



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

PO Box 47600 • Olympia, WA 98504-7600 • 360-407-6000  
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## ORDER AND DETERMINATION BY THE DIRECTOR

Washington State's economy, food, natural resources, and environment are all linked to the abundance and health of its water supplies. Regional climate and water supply conditions have been highly variable this year. Despite abundant snowpack over the winter of 2020-21, exceptionally dry conditions developed across the state during the spring months, resulting in lower than normal water supply forecasts in lower elevation watersheds and in areas of the state dominated by dryland and rangeland agriculture. Averaged statewide, Washington experienced its 2nd driest March-June on record. Widespread concerns about water supply led the Department of Ecology to issue a Drought Advisory on May 24, 2021. Over the past 90 days, nearly the entire state has received less than 75 percent of normal precipitation. A record-setting heat wave in late June melted remaining snowpack. Averaged statewide, June ranks as the second warmest June since 1895.

RCW 43.83B provides that a drought emergency may be declared if water supply meets the statutory hydrologic threshold, and undue hardships are being caused by drought.

The state Water Supply Availability Committee (WSAC) is responsible for reviewing water supply conditions and forecasts for watersheds across the state and supplying their assessment to the Executive Water Emergency Committee. The WSAC determined the following:

1. The Natural Resources Conservation Service and the National Weather Service Northwest River Forecast Center provide seasonal water supply forecasts. These recent forecasts indicate that numerous watersheds will experience runoff below the state drought threshold (75 percent of normal) for the remainder of the water year.
2. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center predicts higher probabilities of warmer and drier conditions for the July through September time period. These forecasted probabilities reaffirm a low likelihood that water supply conditions will improve to normal levels in what already is Washington's warmest, driest season.

The second primary consideration for determining whether drought conditions are anticipated or existing is whether the shortage in water supplies creates risks of undue hardships for water users and the environment. Hardships being experienced and projected include:

1. Declining water levels in wells, streams and impoundments used to supply public drinking water for small to mid-sized water systems.
2. Fish mortality associated with both declining streamflow and lethal water temperatures.

3. Lower water availability for crop and livestock production, including water necessary to help crops and animals cope with heat stress.
4. Very low moisture content causing wildfire fuels to be easily combustible.

The below table indicates watersheds where the forecasted runoff for the remainder of the water year (July – Sept) is expected to fall below 75 percent of normal. Additionally, virtually the entire state has received less than 75 percent of normal rainfall over the past 90 days.

<b>Watershed</b>	<b>Average of July – Sept Monthly Runoff*</b>
Chelan	63%
Colville	30%
Deschutes	66%
Entiat	74%
Hangman	34%
Kettle	48%
Lewis	65%
Little Spokane	75%
Lower Skagit - Samish	69%
Lower Spokane	55%
Methow	72%
Middle Spokane	55%
Nooksack	66%
Okanogan	51%
Palouse	50%
Skokomish - Dosewallips	70%
Snake River	67%
Soleduc	42%
Stillaguamish	58%
Upper Chehalis	72%
Upper Yakima	71%
Walla Walla	56%
Willapa	69%

\*Average of July – September month-by-month forecasted runoff by Watershed, where the average falls below 75 percent of normal.

The amount of water available to a watershed is considered in conjunction with the potential for hardship to water users and environment. Based upon the recommendations of the Executive Water Emergency Committee, I find that the potential for such conditions and hardships exist in all areas of the state, except the area in central Puget Sound consisting of the Duwamish-Green, Cedar-Sammamish, and Snohomish Watersheds. For these areas omitted from the scope of this declaration,

the risk of hardship is deemed low because they are served by large municipal water systems, which have ample water supply in the reservoirs serving these systems.

Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of RCW 43.83B.405, IT IS ORDERED that, except for the watersheds in central Puget Sound consisting of the Duwamish-Green, Cedar-Sammamish, and Snohomish Watersheds, Washington State is in a state of drought emergency.

This order is effective immediately and shall remain in effect through June 1, 2022 unless terminated prior to that date.

In accordance with the provisions of WAC 173-166-060, the Department of Ecology may, under the terms of this order, take the following emergency actions:

1. Issue emergency permits for water.
2. Approve temporary transfers of water rights.
3. Provide funding assistance to public agencies to alleviate drought conditions (to the extent that funds are available).
4. Take other actions depending on future developments in drought conditions.

Ecology, plus all state and local agencies with authority to issue permits or other authorizations in connection with emergency actions authorized under the provisions of this chapter, will have fifteen calendar days from the date of receipt of the respective application(s) in which to provide a decision to the applicant. Agencies with authority to review applications for emergency drought permits, such as under RCW 75.20.050, and affected Indian tribes will have fifteen calendar days from the date ecology receives the application in which to provide ecology with an opinion as to any effects of the proposed withdrawal.

In accordance with the proclamation of the Washington Governor, dated January 3, 1989, (Centennial Accord), nothing herein shall impair or infringe upon the treaty reserved rights or governmental authority of any federally recognized Indian tribe nor shall this order be deemed an assertion of state authority over Indian reservation lands. The Department of Ecology intends to work cooperatively, on a government-to-government basis, with all affected tribes.

Further details about this order or the actions available under it, may be obtained by contacting:

Jeff Marti  
Department of Ecology  
PO Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504-7600  
360-791-6665  
[jeff.marti@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:jeff.marti@ecy.wa.gov)

Applications for emergency water permits or temporary transfers of water rights are available by contacting one of the Department of Ecology's regional offices:

**Contact Information**

<p><b>Central Region</b> (Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, and Yakima counties) <b>Help desk:</b> 509-575-2597</p>
<p><b>Eastern Region</b> (Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties) <b>Help desk:</b> 509-329-3400</p>
<p><b>Northwest Region</b> (Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties) <b>Help desk:</b> 206-594-0193</p>
<p><b>Southwest Region</b> (Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Lewis, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum counties) <b>Help desk:</b> 360-407-0278</p>

DATED this 14th day of July, 2021



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Laura Watson, Director