



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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ORDER AND DETERMINATION BY THE DIRECTOR

Washington State's economy, food and environment are all linked to the abundance and health of its water supplies. The Washington State Legislature recognizes that drought and water shortages can place a significant hardship on Washington communities, farms, and the natural environment. Chapter 43.83B RCW provides that a drought emergency may be declared if water supply is below seventy-five percent of normal and the water shortage will likely create undue hardships for water users or the environment.

On July 5, 2023, I issued a statewide Drought Advisory for all areas of Washington State, pursuant to the recommendation of the state Executive Water Emergency Committee (EWEC). A drought advisory seeks to raise awareness that drought conditions are developing.

Leading up to that decision, the state Water Supply Availability Committee (WSAC) reviewed water supply forecasts for the months of April through September and determined that projected runoff would represent an extreme departure from normal (e.g., below 75 percent of normal) over a subseasonal timeframe for most watersheds across the state (WAC 172-166-030(6)). Further, Washington has been in a severe precipitation deficit since the beginning of May, receiving less than 50 percent of normal precipitation averaged statewide since May 1. May thru June ranked as the 11th driest, and 4th warmest, such period since 1895. Based on this information, WSAC determined that the statutory hydrologic drought threshold was met.

Since the issuance of the drought advisory on July 5, new information regarding hardships due to drought conditions was provided to Ecology and EWEC:

1. Some public water systems are hauling water by truck to meet drinking water supply needs because of inadequate water supplies in wells, streams, and impoundments.
2. Many food producers have fallowed land and ceased irrigation leading to crop stress and reduced yields, because inadequate water availability has led to curtailment among junior water right holders. EWEC reported significant risk of late season water shortages creating widescale damage to valuable food crops.
3. Fish hatchery operations are disrupted due to inadequate river flows. Furthermore, river flows are projected to decline to levels in which fish will not be able to migrate later this summer, resulting in stranding and premature death of critical anadromous and resident fishes.

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Based upon the recommendations of EWEC, I find that drought conditions exist in the following Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs):

Nooksack (WRIA 1)	Walla Walla (WRIA 32)
Lower Skagit (WRIA 3)	Lower Yakima (WRIA 37)
Upper Skagit (WRIA 4)	Naches (WRIA 38)
Dungeness-Elwha (WRIA 18)	Upper Yakima (WRIA 39)
Lyre-Hoko (WRIA 19)	Methow (WRIA 48)
Sol-Duc-Hoh (WRIA 20)	Okanogan (WRIA 49)

Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of RCW 43.83B.405, **IT IS ORDERED the above listed WRIAs are hereby under a drought emergency.**

This order is effective immediately and shall remain in effect through June 30, 2024, unless terminated prior to that date.

In accordance with the provisions of RCW 43.83B.410 and WAC 173-166-060, the Department of Ecology may, under the terms of this order, take the following emergency actions:

1. Issue emergency permits for water.
2. Approve temporary transfers of water rights.
3. Provide funding assistance to public entities to alleviate drought conditions (to the extent that funds are available).
4. Take other actions depending on future developments in drought conditions.

Other state and local agencies with authority to issue permits or authorizations related to the drought emergency actions must provide a decision to an applicant within 15 calendar days of the date of application.

All other areas of the state not contained within this drought declaration area remain subject to the July 5, 2023 Statewide Drought Advisory.

In accordance with the proclamation of the Washington Governor, dated January 3, 1989, (Centennial Accord), nothing herein shall impair or infringe upon the treaty reserved rights or governmental authority of any federally recognized Indian tribe nor shall this order be deemed an assertion of state authority over Indian reservation lands. The Department of Ecology intends to work cooperatively, on a government-to-government basis, with all affected tribes.



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Further details about this order or the actions available under it, may be obtained by contacting:

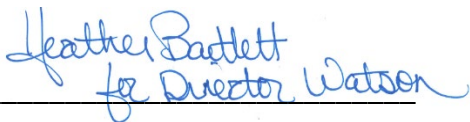
Jeff Marti
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Applications for emergency water permits or temporary transfers of water rights are available by contacting one of the Department of Ecology's regional offices:

Contact Information

<p>Central Region (Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, and Yakima counties) Help desk: 509-575-2597</p>
<p>Eastern Region (Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties) Help desk: 509-329-3400</p>
<p>Northwest Region (Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties) Help desk: 206-594-0193</p>
<p>Southwest Region (Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Lewis, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum counties) Help desk: 360-407-0278</p>

DATED this 24th day of July, 2023



Laura Watson, Director

