

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES OF THE BOARD SESSION – Special Board Session

Wednesday, September 3, 2015
11:30 a.m.

Senator Hearing Room
555 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

PRESENT: Commissioner Janet Carlson, Commissioner Kevin Cameron and Commissioner Sam Brentano. Also present were John Lattimer as chief administrative officer, Gloria Roy as county counsel and Kim Hulett as recorder.

Commissioner Carlson called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

SPECIAL MEETING

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ACTION

(Video Time:00:00:49)

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

1. Consider approval of an emergency drought declaration. – Commissioner Cameron and Ed Flick, Emergency Manager

Summary of presentation:

- Twenty-four out of thirty-six counties throughout Oregon have requested the governor declare a state of emergency for drought;
- Marion County held off declaring a state of emergency so local farmers could have control over their water;
- Recent requests from farmers to access domestic water supplies; and
- To expedite, the Marion County commissioners must ask the governor to declare a state of emergency.

Marion County Emergency Manager Ed Flick:

- As of August 25, 2015, the Federal Drought Monitor has designated all of Marion County as experiencing either severe drought or extreme drought;
- Extreme Drought is currently isolated to the eastern portion of the state;
- Drought severity is determined by both physical conditions and the resulting economic impacts;

- National Weather Service forecasts for Oregon are continued above-normal temperatures and below normal precipitation for the balance of summer and fall;
- Outlook is uncertain due to a strong El Nino year;
- Most profound economic impacts have been on recreation in Detroit Lake;
- Farmers report that yields have been significantly impacted, down 20-40 percent;
- Significant impact on migratory fish based on temperature and low level of rivers; and
- To date, no significant impact on municipal water systems.

Assessments:

- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) assesses ability to maintain adequate flows from Big Cliff Dam to feed the North Santiam River until start of rainy season;
- Goal to maintain at least 700 cubic feet per second (CFS);
- Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) regulates users off of streams every year through the summer;
- Due to low stream flows, regulation began sooner; and
- Some cities in the county have implemented water conservation measures.

Small Business Administration and Farm Service Agency Programs:

- Farmers, ranchers and small non-agricultural businesses are eligible for drought related loan assistance programs since June and will continue to be eligible for the next eight months;
- Farmers respond to drought by applying to transfer rights (using water from a different location) or making emergency permit requests (using another water source temporarily):
 - Using a domestic well for irrigation, or using a well instead of water from a stream;
 - Permitting process can move faster and is cheaper with a declaration in place, but declaration does not guarantee permit will be issued;
 - Domestic wells are exempt from the need for water rights, but can only be used for household purposes and to irrigate up to ½ acre of non-commercial landscaping or gardens;
 - By statute when the governor issues a drought declaration Executive Order, citizens can apply for a drought permit to temporarily use a domestic well for commercial irrigation;
 - Process can be completed in approximately 10 days; and
 - Without a declaration, citizens would have to apply for permanent water rights and the process could take months.
- Primary benefits of a state drought declaration:
 - Creates greater awareness of drought conditions;
 - Facilitates coordination between state agencies; and
 - Allows OWRD to provide existing water right holders with access to emergency water management tools.
- There has not been an unexpectedly high number of applications for drought related permits;
- More citizens might come forward if a declaration were in place;
- No party had requested Marion County declare a drought until last week;
- Likely governor would issue an executive order declaring a drought in Marion County if requested by the Board of Commissioners for following reasons:
 - Vast majority of counties in state have declared;


- County experiencing prolonged and severe drought;
- Weather outlook for fall and winter is uncertain; and
- County has experienced damages to agriculture, recreation, and the environment.
- All declarations the state has issued will expire on December 31, 2015.

Board discussion:

- Recent rains have reduced fire danger in Western Cascades;
- Rains experienced over weekend would not significantly impact the situation with the drought;
- Declaration is necessary at this time;
- Marion County Farm Bureau's concern is the blueberry growers are having a difficult time due to drought conditions; and
- Risk of losing newly established blueberry crops.
- Two places to change wording on the resolution the board will sign:
 - Page 2 – WHEREAS, the entirety of Marion County is in a state of emergency; and
 - Page 2 – (Second RESOLVED from top) – Change to – effective on this 3rd day of September, 2015 at 11:30 a.m. for the entire county.

MOTION: Commissioner Brentano moved approval of the resolution that declares a state of emergency as a result of severe drought conditions in Marion County. Seconded by Commissioner Cameron; motion carried. A voice vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Carlson adjourned the meeting at 12:00 a.m.



 CHAIR



COMMISSIONER



COMMISSIONER

Board Sessions can be viewed on-line at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYF8Y6U7178>.

