



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

682 East Vine Street / Suite 7 / Murray, UT 84107 / (801) 685-2555 / Fax 685-2559 / www.westernstateswater.org

Chair - Jennifer Verleger; Executive Director - Tony Willardson; Editor - Michelle Bushman; Subscriptions - Julie Groat

WESTERN GOVERNORS/WATER RESOURCES

Idaho/Drought

On April 29, with approval from Idaho Governor Brad Little (R), the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) issued an emergency drought declaration for southern Idaho. The declaration allows temporary water right changes in the point of diversion, place of use, and purpose of use for valid, existing water rights, when it is determined that such changes can be accomplished without harming other existing water rights. The declaration may also help with the eligibility requirements for federal drought assistance.

IDWR Director Gary Spackman noted that all Idaho counties south of the Salmon River are classified as being in moderate to severe drought and are experiencing below-normal snowpack. The press release said: "Specifically, total cumulative snow water equivalent (SWE) levels in these basins as of April 1, 2022, ranged from 50 to 78 percent of median. The April-to-September streamflow forecasts for most locations south of the Salmon River are between 25 and 75 percent of median. As of April 1, 2022, storage in most reservoirs serving the southern half of Idaho were between 20 to 65 percent of capacity, increasing the chances that many reservoirs will not fill." <https://idwr.idaho.gov/news-releases/>

New Mexico/Drought/Wildfires

On April 25, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (D) declared a statewide emergency for severe drought and fire conditions. The executive order noted that 93% of New Mexico was experiencing severe to exceptional drought conditions, and that significant fire danger "has increased throughout the State due to warmer temperatures, lower humidity, high winds, and an abundance of dry, fine fuels." According to the National Interagency Fire Center, New Mexico is currently fighting six large fires across more than 235,000 acres. Governor Lujan Grisham has issued five other emergency declarations in April regarding the various fires. <https://www.governor.state.nm.us/about-the-governor/executive-orders/>

On May 4, Governor Lujan Grisham submitted a request for a Presidential Disaster Declaration through

the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as well as applied for a hazard mitigation assistance grant. In a press release she said: "The state has aggressively pursued a Presidential Disaster Declaration for New Mexico, using every available tool and technology to document the damage that we know New Mexico communities have sustained and are still experiencing in order to expedite the process. I am laser focused on getting New Mexicans the disaster relief they need and deserve, and I am confident that FEMA and the President will grant our request." <https://www.governor.state.nm.us/press-releases/>

Oregon/Drought

On April 25, Oregon Governor Kate Brown (D) signed an executive order declaring drought across four counties with low snowpack, low reservoir levels, and low streamflow. "Forecasted water supply conditions and precipitation levels are not expected to improve. Drought is likely to have a significant economic impact on the farm, ranch, vineyard, recreation, tourism, and natural resources sectors, as well as an impact on drinking water, fish and wildlife, and important minimum flows for public instream uses and other natural resources dependent on adequate precipitation, stored water, and streamflow in these areas. Extreme conditions are expected to affect the local growers and livestock, increase the potential for fire, shorten the growing season, and decrease water supplies." The order directs agencies to coordinate and provide assistance to water users, to understand the impacts of water availability on wildlife, to assess and mitigate emergency activities, and to assist with federal resources to mitigate drought conditions and agricultural recovery. https://www.oregon.gov/gov/eo/eo_22-07.pdf

ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES

Reclamation/Colorado River

On May 3, the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) announced two operational changes to keep the Lake Powell surface water elevation above 3,490 feet, the lowest point at which Glen Canyon Dam can generate hydropower. The actions will increase flow from upstream reservoirs and release less water downstream. Under the terms of the 2019 Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) and the 2022 Drought Response Operations

Agreement (DROA), approximately 500,000 acre-feet of water will be released from Flaming Gorge Reservoir, which is at 78% of its storage capacity. Another 480,000 acre-feet will be left in Lake Powell by reducing Glen Canyon Dam's annual release volume from 7.48 million acre-feet (maf) to 7.0 maf, as outlined in the 2007 Interim Guidelines. Further supplemental upstream releases from Blue Mesa and Navajo reservoirs may be required later this year. Similar upstream releases were made during the summer of 2021.

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Tanya Trujillo said: "Today's decision reflects the truly unprecedented challenges facing the Colorado River Basin and will provide operational certainty for the next year. Everyone who relies on the Colorado River must continue to work together to reduce uses and think of additional proactive measure we can take in the months and years ahead to rebuild our reservoirs." Reclamation Acting Commissioner David Palumbo said: "Reclamation applauds the quick response and support from across the Basin for these actions. As we focus on these short-term response actions, we recognize the importance of simultaneously planning for the longer-term to stabilize our reservoirs before we face an even larger crisis." <https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/#/news-release/4196>

CONGRESS

Senate/WRDA 2022

On May 4, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee introduced the 2022 Water Resources and Development Act and voted unanimously to advance the bill to the full Senate for consideration. The bill authorizes 36 new feasibility studies, 17 new projects, and 4 modified projects. The bill contains four titles and various sections of particular interest to Western States. Section 106 authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to inform and educate states about opportunities to partner and address water development needs. Section 117 directs the Corps to establish a Western Water Cooperative Committee, which may include WSWC governor-appointed members, and to work together on the committee to ensure that water resource development projects in western states are operated in a manner consistent with congressional directives by identifying opportunities to avoid or minimize conflicts between the operation of those projects and state water rights or water laws.

Section 118 authorizes the Corps to update water control manuals at the request of the governor, in states that declared statewide drought in 2021, with priority given to those waters that accommodate a water supply project. Section 127 directs the Corps to develop and update an inventory of low-head dams in collaboration

with state and federal agencies. Section 134 makes permanent the Corps' authority to evaluate and approve water supply conservation measures for projects in states that experience repeated droughts. Section 141 encourages the Corps to utilize all existing authorities to facilitate the renegotiation of the Columbia River Basin Treaty with Canada and the United States, and requires the Corps to periodically update Congress on the status of such activities. Sections 206-209 authorize the Government Accounting Office (GAO) to study and audit various projects for cost overruns, backlog, project distribution, operation and maintenance costs, and mitigation practices.

Section 321 amends 33 USC 2336 and authorizes the Corps to assist tribes with abandoned or inactive non-coal mine restoration. Section 327 authorizes the Corps to consider incidental flood risk management benefits on the Missouri River when acquiring land to meet fish and wildlife mitigation requirements. Section 337 makes permanent the prohibition on charging fees for surplus water contracts in the Upper Missouri Mainstem Reservoirs. Section 341 increases the authorization amount for the New Mexico Acequia protection and restoration program to \$80M and adjusts the non-federal cost share to 10% for economically disadvantaged communities. Section 343 expands state and local payment options to reimburse the Corps for repair and replacement for municipal and industrial water supply storage. Section 352 authorizes a pilot program in Idaho for the Corps to enter good neighbor agreements for forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration services on federal lands. Section 407 authorizes a forecast informed reservoir pilot program at one or more dams within the Corps' North Atlantic Division.

WATER RESOURCES

Sub-Seasonal Precipitation

On April 28, the Journal of Geophysical Research Letters published a study on Sub-Seasonal Predictability of North American Monsoon (NAM) Precipitation. The study was led by the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), with data analyzed on the Cheyenne supercomputer in Wyoming, and was funded by the Bureau of Reclamation. The study found that identifying surges of moisture advection that push subtropical highs into the NAM region as a proxy for rainfall improved forecasting ability for June-October precipitation in Arizona and New Mexico, where monsoon precipitation contributes from 60-80% of the annual rainfall. The study analyzed and modeled data from 1982-2018 (hindcasting), and the Bureau of Reclamation will evaluate the predictive capability of the system this year on the Lower Colorado River and Rio Grande basins. <https://news.ucar.edu/132841/new-method-can-predict-summer-rainfall-southwest-months-advance>

The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is a government entity of representatives appointed by the Governors of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.