

Crook County Drought Declaration

On July 1, 2020, Governor Brown signed a drought declaration for Crook County. This action followed Crook County Court's declaration of a state of emergency on June 17 and request that the State of Oregon declare a drought emergency for Crook County. The conditions of winter snowpack, reservoir levels, and surface water flows and the anticipated impacts to users of those water sources in Crook County drove this request.

The City of Prineville is thankful to have a groundwater aquifer with ample water supply to meet our customers' water needs and we expect our groundwater supply to be adequate this year. But the drought declaration is an important reminder that water is a precious and scarce resource in the high desert. We encourage you to take action to conserve water. If you have an irrigation system, check for leaks and make sure your sprinklers aren't watering the sidewalk or driveway. Also, consider using more efficient irrigation methods, like drip irrigation for gardens and shrubs. Please visit our [Water Conservation](#) page for more indoor and outdoor water conservation ideas and information about our free water conservation items.

The City of Prineville will continue to provide information on the drought declaration, water conditions, and voluntary water conservation measures. Below is additional information about the drought declaration request.

Why did Crook County Court request a drought declaration for Crook County?

Crook County Court made this request in response to concerns about weather conditions causing pasture shortages, a shortened growing season, and reduced recreational opportunities. These conditions can result in significant economic damage to the agricultural and livestock industries, recreation, and related economies. Many local irrigators and ranchers rely on winter snowpack and water stored in Ochoco and Prineville Reservoirs for their water supply, and drought conditions may threaten their economic stability. A drought declaration can help make resources available to protect people and livestock, mitigate economic losses, and proactively address the threat of wildfires.

What evidence is there of a drought?

- Crook County has experienced earlier snowmelt than usual and has been snow-free since mid-April.
- Water levels in Ochoco and Prineville Reservoirs are substantially below average for this time of year and dropping.
- Irrigation from stored water and deliveries from irrigation districts are already being restricted or cut off this irrigation season and may be reduced further.
- The extended weather forecast for Central Oregon projects above-average temperatures, below-average precipitation, and very low soil moisture levels.

What happens when the Governor approves a request for a drought declaration?

- Water users and managers gain access to legal tools to increase water supply source flexibility. For example, water users can apply for temporary water right transfers and emergency water use permits. They also gain access to other federal and state drought assistance programs, including emergency farm loans and compensation for grazing losses.

- The Governor may require that cities develop water conservation plans or water curtailment plans if the drought is considered severe enough. The City of Prineville has a Water Management and Conservation Plan that includes a water curtailment plan and will implement measures described in these plans if needed. We encourage you to conserve water and will continue to provide information about the City's water supply conditions.