



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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ORDER AND DETERMINATION BY THE DIRECTOR

A healthy Washington State economy, environment, and community, rely on plentiful water supplies. The Washington State Legislature recognized the significant hardship that drought and water shortages can create for our state and provided tools and processes to provide relief. [Chapter 43.83B RCW](#), *Drought Conditions*, allows a drought emergency to be declared if: (1) water supply is below seventy-five percent of normal and (2) the water shortage will likely create undue hardships for water users or the environment. This order summarizes water supply conditions and anticipated hardship to support this declaration of drought emergency.

Water Supply Conditions

The Washington State Water Supply Availability Committee (WSAC) reviewed water supply forecasts for the critical May through September 2025 period and determined that projected water supply represents an extreme departure from normal (e.g., below 75 percent of normal) in 19 watersheds. These include Water Resources Inventory Areas (WRIAs) 1 (Nooksack), 3 (Lower Skagit-Samish), 4 (Upper Skagit), 5 (Stillaguamish), 7 (Snohomish), 8 (Cedar-Sammamish), 9 (Duwamish-Green), 10 (Puyallup-White), 11 (Nisqually), 12 (Chambers-Clover), 18 (Elwha-Dungeness), 45 (Wenatchee), 46 (Entiat), 47 (Chelan), 48 (Methow), 49 (Okanogan), 51 (Nespelem), 52 (Sanpoil), and 60 (Kettle) ([WAC 173-166-030\(6\)](#)).

Compounding precipitation, snowpack, and soil moisture deficits, combined with early and rapid snowpack melt off, have impacted water supply in these watersheds. Forecasts predict warmer than normal temperatures and lower than normal precipitation in spring and summer 2025, lowering the likelihood that conditions will improve during that period. Based on this information, WSAC determined that the statutory hydrologic drought threshold of less than 75% of normal water supply was met ([WAC 173-166-030\(2\)](#)).

Hardship Due to Drought Conditions

Information on drought-related hardship was provided to the Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the state Executive Water Emergency Committee (EWEC), as summarized below.

Agricultural Sector: Agricultural producers anticipate the need to fallow land and cease irrigation, leading to crop stress and reduced yields. This is due to inadequate water availability. Farmers with junior water rights are expected to be interrupted earlier this year due to compounding snowpack deficits and reduced streamflows.

Drinking Water Supplies: Small and more vulnerable public water systems may require water trucking and well deepening and rehabilitation to support domestic water use. These impacts are often observed later in the season.

Fisheries and Instream Resources: River flows are projected to decline to levels in which fish will be unable to migrate later this summer, resulting in stranding and increased fish mortality of critical anadromous and resident fishes. Low streamflow leads to higher stream temperatures that are dangerous for fish.

A drought declaration for these watersheds provides early information to water users on water supplies and activates tools to provide drought relief.

Based upon the recommendations of EWEC, I find that drought conditions exist in the following 19 WRIs: 1 (Nooksack), 3 (Lower Skagit-Samish), 4 (Upper Skagit), 5 (Stillaguamish), 7 (Snohomish), 8 (Cedar-Sammamish), 9 (Duwamish-Green), 10 (Puyallup-White), 11 (Nisqually), 12 (Chambers-Clover), 18 (Elwha-Dungeness), 45 (Wenatchee), 46 (Entiat), 47 (Chelan), 48 (Methow), 49 (Okanogan), 51 (Nespelem), 52 (Sanpoil), and 60 (Kettle)

Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of RCW 43.83B.405, **IT IS ORDERED that these 19 watersheds are hereby under a drought emergency, which include all or parts of Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce, Lewis, Thurston, Clallam, Jefferson, Okanogan, Chelan, and Ferry counties.**

This order is effective immediately and shall remain in effect through April 7, 2026, unless terminated prior to that date.

This order serves to incorporate the April 8, 2025 drought emergency order covering three Yakima Basin watersheds. This includes WRIs 37 (Lower Yakima), 38 (Naches) and 39 (Upper Yakima). Drought conditions continue to degrade in the Yakima Basin. The Bureau of Reclamation released a May-September 2025 Total Water Supply Available (TWSA) of 48% water allocation for proratable water right holders. TWSA reflects multiple water supply indicators, and this information affects the amount of water proratable water users are entitled to (i.e., water right holders with 1905 priority dates).

In accordance with the provisions of chapter 43.83B RCW, 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 entities to help alleviate drought hardship (to the extent that funds are available); and
4. Take other actions depending on future developments in drought conditions.

RCW 43.83B.410 specifically requires Ecology and other state and local agencies to expedite drought-related permitting decisions.

In accordance with the proclamation of the Washington State 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. Ecology intends to work cooperatively, on a government-to-government basis, with all affected tribes.

The areas served by the Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma water utilities continue to be under a drought advisory and are not included in the drought declaration area at this time.

Further details about this order or the actions available under it, can be obtained by at the [Ecology Drought Response website](#) or by contacting:

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Applications for emergency water permits or temporary transfers of water rights are available by contacting one of the Department of Ecology's [regional offices](#).

DATED this 5th of June, 2025

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Casey D. Sixkiller", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Casey D. Sixkiller, Director