

Klamath Basin 2010: Q&A from Water Resources Department:

Q1. What is the water situation in the Klamath Basin?

- As of September 19th, year-to-date precipitation in Klamath Falls totaled 5.33”, compared to a normal of 7.67”.
- The September 19, Upper Klamath Lake elevation was 4,138.87 feet.
- The June 1 Water Supply Outlook Report prepared by the Natural Resources Conservation Service projects Upper Klamath Lake inflow from June through September at 63 percent of normal.
- Current storage on Upper Klamath Lake is approximately 173,000 af, compared to 224,000 af in an average year.
- Governor Ted Kulongoski issued Executive Order No. 10-03, determining a state of drought emergency in the Klamath Basin on March 16, 2010.

Q2. What preparations have been put in place since 2001 that will help?

Since 2001, irrigators have applied for, and received, supplemental groundwater permits for 90 wells in the Klamath Basin, which will allow irrigators to switch to groundwater in 2010 in the event surface water is not available. Many irrigators who hold surface water rights now have this supplemental plan in place, more than doubling the number of wells in the Klamath Basin since 2001 with access to supplemental water rights.

Q3. How can irrigators go about securing temporary emergency drought permits?

Irrigators have the option to apply for temporary emergency drought permits. Securing such a permit requires a turn around time of about 7 to 10 days, and results in a permit that is valid only during the length of the declared drought.

The Water Resources Department issues emergency drought permits using authority from Oregon’s drought mitigation rules (Oregon Administrative Rules Chapter 690, Division 19).

These rules govern the Department’s processes during a declared drought, allowing for expedited processes that do not include standard waiting periods or notification requirements. These do, however, include a scientific review. These permits allow irrigators to use supplemental groundwater sources in lieu of their surface water rights; they allow for emergency transfer of water from one parcel of land to another as well as other types of movement of water.

Contact the Water Resources Department for assistance with emergency drought permit forms, assistance in the field, and other questions.

Q4. Who can help with water-related transactions?

Water Resource Department staff members are available through the District 17 (Klamath Falls) Watermasters Office: (5170 Summers Ln., 541-883-4182).

For specific water-related transactions and services, please refer to the following:

Emergency Water Use Permits (OAR 690-019-0040):

Jeana Eastman 503-986-0859 / Jeana.m.eastman@ wrd.state.or.us

This process allows the use of water from an alternate source. Holders of a water right permit, certificate, decree right or claim are eligible.

Temporary Drought Transfers (OAR 690-019-0055):

Sarah Henderson (503-986-0883 / Sarah.a.henderson@ wrd.state.or.us

This process allows a temporary change in character of use, place of use, or point(s) of diversion/appropriation. Holders of a water right permit, certificate, decree right or claim are eligible.

Temporary Drought Instream Leases (OAR 690-019-0058):

Sarah Henderson (503-986-0883 / Sarah.a.henderson@ wrd.state.or.us

This process allows the holder of a water right subject to transfer to lease that water right for in-stream use. Holders of a water right subject to transfer are eligible.

Temporary Substitution of Supplemental Ground Water Right for Surface Water Primary Right (OAR 690-019-0059):

Sarah Henderson (503-986-0883 / Sarah.a.henderson@ wrd.state.or.us

This process allows the holder of a water right permit, certificate, or claim to use a supplemental ground water right in favor of a primary surface right. Those holding both a primary surfacewater right and a supplemental groundwater right are eligible.

Q5. What additional services can the Water Resources Department provide?

The Governor has directed the Water Resources Department to develop a Klamath Basin 2010 webpage, with resources for the community in the event of a declared drought. See Water Resources' Department's Home Page: www.wrd.state.or.us. Under "Agency Spotlight," click on "Klamath Basin 2010" for a basin map, contact information, Q&A, and updates on the water situation in the Klamath Basin.

The Department is gearing up to issue emergency drought permits and to authorize emergency drought transfers of water, should the Governor issue a drought declaration for Klamath County.