



# DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**CHRIS BOICE   TIM FREEMAN   TOM KRESS**

Douglas County Courthouse, Room 217  
1036 SE Douglas Avenue, Roseburg, Oregon 97470

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2021

## **Douglas County Approves Emergency Drought Order**

(Douglas County, Ore.) Douglas County is the seventh county to declare an emergency drought order in Oregon this year. At the Weekly Business Meeting on Wednesday, April 28, 2021, Douglas County Public Works Director, Scott Adams, presented and received approval from the Douglas County Board of Commissioners for an emergency drought order for Douglas County. Oregon's Governor has already declared State of Drought Emergencies in Jackson, Lake and Klamath Counties, and has pending emergency drought order requests from Gilliam, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties.

The order formally declaring a drought in Douglas County has been officially recorded, and the Douglas County Board of Commissioners have submitted a copy of the order to Oregon's Governor, requesting an official executive order from the State for Douglas County, under the provisions of ORS 536, as a direct result of severe and projected drought conditions. The Governor's drought declaration will allow increased flexibility in how water is managed to ensure that limited supplies are used as efficiently as possible. The Governor's executive order for drought declaration will also authorize state agencies to expedite water management tools to users who would not otherwise have access.

The order cited that there is the potential for the Douglas County agricultural and livestock, natural resources, recreational, tourism, and related economies will experience widespread and severe damage resulting from extreme weather conditions and diminishing stream flows within the county. The annual water supplies available for irrigators and ranchers within Douglas County are from winter snow pack, which is significantly lower than normal in the Umpqua Basin. A large share of the county's economy is dependent upon the agriculture sector, which will be adversely affected by the low snow pack, water levels and rainfall. These conditions will result in the loss of economic stability, decreased feed and pasture production, shortened growing season and decreased water supplies for our agricultural, livestock and vineyard producers. Current predictions by NOAA are that drought within our region will persist or intensify and could also dramatically increase wildland fire danger due to higher than normal temperatures and below average precipitation. Also, noted is the fact that our multi-year cumulative droughts have resulted in decreased fuel moisture and an early onset for fire danger. [Click here](#) to read a copy of the emergency drought order.

As of April 13, 2021, the U. S. Drought Monitor for Oregon illustrates the majority of Douglas County is already in Moderate Drought. The most recent three-month weather outlook prepared by NOAA Climate Prediction Center indicates "*an increased probability of above-normal temperatures along with below-normal precipitation*".

As of April 19, 2021, Oregon Water Resources Department Water Conditions Report stated that the Umpqua Basin stream flows are 72% of average. Snowpack, according to the most recent NRCS report states parts of southwestern Oregon, including the Umpqua Basin snow water equivalent (SWE) remains well below normal. The lack of surface water resources is expected to negatively impact consumptive water users including irrigators, industrial and domestic users resulting in economic losses and hardship. Groundwater resources will also be affected by a lack of sufficient recharge resulting in reduced spring and well water supplies.

*"The Douglas County Board of Commissioners agree that extraordinary measures must be taken to alleviate the suffering of our citizens, livestock, forests and agricultural industry in order to protect and mitigate economic loss, as well as be responsive to the threat of wildfires,"* commented Commissioner Tom Kress.

Further, the Natural Resources Division of the Douglas County Public Works Department also wanted to announce a **NOTICE OF WATER AVAILABILITY** for properties located downstream of Galesville Reservoir that border or have access to either Cow Creek, the South Umpqua River or the Umpqua River. Those properties may be eligible to purchase stored water from Douglas County's Galesville Project. There is a limited amount of water available for specific uses (Industrial: 1,485-acre feet, Irrigation: 5,555-acre feet, Municipal: 4,265-acre feet, Multiple Purpose – including domestic: 3,975-acre feet). Water from the Galesville Project is available on a first-come, first-serve basis. In order for a property to be served with water from Galesville Reservoir, the property owner would have to enter into a contract with the Natural Resources Division of the Douglas County Public Works Department. In addition to entering into a contract, a land owner would also be required to obtain a water right from the Oregon Water Resources Department before using any contracted water. To check for eligibility, please contact the Douglas County Natural Resources Division at (541) 440-4255 or visit the website at <https://douglascounty-oregon.us/362/Natural-Resources>.

Although the drought declaration has not resulted in any residential use restrictions, it is a good reminder that water conservation is always a good idea and that fire danger is likely to be high again in many parts of Douglas County this summer.

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