



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Local Water Supply Emergency Planning Guidance

Revised: May 1, 2026

Change Log

Date	Change No.	Summary of Changes
12/20/2023	1	Updated content under “Understanding ORS 536 and ORS 401 Emergency Declarations”, to include details about drought impacts and benefits an ORS 536 declaration would provide. Updated Annex C, Sample County Drought Declaration Request.
4/3/2026	2	Updated Annex C, Sample County Drought Declaration Request.
5/1/2026	3	Added Agricultural Resources sub-section to outline information about USDA Secretarial Drought Declarations and information about the AgriStress Helpline. Added details about Small Business Association Economic Injury Disaster Loans related to USDA Drought Declarations.

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Purpose

This guidance identifies potential solutions when anticipating or experiencing sustained drought causing localized or widespread drinking, sanitation and household water supply shortages. When responding to any emergency, the first step is to follow your local emergency operations plan to ensure appropriate entities are engaged.

Planning Assumptions

- Drought is a normal, recurring feature of climate and occurs almost everywhere, although its features vary from region to region and defining it can be difficult.
- Changes in the timing of streamflow related to changing snowmelt have been observed and are likely to continue, reducing the supply of water for many competing demands and causing widespread ecological and socioeconomic consequences.
- Prolonged periods of reduced precipitation contribute to water supply deficits that can increase the time it takes for water supplies to recover.
- Sustained high temperatures increase demand on water supply systems and stress within the natural environment.
- Drought is a slowly developing – and often long-lasting – disaster with cumulative impacts, making consistent early monitoring and detection critical. Drought can have adverse effects on agriculture, community water supplies, industry, fish and wildlife, recreation, and other uses of water to support communities and individuals.
- During a drought tribal and local jurisdictions will consider all water management tools available and routinely consult with drinking water suppliers within the region.
- Local jurisdictions have initial responsibility for providing emergency drinking water supplies.
- When local resources have been exhausted, assistance may be provided by state agencies.

Understanding ORS 536 and ORS 401 Emergency Declarations

Drought declarations under Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 536 and emergency declarations under ORS 401 allow for different types of state assistance. Drought declarations provide water rights holders with temporary, short-term methods of accessing water resources or putting water to beneficial use. Emergency declarations enable emergency resource procurement and allocation when the lack of water supply resources threatens health and safety. This section supports tribal and local emergency managers in accessing the most appropriate state assistance associated with drought conditions and water supply emergencies.

In most instances, an ORS 536 drought declaration should occur before an ORS 401 emergency declaration to conserve limited state resources. In some cases, especially when it's anticipated that drought conditions may occur statewide, the governor may issue concurrent drought and emergency declarations. When this occurs, it's to facilitate proactive emergency planning and resource coordination to address anticipated water supply shortages.

ORS 536 Drought Declaration

Tribes and counties can declare a drought emergency and petition the governor to declare a state drought emergency under ORS 536. Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) offers water users (e.g., farmers, ranchers, cities, industry) additional water rights tools to address supply shortages. An ORS 536 drought declaration is not intended to address life safety impacts. An ORS 536 drought declaration makes available the following emergency tools and powers: temporary emergency water use permits, temporary transfers, temporary instream leases, temporary substitutions, special option agreements, human consumption or stock water use preferences, and water conservation or curtailment. Download the OWRD [State Drought Declaration Process and Emergency Tools](#) document for more information.

When requesting a declaration under ORS 536, tribes or counties need to include details about the anticipated impacts the drought would have on the jurisdictions (i.e., impacts on critical facilities, agriculture, firefighting, the economy or other impacts). Jurisdictions should also include what resources or benefits they are seeking with the declaration.

ORS 401 Water Supply Emergency Declaration

When a drought causes water supply shortages that affect life safety within tribal or local jurisdictions, then a state of emergency should be declared under ORS 401. Tribal county, or city emergency declarations allow tribes, counties, or cities to use emergency actions to meet immediate needs. This often means procurement process requirements may be eased. Tribal, county or city governments should use every means available, including mutual aid, to prevent loss of life and interruption of essential services. When a tribe or county has exhausted local and regional resources, it may request state assistance through the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM).

The state will not provide direct financial support under an ORS 401 declaration. The level of state assistance will be determined by the extent of the threat to life safety, resources available, statewide priority and type of assistance requested. All requests are reviewed by ODEM and assigned to one or more state partners for fulfillment. The state will respond within its capabilities and request interstate or federal government support, if necessary. Resources may include technical assistance, equipment, personnel, facilities, communications assistance, or coordination support.

Planning Checklist

Drought impacts many sectors. The focus of this section is on water supply shortages that pose life safety issues by jeopardizing water for drinking, sanitation and other household purposes.

Preparing for Drought and Water Shortages

Understand and define drought impacts.

- Identify affected water sources and assess the severity of the effects.
- Identify public water systems vulnerable to reductions in supply, see [Appendix A: Resources for Community Water System Operators](#).
- Engage with vulnerable local water systems to track changes in water supply over time and forecast expected rates of change.
- Identify other factors contributing to water supply shortages (e.g., damaged or leaking pipes, improperly constructed wells, collapsed well casings, inadequate storage) and determine timelines for resolving issues.
- Identify the number of households that use domestic wells.
- Engage with the local [watermaster](#) to understand regional water supply impacts.
- Consider the effects of severe weather. Hot, dry days can cause an increase in plant evapotranspiration and open container evaporation, which may reduce surface water flows as well as soil moisture.
- Identify the total number of people potentially affected. This information will drive many planning assumptions since an individual needs about 1 gallon of water per day to survive. The average American domestic water user uses about 80-100 gallons per day for normal household indoor activities.

Review existing plans.

- Review existing tribal or county emergency operations plans and address potential planning gaps.
- Identify water providers' existing plans for addressing water shortages:
 - Water management and conservation plan (WMCP)
 - Emergency response plan
 - Drought contingency plan
 - Hazard mitigation plan
 - Water curtailment plan

Organize a collaborative local response planning team.

- Include members who have local knowledge and technical expertise, represent multiple disciplines and are focused on solutions.
- Involve the whole community, including government, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, private sector businesses, organizations and agencies from other

sectors, people with disabilities, individuals with access and functional needs, infants, children and older adults.

- Some recommended members include but are not limited to:
 - County commissioners
 - Water system operators (both drinking water and wastewater facilities)
 - Local drinking water regulators
 - Local OWRD watermaster
 - Fire departments
 - Tribal representatives
 - ODEM preparedness and response and mitigation and recovery regional coordinators
 - Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) regional coordinators
 - Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (ORWARN)
 - Local community emergency response organizations (i.e., CERT) and faith-based organizations that can mobilize volunteers
 - Water-related planning groups
 - Local public information officers

Develop a jurisdictional communication plan for drought and water shortages.

- Pre-identify available public information officer resources that may be activated during a response.
- Develop accessible public education materials (translated and in formats accessible to individuals with access and functional needs).
- Water shortages impacting community water systems:
 - Strategies for conserving water that system users can take to maximize water.
 - Role of the community when water conservation or curtailment measures are implemented.
 - Ways that community members can get involved with helping.
 - Actions that community members should take when a water shortage occurs.
- Domestic dry wells:
 - How to maintain your well, indicators a well may be going dry, and when and where to report a dry well.
 - Strategies for conserving water that household residents can take to maximize water (the Oregon State University Well Water Program has educational materials and is willing to be a resource to aid in developing additional resources. Contact the program at well.water@oregonstate.edu).
 - Ways that community members can help (e.g., what to donate and where or how to volunteer).

Prioritize local water needs.

- Identify critical facility needs.
 - Critical facilities in your community may have significant water needs, such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, food processing plants, public safety facilities, and wastewater treatment and processing facilities.
 - Consider water needs for agriculture.
 - Water for agricultural production and processing typically is not prioritized as highly as health and safety considerations during an emergency.

- Lack of water to support agricultural production and processing poses potential impacts on local economies and supply chain management.
- Loss of livestock because of extended water shortages can become a secondary public health concern, as higher temperatures will increase decomposition rates and create additional health and safety concerns. As such, carcasses must be disposed of quickly using accepted disposal methods.
- Consider water availability for firefighting.
 - A major fire event concurrent with a significant drought can pose a special risk should water for fire suppression become unavailable due to reduced supply.
 - Coordination among emergency managers and local, state and federal firefighting resources is vital for ensuring sufficient water supply to conduct effective fire suppression without causing sudden drinking water supply depletion.
- Consider economic impacts.
 - Disruption of water availability can result in economic hardships for individuals and businesses.
 - Identify businesses at risk of closing if water shortages cannot be remedied.
 - Determine if economic impacts will affect the operations of critical facilities, such as hospitals.

Identify resources for domestic personal wells.

- Pre-identify the organizations or groups that may test and provide verification a well is dry due to drought vs. non-operational due to mechanical or maintenance issues (e.g., licensed well driller or pump installer, public works officials or volunteers specifically trained in performing verification).
- Evaluate and pre-identify local resources available to assist potential personal well owners with:
 - Deepening or replacing an existing well.
 - Sources for temporary potable water.
 - Testing water levels in wells to verify well is dry vs. non-operational due to mechanical or maintenance issues.
 - Providing temporary potable water storage (e.g., water tanks).
 - Transporting potable water to household water storage tanks.
 - Plumbing temporary water storage tanks into homes.
- Review tribal or local codes and ordinances to determine if there are any waivers or permits required for connecting temporary water storage tanks to preexisting plumbing.
- Specific areas have wells that go dry annually and have adapted to such occurrences. Solutions may be readily available without engaging in an emergency response.
- Consult OWRD's dry well [handout](#) to troubleshoot issues with drying water wells.
- Pre-identify strategies to solicit, accept, store and disburse bottled water donations.
- See [Appendix B: Dry Domestic Personal Wells](#) for additional information about household responsibilities and resources.

Understand state and federal regulations.

- When identifying potential response strategies, engage with state and federal regulators for technical expertise and to ensure compliance with state requirements.

- Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Drinking Water Services regulates the safety of public water supply systems.
- OWRD regulates the use of surface water and groundwater.
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) regulates wastewater sanitation and management.

Identify strategies and document local capabilities to respond to drought.

- Talk to local and regional partners that can deliver mutual aid, such as ORWARN or local fire departments.
- The local OWRD watermaster can assist in identifying alternatives, such as other public water systems or private wells, and should be contacted to ensure emergency supplies are obtained legally.
- Talk to local businesses to identify what resources or capabilities they may be able to provide.
 - Examples of resources include water trucks, commercial water hauling companies, water tanks for short-term storage, water point of distribution equipment (e.g., trailers, manifolds) and bottled water distributors.
- Consider non-traditional solutions and partnerships. Be creative within regulatory guidelines.

Remember the following when identifying potential response strategies:

- What are the costs associated with implementing each identified strategy and who is responsible for these costs?
- How long can the identified strategy be sustained?
- For any strategy that's implemented, what are the thresholds for demobilizing?

Identify thresholds for local response.

- Set clear, data-driven thresholds and associated actions (e.g., if stream flow drops below 300 gallons per minute, then implement curtailment measures restricting outdoor water use).

Responding to Drought and Water Shortages

During the preparedness phase, counties should identify thresholds indicating when a drought emergency is imminent, and action is required. When those thresholds are met, counties should implement their plan and include the following actions:

Convene the drought response planning team.

Declare a local drought emergency.

- The county governing body, through ordinance or resolution, should declare a local drought emergency for its jurisdiction. In its resolution, the governing body should identify local actions that should be taken and indicate if state assistance is needed.
- Under most circumstances, jurisdictions should initially request an ORS 536 drought declaration to receive assistance to address water supply shortages before requesting an ORS 401 emergency declaration to address life safety impacts. The local ODEM preparedness and

response coordinator is available to provide technical assistance on the appropriate declaration.

- Additional details about state assistance provided under ORS 536 and ORS 401 are available in the Understanding ORS 536 and ORS 401 Emergency Declarations section.
- See [Appendix C: Sample County Drought Declaration Request](#) for a sample ORS 536 declaration request.
- When requesting a drought declaration from the governor, refer to the Guidance Memo and Template document on the OWRD [Governor Drought Declaration Process](#) page for a template letter.

Communicate with the public.

- Implement a jurisdictional communications plan and consider the following:
 - Be consistent in the type and frequency of information communicated.
 - Clearly communicate the situation and appropriate preparedness actions through media outlets, government websites, social media and other public information distribution methods.
 - Directly and promptly address rumors that can have detrimental effects on public confidence, morale and sense of security.

Reduce Demand.

- Encourage water conservation. OWRD maintains water conservation [resources](#).
- For public water systems, enforce curtailment of non-essential water uses per existing curtailment plans.
- For private domestic uses, make recommendations about curtailing lawn watering, car washing, and other non-essential activities that require water when surface water or wells are going dry.
- Initiate local strategies to provide emergency water.

If life safety needs for water exceed local capability, request state support.

- Emergency managers can request state support for responding to water supply shortages through the Oregon Emergency Operations Portal (i.e., Ops Center).
- Ensure the request clearly explains the problem to be resolved, the support provided through local resources and how needs exceed the capabilities of the local jurisdictions.

Best Practices for Responding to an Emergency

Communicate early and often.

- Communication with stakeholders, community leaders, organizations and the public will provide the foundation to build partnerships when involvement and support become critical.
- Public trust and confidence in local government will help reinforce difficult water use restrictions that may be required, as well as provide reassurance that issues are being addressed and response efforts are underway.
- Open and honest communication will minimize adverse public opinion, counterproductive interference, panic, rumors and false claims.
- Clearly communicate the impacts of drought.
- Release clear guidance regarding water conservation and curtailment measures for the public.
- Clearly outline how curtailment measures will be enforced and any penalties associated with violations.

Consider immediate and long-range issues.

- Response to the immediate effects of drought and threats to public safety will lead to a review of existing water supply capabilities. A review could include system reliability, storage capacity, pipeline and pumping requirements, requirements for future flow demands, potential intertie considerations, and funding opportunities for expansion and maintenance.
- Recovery from a sustained drought and corresponding water supply emergency will require long-term planning to ensure the continuation of reliable and sustainable drinking water sources and associated treatment and distribution systems to offset future water shortage impacts.

Leverage volunteer services.

- Some aspects of water supply emergencies depend on human resources to be effective. Identify volunteers from established volunteer organizations, local government staff or community solicitations for assistance.
- Volunteers may be able to assist by:
 - Providing or supplementing staffing at water supply community points of distribution (CPODs).
 - Passing out water bottles at CPODs.
 - Transporting drinking water tanks and containers to central locations or individual users.
 - Assisting with conducting safety checks of vulnerable populations.
 - Moving supplies to and from warehouses for further distribution.
 - Passing out official information on water supply resilience.
 - Documenting response activities for emergency efforts.

Identify the impact on vulnerable populations.

- Identifying who may be vulnerable to water supply emergencies within affected areas will require careful consideration of matters of privacy. Examples of vulnerable populations may include people with pre-existing medical or health conditions, very young individuals and senior populations.
- People who already may be faced with water supply limitations are especially at risk during prolonged droughts.
- Vulnerability may be enhanced because of limited mobility, access to transportation, remoteness or financial hardship.
- Local organizations and neighborhood associations may be able to assist in defining populations of vulnerability.
- Identify organizations like the Disability Emergency Management Advisory Committee (DEMAC) to assist vulnerable populations.

Embed diversity and inclusion into planning and decision-making.

- Ensure public messaging and outreach are as inclusive as possible, being mindful that some segments of an affected community traditionally may be underserved during emergencies.
- Remembering that emergencies transcend both physical and human boundaries will ensure diversity and inclusion are elements of the local water supply emergency response.
- Inclusion of community groups, organizations and cultural representations, as well as those with non-English language proficiency, will ensure all population segments are represented.

Special Considerations

Community Points of Distribution (CPODs)

- CPODs are sites where the public can access life-sustaining emergency relief supplies during or after a disaster.
- The logistics associated with the implementation of CPODs for centralized water delivery in affected neighborhoods require planning and preparation to achieve success and maximum coverage.
- Available data about where systems have or are about to fail because of water shortages will help identify the most effective sites for CPODs, including water delivery resources, staff needed and available, hours of operation, security, public outreach, traffic control and other factors.
- Understand sanitation regulations and cleaning processes for ensuring potable water.
- Consider using convenient sanitary containers, such as water bags.
- Set up sanitation stations to clean water containers before they're filled.
- Check with the local OWRD watermaster to ensure the source of water complies with Oregon Water Law.
- Ensure all water intended to be used for drinking is safe for use.

Water Hauling

- Ensure all potable water hauling meets the OHA Drinking Water Services [Hauling Guidelines](#).
- Ensure water tenders are operated by appropriately qualified operators.
- Water tenders should be flushed and sanitized regularly to ensure water potability.
- Check with the local OWRD watermaster to ensure the source of water complies with Oregon Water Law.

Agricultural Resources

USDA Secretarial Drought Declaration

The USDA utilizes a streamlined process that provides for nearly an automatic designation for any county in which drought conditions, as reported in [the U.S. Drought Monitor](#) when:

- A county, or any portion of a county, meets the **D2 (Severe Drought)** drought intensity value for eight consecutive weeks during the growing season.
- A county that has a portion of its area in a drought intensity value of **D3 (Extreme Drought)** or **higher** at any time during the growing season.

When a USDA Secretarial Drought designation is issued, [Emergency Farm Loans](#) administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) are available for farmers and ranchers who operate in a disaster-designated county and have experienced substantial damage or loss. To apply, farmers and ranchers should contact their local [FSA Office](#).

FSA maintains a distribution list to notify individuals about disaster assistance, click [here](#) to sign up.

AgriStress Helpline

The AgriStress Helpline is a free, 24/7 hotline for Oregon's agricultural and forestry communities, including farmers, ranchers, fishermen, foresters, and their families. Call or text: (833) 897-2474. Helpline operators are trained to understand the unique stressors and situations of agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Additional information is available at the Oregon State University Extension Service AgriStress Helpline [website](#).

Small Business Association Economic Injury Disaster Loans

When USDA Secretarial Drought Declarations are issued, this triggers the Small Business Association (SBA) to provide low-interest federal disaster loans to small businesses and private nonprofit organizations for the counties declared in the USDA Secretarial Drought Declaration. Under this declaration, SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program is available to small businesses (i.e., trucking companies, restaurants, etc.), small agricultural cooperatives, nurseries, and private nonprofit organizations — including faith-based organizations — with financial losses directly related to the disaster. The SBA is **unable** to provide disaster loans to agricultural producers, farmers, or ranchers, except for small aquaculture enterprises.

EIDLs are available for working capital needs caused by the disaster and are available even if the small business or PNP did not suffer any physical damage. The loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable, and other bills which could not be paid due to the disaster. Applications must be submitted online through the [SBA](#).

Appendix A: Resources for Community Water System Operators

The following are resources that jurisdictions can share with community water system operators.

Organization or Agency	Resource	Details
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality	Clean Water State Revolving Fund	Assists public agencies with low-interest loans for water infrastructure projects.
Oregon Health Authority	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	Provides low-cost loans to community and nonprofit non-community water systems for planning, design and construction of drinking water infrastructure improvements.
Oregon Health Authority	Drinking Water Services Circuit Rider Program	Circuit Riders provide short-term (typically 10 hours or less) on-site technical and engineering assistance for community water systems serving populations under 10,000, as well as nonprofit transient and non-transient water systems. For these systems, services are free.
USDA Rural Development – Oregon Program	Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants	Helps eligible communities prepare, or recover from, an emergency that threatens the availability of safe, reliable drinking water.
Oregon Association of Water Utilities	Training and on-site assistance for water utilities	Helps provide training, resources and on-site technical assistance for water systems.

Appendix B: Dry Domestic Personal Wells

During drought, increased groundwater pumping coupled with reduced recharge can impact domestic personal wells and result in low water yields. Chronic drought is becoming more common across Oregon lowering available groundwater and causing domestic personal wells to go dry.

Responsibilities of Households

Users of domestic personal wells should be informed about their wells. The following are resources to educate domestic well users about maintaining their domestic wells:

- Oregon State University [Well Water Program](#).
- Oregon Health Authority [Domestic Well Safety Program](#).
- National Environmental Health Association [Private Well Class](#).

When households find that their well output is decreasing, residents should start water conservation efforts and contact a licensed well driller or pump installer to verify the cause. Decreased output of water from a well may be due to drought or a maintenance issue. Households should work with a licensed well driller or pump installer to identify a solution. When water output from a well drops significantly or a well becomes dry, report the dry well to the Oregon Water Resources Department using its [Dry Well Reporting form](#).

The following are resources that jurisdictions can share with households experiencing dry domestic personal wells.

Organization or Agency	Resource	Details
Oregon Water Resources Department	Water Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund (WARRF)	WARRF provides financial assistance to individual households or members of a federally recognized tribe in Oregon to permanently abandon, repair or replace a water well used for household purposes.
Rural Community Assistance Corporation	Household Water Well & Septic System Loan/Grant Programs	Provides loans and grants for wells and septic tanks for households in rural communities with income of \$31,713 or less.
Rural Community Assistance Corporation	Environmental Infrastructure Loans	Provides early funds small rural communities need to determine project feasibility and pay pre-development costs prior to receiving state and federal funding. Projects must be in rural areas with populations of 50,000 or less in RCAC's service region.

USDA Rural Development – Oregon Program	<u>Rural Decentralized Water Systems Grant in Oregon</u>	Helps qualified tribes and nonprofits create a revolving loan fund to increase access to clean, reliable water and septic systems for households in eligible rural areas.
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Appendix C: Sample County Drought Declaration Request

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RE: Baker County Drought

February 19, 2026

Mr. Greenwood and Mr. Peetz,

Baker County, by and through its County Elected Officials, requests that the Governor of Oregon issue an executive order for all of Baker County under the provisions of ORS 536 as a direct result of severe and continuing drought conditions.

There is the potential for widespread and severe damage to the following sectors from extreme drought conditions in Baker County.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☒ Agriculture | ☐ Private Domestic Wells |
| ☐ Fisheries | ☐ Public Water Systems |
| ☒ Forestry | ☒ Tourism/recreation |
| ☒ Livestock | ☐ Other: _____ |

There are many areas of the county that are not located under irrigation reservoirs where they pull from the snow storage and the little drainages that only last as long as the snow storage allows. This year that storage is not looking well and will not support the above sectors.

Agriculture anticipated impacts:

- Reduced irrigation water supplies: Low precipitation and soil moisture have reduced availability of surface and groundwater for irrigation, likely diminishing water for hay, wheat, and other irrigated crops.
- Shortened growing season: Persistent drought conditions can shorten crop growth windows, stressing yields.
- Economic strain on producers: Lower crop production increases costs and may force producers to purchase supplemental feed or adjust crop choices. Historically, drought has caused significant loss for agricultural producers in Baker County.
- Soil moisture deficits: Soil moisture reductions limit germination and plant vigor.

Agriculture is a major part of the local economy, with rangeland and cropland being very dependent on water availability.

Forestry Anticipated impacts:

- Increased wildfire risk: Dry conditions elevate wildfire potential.
- Forest health stress: Drought-induced stress can reduce tree growth and increase insect outbreaks, which could lead to tree mortality and increase the fuel loading that would produce harder to control wildfires.
- Operational challenges: Forestry operations (e.g., timber harvest, access) may be affected by increased fire restrictions.

Past droughts in Baker County have contributed to wildfire-related losses and increased fire danger.

Livestock anticipated impacts:

- Forage and water scarcity: Reduced water for grazing lands and pastures, coupled with lower forage productivity due to dry soils, can force ranchers to purchase supplemental feed or reduce herd sizes.
- Livestock water stress: Declining water supplies for livestock drinking water creates health and production stresses.
- Economic strain: Feed costs may rise, and ranch planning becomes riskier with uncertain water and grass availability.

Baker County has a significant livestock base making this sector vulnerable when drought limits pasture quality and water access.

Tourism & Recreation anticipated impacts:

- Lower water levels at recreation sites: Reduced flow in rivers, streams, and reservoirs can make boating, fishing, and water-based recreation less viable. Some boat ramp access at lower water levels may be impossible.
- Fire restrictions: Increased wildfire risk often leads to burn bans and closure of campgrounds or trails during peak seasons, reducing tourism.

The County has already formally declared a drought and has attached a copy of the adopted resolution for your files. In addition, the County has taken the following actions to mitigate current effects and/or in anticipation of continued or worsening drought conditions:

Our current mitigation action was to take a proactive step by early drought declaration. It allows producers to plan irrigation, planting, and herd management months in advance. It allows access to state and federal drought programs. We are also working on a smoke management plan that would allow an exemption from the one hour maximum to a 24 hour average to allow for prescribed fire activities to help protect communities from wildfire caused by drought.

The Baker County Board of Commissioners therefore requests an executive order from the Governor, declaring drought in Baker County.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Jason Yencopal
Baker County Emergency Management

COUNTY OF BAKER
BOARD of COMMISSIONERS

DECLARATION OF LOCAL DISASTER

WHEREAS, the County of Baker on this 18th day of February, 2026 has determined that the Baker County agricultural industry, and related economy is suffering widespread and severe economic damage, potential injuries and loss of property resulting from extreme cyclical weather conditions within the county.

And

Temperature has been warmer than normal for most of this water year so far as well as below normal precipitation. This December became the warmest in the Baker Valley based on recordings from the Baker City Airport since 1943. January was 5 degrees warmer than average with only 0.18 of an inch of rain making this the second-lowest on record since 1943.

And

Snowpack below 7,000 feet is well below normal. Snow run off helps those that are not located under irrigation reservoirs with water that will likely not occur this year. Baker County Emergency Management along with help from the Water Resources Department has been measuring snow since 2013 at Anthony Lakes (elevation 7,100), Little Alps (elevation 6,300), and Little Antone (elevation 4,500) snow courses. The observations where the higher elevations are doing better but still not well. From our snow measurement that Anthony Lakes SWE (Snow Water Equivalent) was 11 inches making it the eight-lowest since 1936. At the Little Alps snow course the SWE was 2.2 inches making it the second lowest since 1959, when annual surveys started. This is the first year that I can remember having to do a "bulk sample" of snow on this snow course since I have been doing measurements. The Little Alps snow course is contained a SWE of 1.2" making it the second lowest since records have been kept for this site.

And

Since the beginning of the water year Baker County has had part of the county in D0 (abnormally dry) and D1 (moderate drought).

And

These disaster conditions will result in loss of economic stability, and decreased water supplies for Baker County agricultural producers. Ranchers are having to move livestock to other rangeland for grazing earlier than normal which will equate to a shortage of rangeland feed later in the year. Those producers not located under stored water will likely yield less than normal unless they are able to provide water from other sources.

WHEREAS, the Baker County Board of Commissioners, have determined that extraordinary measures must be taken to alleviate the suffering of people and livestock and to protect or mitigate economic loss, and to be responsive to the threat of wildfires;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED by the Baker County Board of Commissioners:

Section 1. That a local disaster is declared within Baker County.

- Section 2. That the Baker County EOP, Drought Annex plan has been implemented and that all county departments are directed to utilize all available resources to respond to and mitigate the effects of this disaster.
- Section 3. That this proclamation shall take effect immediately from and after its issuance and shall remain in effect until rescinded by subsequent action of the Board of Commissioners or until December 31, 2026.
- Section 4. To raise awareness and encourage producers to use the Condition Monitoring Observer Report (CMOR) system to report conditions affecting them at:
<https://droughtimpacts.unl.edu/Tools/ConditionMonitoringObservations.aspx>
- Section 5. The Board of Commissioners, request that the Honorable Tina Kotek, Governor, of the State of Oregon declare: "A Local Disaster and State of Emergency" exists in Baker County. That a drought declaration under Oregon Revised Statute 563 be used to allow the Water Resources Department to use a number of water-related tools that include temporary drought permits to use groundwater and emergency water rights under ORS 540.

And

Request the Honorable, Brooke Rollins, Secretary, of the United States Department of Agriculture, to expedite assistance to local agricultural industries/producers who have suffered extensive and ongoing loss from the drought and continue recovery efforts associated with the wildfires, and for technical assistance on drought mitigation through the Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

ORDERED this 18th day of February, 2026



Shane Alderson, Chair
Board of Commissioners



Michelle Kaseberg
Commissioner



Christina Witham
Commissioner