought according to US Drought Monitor
- 13<sup>th</sup> driest 12-month period of record
  - Water not going as far due to evaporative losses
    - Extremely warm summer (warmest on record) contributed to high evaporative demand
- Lake County driest 12-month period of record
  - Crook County second worst on record
- All counties warmest or second warmest on record (June-July-August)
  - Prolonged periods of above average temperatures
  - Many days of >90 degrees

### **Carrie Boudreau**

- Many streams measuring below to well below 7-day average streamflow (9/13)
  - Quite a few measuring worst on record
  - Similar trend with 28-day average
- South Yamhill R at McMinnville, OR measuring near historic low
- Siuslaw R near Mapleton, OR measuring much below historic low
- Mohawk R near Springfield, OR measuring near historic low
- Illinois R near Kirby, OR measuring within normal range
- Chetco R near Brookings, OR measuring below historic low
- Upper Klamath Lake trending downwards since April 1
- 7-day average hydrograph statewide measuring in lower 10<sup>th</sup> percentile

### **Ryan Andrews**

- 22 counties with drought declaration EO
  - Three additional requests from Linn, Josephine, and Yamhill Counties
- WY % of average streamflow measuring below average in most counties

- Only Tillamook (100%) and Polk (102%) counties measuring average or above
- August % of average well below average statewide with exception of Baker County
  - Powder R above Phillips Lake measured 731% of average throughout month
- Many streams in western OR set new historic lows over past 7-day period (9/12)
  - Powder R set new high
- Most OWRD administrative basins measuring below average streamflow throughout the water year
  - Trend worsens from west to east; only coastal basins measuring somewhat near average

### **Jon Rocha**

- Some USBR basins still delivering irrigation water
  - Tualatin, Umatilla, Owyhee, Crooked, Burnt
- Irrigation delivery shut down in:
  - Rogue (7/19)
  - Malheur (8/23)
    - Bully Creek expected to be empty by end of month
  - Deschutes (8/25)
  - Powder (8/27)
    - Phillips empty; passing inflow
- Expected shut down:
  - Crooked (10/1)
  - Owyhee (10/1)
  - Burnt (10/1)
- Some systems with no carryover expected for next water year
  - Warm Springs, Beulah empty
- Wickiup passing inflows to go to North Unit Irrigation District from Crane Prairie
- Umatilla typically releases until around Thanksgiving
  - Should be record low carryover by then

### **Ron Graham**

- Extreme lightning activity major driver of fire activity
- Significant fires in March in Bend
- 80 consecutive days of preparedness level 5
  - National record for preparedness level 4
- Limited resource availability for fighting fires
- Approximately 5.5 million acres of burned land nationally
  - Dixie fire alone was about 1 million
- Bootleg fire largest in Oregon (> 400,000 acres)
- Just under 1,050 fires this year for ODF jurisdictions
  - 10-year average about 550 fires
- 10-year average of 96,000 acres burned in OR
- Live fuels have been low this year
- Primarily dealing with western flocks of Cascades
- Cougar Peak fire in Lake County being investigated

- Big Meadow fire (2,600 acres)
  - Good indicator of fire activity
    - Activity typically drops off at this time of year
- Bear Flat fire started on BLM jurisdiction
  - Challenging, but held in check @ 50 acres
- Couple new starts west of Cascades
  - Columbia City
- Vehicle fire south of Salem near Independence caused evacuation of homes
- Dealing with holdovers/rekindling of 2020 fires
- Significant fire potential outlook getting back to low/minimal range
- Seasonal workforce returning to other jobs – loss of resources for fighting fires
- Over 40 states helping with fires – Oregon will move to assist