

Douglas County Drought Fact Sheet for Summer 2018

- 1) Douglas County is experiencing a severe drought, due to below average precipitation, lack of snow pack, low stream flows and higher than normal temperatures.
- 2) Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD), the authority on water issues, rights and drought in Oregon, announced that there will be increased mandated water restrictions are coming soon for Douglas County property owners with stream or river water rights. For more information about OWRD go to www.oregon.gov/OWRD/
- 3) OWRD Watermaster for the Umpqua Basin, Susan Douthit reports OWRD mandated water restriction enforcement in Douglas County began three weeks earlier than average. The declared drought is expected to be more severe as the season progresses. Forecasts predict dry conditions with temperatures expected to be well above normal.
- 4) According to the OWRD's June 16, 2018 Water Conditions Report.
 - Stream flows in the Umpqua basin hover around 40% of average
 - Precipitation for the month of June was below normal for most areas of the state
 - Recent warm temperatures and below normal precipitation have increased water demand across the state, contributing to water distribution activities one to three weeks earlier in the season than normal.
 - Drought conditions are worsening and they are not forecasted to improve through the summer.
 - Above normal wildfire conditions are expected to continue through the fire season
- 5) This announcement is for citizens in Douglas County with stream and river water rights only. However, all residents of Douglas County should start practicing water conservation measures. Citizens are encouraged to contact their local city water department or water district office for information on what water restrictions they are imposing.
- 6) What are the options when a primary supply is no longer available? A supplemental or back up water supply for irrigation may be available, if you have access to stored water (private storage facilities/tanks, Ben Irving or Galesville Reservoirs) or through a drought permit or transfer of water rights. Domestic (household) supplemental supplies are available through water haulers, water authorities, grocery stores and farm supply stores.
- 7) How can you conserve water on your farm, ranch or rural property?
 - Fix any leaks in the irrigation system. Studies show up to 16% is lost due to leaks.
 - Consider a reduction in nozzle size or installation of drip irrigation. Research shows that drip tape uses 30% to 50% less water than overhead irrigation. This ensures uniformity of water distribution.
 - Pressure regulators and nozzles should be replaced every 5-7 years to avoid uneven distribution.
 - Install flow meters or other measurement devices that keep track of water use.
 - To save water, it is important to determine if moisture is penetrating below crop root zones. Water below the root zone means too much water is being applied. Estimates are that this conservation measure may conserve as much as 13% of your water.
 - Shift to cropping patterns that are less water dependent than your current system. Plant varieties of crops that withstand dryness, hold water, and reduce the need for irrigation. Melons, tomatoes, squash and beans are better suited to dry conditions, while lettuce and corn rely on wetter conditions to thrive.
- 8) Tap into local resources. A variety of technical bulletins and online resources are available from partners around the state. For example: the Extension Program through Oregon State University (OSU), the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and local soil and water conservation districts can help you find ways to use water more efficiently this year and beyond. OSU Extension's Small Farms Program provides 15 ways to you help mitigate drought on your farm: <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sfn/sp14drought>
- 9) For additional drought information and information on drought assistance programs offered by the State of Oregon and the Federal Government, log onto: www.drought.oregon.gov/
- 10) Douglas County was the fifth county to declare a drought order in Oregon. On June 14, 2018, Governor Kate Brown approved the order for the state of drought emergency for Douglas County. The order cited below average precipitation, lack of snow pack, low stream flows, higher than normal temperatures, economic hardship and potential for serious injury, as the basis for the request.
- 11) The U.S. Drought Monitor shows nearly all of southern and Eastern Oregon in some stage of drought, from abnormally dry to severe conditions. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center also forecasts that seasonal drought within our region will persist or intensify. This could dramatically increase wild land fire danger due to higher than normal temperatures and below average precipitation.
- 12) The Douglas County Board of Commissioners continue to assert that measures must be taken to alleviate stress to citizens and livestock, to protect or mitigate economic loss, and to be responsive to the threat of wildfires.