

DROUGHT EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Executive Summary of the Report of the Task Force on Drought Emergency Response

Background: House Bill 4113 (2016) established the Task Force on Drought Emergency Response and directed the Task Force to research and evaluate potential tools to prepare for or deal with drought emergencies. The bill further provided that the Task Force may: (1) Evaluate the sufficiency of existing tools to address short-term drought response needs and recommend additional tools to address short-term drought response needs; (2) Identify options to minimize the impact of drought on agricultural, municipal, and other interests; (3) Identify options to minimize the impact of drought on fish and wildlife; (4) Identify tools to assist small water providers in developing water management, conservation or efficiency plans and in anticipating drought risks and responses; (5) Identify the data and resources necessary for anticipating drought and drought impacts on the economy, communities and the environment; and (6) Recommend improvements in information sharing necessary for enabling the public, water users and recreational in-stream users to understand drought conditions and to assist in efforts to mitigate or adapt to drought.

Task Force Membership and Decision-Making:

In accordance with House Bill 4113, the Oregon Legislature appointed four Task Force members:

Senator Arnie Roblan, appointed by the Senate President
Representative Ken Helm, appointed by the Speaker of the House
Richard Kosesan, Water for Life, appointed by Senate Minority Leader
Mary Anne Nash, Oregon Farm Bureau, appointed by House Minority Leader

In addition, the Governor appointed eleven members to the Task Force:

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| JR Cook | Industrial | Northeast Oregon Water Association |
| Suzanne DeLorenzo | Municipal | Clackamas River Water |
| Brett Golden | Conservation | Deschutes River Conservancy |
| Jason Green | Municipal | Oregon Association of Water Utilities |
| Rodney Park | Agriculture | Parks Nursery |
| Kimberley Priestley | Conservation | WaterWatch of Oregon |
| Eric Quaempts | Tribal | Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation |
| Robert Rees | Conservation | Association of Northwest Steelheaders |
| Daniel Shoun | County | Lake County Commissioner |
| Julie Smitherman | Municipal | City of Ashland |
| April Snell | Irrigation Districts | Oregon Water Resources Congress |

Senator Roblan and Representative Helm were appointed to serve as Co-Chairs by unanimous vote of the other members of the Task Force. The Co-Chairs elected to be non-voting members of the Task Force. A majority of the Task Force (seven members) was required to approve recommendations; however, the Task Force strove to reach consensus.

The Task Force met seven times between July and October. Ideas that were not recommended by the Task Force – due to a lack of time to refine the concept, a lack of agreement, or other reasons – have been captured in the working documents and materials of the Task Force, as well as in Appendix D of the report.

Recommendations: A summary of the recommendations approved by the Task Force are provided below; however, more in-depth actions needed to implement each recommendation are highlighted in full within the report. Actions were not prioritized by the Task Force; therefore, the ordering of actions should not be construed as a prioritization. In addition, some members noted that the level of support for budget-related proposals may change with a clearer understanding of the status of the State's budget.

The Task Force approved the following recommendations:

- A. The State should continue to increase and enrich water-related data collection to inform water use decisions, conservation, and management, as well as better anticipate and respond to drought.
- B. Provide resources for assessments of drought impacts, risks, and vulnerabilities on instream and out-of-stream sectors in order to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from drought.
- C. The State should review the drought declaration process and tools to ensure drought declarations are effective to assist with emerging drought response.
- D. The Legislature should look at establishing a drought emergency fund for instream and out-of-stream needs.
- E. Provide OWRD with staff resources to do outreach and communication. Develop communication tool box to educate all sectors and elected officials about existing tools, water conservation, drought conditions and preparedness, and help small communities respond to drought.
- F. The Legislature should look at establishing a fund for drought planning to help communities be better prepared and more resilient to drought.
- G. Provide funding for additional watermaster staff and tools to make water distribution more efficient.
- H. Need to address lack of planning, support, resources, and technical assistance for small water systems to be better prepared for drought.
- I. Assemble a group of experts to evaluate and identify existing infrastructure programs and evaluate barriers to accessing infrastructure funding. Provide technical assistance or capacity building grants to help individuals and communities identify, apply for, and access infrastructure funding to improve drought resiliency.
- J. Evaluate management options for stored water to better address current and future instream and out-of-stream needs.
- K. The Legislature should look at measures and incentives to promote water conservation and efficiency.
- L. The Legislature should consider additional programs to facilitate restoration of streamflows through voluntary means during times of drought.
- M. Oregon should continue to encourage water reuse activities throughout the state, while giving due consideration to the protection of instream flow, water quality, public health, and drinking water sources.

For More Information: Questions about the report should be directed to Racquel Rancier, Senior Policy Coordinator, Oregon Water Resources Department, at racquel.r.rancier@wrdd.state.or.us. A copy of the full report is available online at: www.oregon.gov/owrd/Pages/HB_4113.aspx.