



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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## DROUGHT ADVISORY

May 24, 2021

A Drought Advisory is in effect for certain areas of Washington State.

A Drought Advisory is intended to increase awareness of developing drought conditions and provide recommendations for voluntary actions to alleviate impacts, pursuant to RCW 43.83B.405(1).

The affected area includes all areas east of Washington's Cascade Mountain Divide, portions of southwest Washington, and the Washington coast (see attached map). Specific counties include the following:

Adams	Kittitas
Asotin	Klickitat
Benton	Lewis (western half)
Chelan	Lincoln
Clallam County (western half)	Okanogan
Clark	Pacific
Columbia	Pend Oreille
Cowlitz	Skamania
Douglas	Spokane
Ferry	Stevens
Franklin	Wahkiakum
Garfield	Walla Walla
Grant	Whitman
Grays Harbor	Yakima
Jefferson (western half)	

### Water Supply Conditions

- As defined by RCW 43.83B.011, drought conditions mean that a geographic area is expected to receive less than 75% of normal water supply and there is a potential for undue hardship to water users or uses.
- Averaged statewide, March and April total precipitation ranked as the 4th driest on record (since 1895). Precipitation has been especially low in eastern Washington; precipitation over the last 90 days (February 15 - May 15, 2021) has been less than 50% of normal for all of the lower elevations of eastern WA. Water year (since Oct 1, 2020) precipitation is below 75% of normal in parts of Yakima, Klickitat, Kittitas, Benton, Franklin, Grant, Adams, Walla Walla, and Lincoln counties.
- Forecasted streamflow conditions for the April – September runoff period are mixed. Washington State experienced above normal snowpack accumulation this winter, reaching 132% of normal by April 1, 2021, but the state overall has been notably dry since mid-February.
- Rivers and streams originating in higher elevation areas of melting snowpack are expected to be near to above normal, while lower elevation and rain-dominated watersheds are likely to be below normal and, in some cases, below the hydrologic threshold of the statutory drought definition.
- The NOAA Northwest River Forecast Center April through September streamflow forecasts are less than 40-60% of normal in southwest Washington (e.g. the Upper and Lower Chehalis Basin), and rank as the lowest forecasted flow in about 70 years. The forecast for the Calawah River on the northwest Olympic Peninsula is 47% of normal, the fourth lowest in the last 72 years. southeastern Washington streamflows are also less than 40-70% of normal and rank around the 10th driest forecast on record. NOAA's water supply forecasts are updated daily and available at <https://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/>.
- Soil moisture conditions over much of the Columbia Basin in eastern Washington are at extreme low percentiles.
- The NOAA Climate Prediction Center June through August outlook, indicates a higher probability of warmer than normal temperatures and drier than normal precipitation, on average.

### **Most Affected Users**

- Non-irrigated lands used for dryland and rangeland production are likely to be most affected. Non-irrigated producers in eastern Washington are expecting reduced yields as a result from this year's precipitation deficit.
- Irrigation users with junior water rights may be required to restrict their diversions to protect senior water rights later in the summer.
- Small water systems dependent on shallow wells are most vulnerable to impacts in dry years.
- Drought conditions can cause severe stress to fish coping with low streamflows and high water temperatures. Wildlife can struggle to find water sources and forage.
- The Northwest Interagency Coordination Center forecasts that significant fire potential is expected to increase to above average in June across central Oregon into southeast Washington and continue through August.

### **Less Affected Areas**

- Farms and communities receiving water from the Columbia River and Lake Roosevelt are not expected to experience shortages this year if current weather trends continue.
- The federal Bureau of Reclamation forecasts that both senior and junior water users in the Yakima Basin are expected to receive their full water supply this summer.
- Mid to large-size water systems plan to meet customer water requirements during critical years and are not expected to encounter shortage issues.

### **Recommendations to Alleviate Drought Impacts**

- All water users should take care to conserve their water use. Find leaks and repair them.
- Pasture conditions are fair in many regions and cannot support typical herd sizes. Producers may have to purchase feed as early as June or July 2021.
- Producers are encouraged to contact their local conservation district for technical assistance.
- Impacted producers should contact their local USDA office to determine their eligibility for disaster assistance. Producers and growers should keep detailed records of crop losses for federal assistance programs.

- Junior water right holders concerned about waters rights curtailment should contact their local Department of Ecology Regional Office.
- Customers of public water systems in the affected area should look for communications from their local water utility to determine whether shortages are expected.
- Water system managers should review their own water shortage response plans and educate their customers about water conservation.
- Residents with private wells should monitor their well levels and reduce pumping if necessary to avoid drying their well or burning out their pump.
- Recreationists should not build rock dams in streams for the purpose of creating wading areas. Avoid the harassment of fish and wildlife.
- Rural residents should take care to reduce fire risks on their property by adopting “Firewise” practices, e.g., creating a defensible space around residential structures by thinning trees and brush; choosing fire-resistant plants; selecting ignition-resistant building materials; positioning structures away from slopes; and working with firefighters to develop emergency plans.

### Report Observations of Drought Conditions

Observations and photographs of drought conditions can help us assess whether to elevate state response. Submit observations using the Conditions Monitoring Observation System at: [go.unl.edu/CMOR](http://go.unl.edu/CMOR).

If your water supply is at risk of failing, contact the Department of Ecology Regional Office nearest you.

For further information, contact:

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Signed this 24th day May of 2021



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Laura Watson, Director