



WATERWORKS

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Drought Task Force



During the 2016 Legislative Session the Oregon legislature passed HB 4113, which created the Task Force on Drought Emergency Response. Executive Director, April Snell, was appointed to the Drought Task Force (DTF) and began her service, along with 14 other members, in July. The DTF is tasked with researching and evaluating potential tools to prepare for and deal with drought emergencies. To date, the DTF has had two meetings and will continue to meet throughout the months of August, September and October, before submitting a report to the Legislature in November. At the end of the first meeting, DTF members were asked to share the ideas/tools they would like to see explored during future DTF meetings. The ideas were categorized into outreach, conservation, funding, data, long-term water supply and resiliency and other short term tools. The second meeting was primarily spent educating DTF members on current local and regional planning, data needs in responding to and anticipating drought, challenges for small water systems and on the current water right drought response tools. The next meeting will be held on August 15th. All DTF materials to date can be found on the DTF website [here](#).

Integrated Water Resources Strategy Update



The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) is halfway through their planned Policy Advisory Group (PAG) meetings for the 206/2017 update to Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS). The PAG, which is made up of "real people", has met twice in Salem so far to discuss potential updates to the IWRS, specifically targeting development of a long term strategy for drought resiliency. Brent Stevenson, from Santiam Water Control District, is serving on the PAG, providing valuable feedback on the needs of agricultural water suppliers across the state. In addition to the PAG, OWRD also held seven open houses across the state to gather public input on the update and had an online survey available to the public. The feedback received at the open house events and through the online survey are being compiled to be presented to the PAG to help inform them as they move forward with development of new recommended actions for the IWRS update. The next meeting will be held on September 14th. All IWRS PAG materials to date can be found on the IWRS website [here](#).

Agricultural Reservations of Water Rulemaking Update



In the 1987, the Oregon legislature authorized the Oregon Water Resources Commission (WRC) to reserve water for future economic development. Reservations of water for economic development were a corollary to instream water rights, and were designed to ensure that water was reserved for future growth and development. The reservations of water that were set aside, in Hood River, Grande Ronde, Malheur and Owyhee are all set to expire this year and OWRD is in the process of rulemaking to extend the reservations for up to another 20 years. OWRC is highly supportive of the agricultural reservation program and wants to ensure that the foresight of the Oregon Legislature in setting aside water for storage for future economic development is preserved and we have been highly engaged in the rulemakings for each of the basins, serving on the Rules Advisory Committee for each, attending public hearings and submitting comments in favor of extension. At the August WRC meeting, some of reservation extensions will be up for approval by the WRC. There has been little opposition thus far to the reservation program, and hopefully the WRC will extend the reservations for an additional 20 years. The challenge of meeting Oregon's current and future water needs necessitates a long-term strategy and the reservations of water will continue to be an important part of that strategy. For more information on all of OWRD's current rulemaking, please visit their website located [here](#).

Artificial Beaver Dams Rules Advisory Committee Update



The Department of State Lands (DSL) initiated a rulemaking earlier this year to create a new removal fill permit and/or general authorization for the creation of artificial beaver dams in waterways. This rulemaking was a compromise made after similar legislation was introduced during the legislative session, and two state legislators, Senator Chris Edwards and Representative Brian Clem, have been following RAC activities and attending meetings. Over the course of the meeting schedule, the RAC began looking at two different types of structures: (1) Artificial Beaver Analogues (ABA) and (2) Restoration Check Dams (RCD). Each type of structure would have it's own permit, with RCDs being limited to a pilot area in the eastern part of the state. OWRC along with Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) have shared concerns about the creation of new authorizations/permits within removal fill rules and believe that the existing individual permit process is the appropriate process for the development of these projects. The risk for potential impacts on agricultural lands and irrigation systems is too great for our support of an expedited process. Both our organizations have sat down and expressed our concerns with DSL, and while there has been some progress, we remain uncomfortable with the unintended impacts of this proposed general permit and cannot support it in its current form. Additionally, we still do not understand why there is such an urgency to move this permit forward or to make it statewide. However, it appears DSL is intending to move forward with a general permit for these projects in the fall. We will keep you updated as the process moves forward and when the final draft rules are open for public comment.

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