

DROUGHT RELIEF RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITIES, TRIBES AND SMALL BUSINESSES



News Release from **Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM)**

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SALEM, ORE. — As drought conditions impact communities across much of Oregon, the State of Oregon reminds eligible public bodies, Tribes, nonprofit organizations and small businesses of the financial and technical resources available to support drought mitigation, water system improvements and economic recovery.

State and federal partners are offering multiple programs that help communities address declining water availability, improve local water infrastructure, and offset drought-related economic losses. Some programs also have provisions applying to those affected by fire.

Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants

[These U.S. Department of Agriculture grants](#) support rural communities experiencing significant declines in water quantity or quality.

Who may apply:

- Public bodies in rural areas
- Nonprofit organizations
- Federally recognized Tribes
- Applicants must document that a major decline in water quality or quantity has occurred within the last two years or is imminent.

Eligible areas:

- Rural areas and towns with populations of 10,000 or fewer
- Tribal lands in rural areas

How funds may be used:

- Water transmission line grants (up to \$150,000): Waterline extensions, repair of breaks or leaks, and necessary maintenance to restore supply.
- Water source development grants (up to \$1,000,000): Construction of new wells, reservoirs, transmission lines, treatment plants, or other water-source infrastructure.

WaterSMART Drought Response Program

[The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program](#) supports projects that strengthen drought resilience through long-term planning and infrastructure improvements.

Who may apply:

- States, Tribes, irrigation districts, and water districts
- State, regional, or local authorities with water or power delivery responsibilities
- Other qualified organizations with water or power delivery authority

How funds may be used:

- Development of drought contingency plans
- Water management decision-support tools
- Infrastructure to improve water storage, distribution, and supply diversification
- Planning and implementation measures that help communities prepare for and respond to drought conditions

Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund (WARRF)

[The Oregon Water Resources Department's Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund](#) (WARRF) provides financial assistance to low-to-moderate income homeowners or members of a federally recognized Tribe in Oregon experiencing well water supply issues. Grants assist with dry wells and wells damaged or destroyed by wildfire. A majority of program funding is dedicated to applications from state drought-declared counties or for wells impacted by wildfire.

Who may apply:

- Qualifying low-to-moderate income homeowners or members of a federally recognized Tribe
- Homeowners with a well connected to their home that can no longer provide enough water for essential in-home use including drinking, cooking and bathing

How funds may be used:

- Reimburse up to \$40,000 for work by a licensed professional and materials associated with and necessary to abandon, repair, or replace eligible wells

How to apply:

- Application and more information on qualifying and important instructions can be found at owrd.info/warrf
- Funding is limited and allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis to qualified applicants

OWRD encourages reporting of all dry wells via the state's Dry Well website at owrd.info/drywell.

SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Program

The U.S. Small Business Administration announced the availability of low-interest federal disaster loans for eligible small businesses and private nonprofit organizations impacted by the drought in Oregon.

- For drought in the following counties **beginning March 24** and continuing: Benton, Clackamas, Coos, Crook, Curry, Deschutes, Douglas, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Jackson, Jefferson, Josephine, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Morrow, Polk, Wasco, Wheeler, and Yamhill.
- For drought in the following counties **beginning April 1** and continuing: Baker, Clackamas, Coos, Crook, Curry, Deschutes, Douglas, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jackson, Jefferson, Josephine, Lake, Malheur, Marion, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wasco, and Wheeler.

You can [apply online](#) and [read more details on the MySBA Loan Portal](#). **Application deadline for Economic Injury Disaster Loans is March 1, 2027.**

Who Can Apply:

- Small businesses
- Private nonprofits & faith-based organizations
- Small agricultural cooperatives & nurseries
- Small aquaculture enterprises

Key Details – Economic Injury Disaster Loans (working capital for operational expenses):

- Up to \$2 million in loan funding
- Loan terms of up to 30 years
- No interest/required payments during the first 12 months after disbursement
- Interest rates as low as:
 - 4% for small businesses and
 - 3.625% for private nonprofit organizations

Applicants may call the SBA Customer Service Center with questions regarding their application at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. For people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

Resources for Agriculture Producers

Agriculture producers affected by drought are encouraged to connect with their local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) for information on drought disaster relief assistance. To find a Service Center near you, use the USDA FSA locator at farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator.

- Prepare: The FSA encourages farmers and ranchers to create a [Login.gov](https://login.gov) account. Full FSA access requires identity verification, which can take 7 to 10 business days for new customers. [Login.gov](https://login.gov) is the secure, single sign-on account that gives you direct access to FSA services including disaster payments, farm program benefits, and loans quickly. Acting right away is important because worsening drought, wildfires, heat waves, and smoke have already caused big losses to crops and livestock.
- Setting up a [Login.gov](https://login.gov) account takes about 10 minutes. Once registered, you can use many U.S. federal and state government websites, including FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). You need an email address and a phone number for extra security. If you want to also access services like Social Security or Veterans Affairs, you'll need ID documents, such as a state ID or Social Security number.
- USDA offers a suite of programs to help producers recover losses from drought as well as protect their operations from the impacts of drought.

These programs include:

- The [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffered grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land.
 - FSA maintains a list of [counties eligible for LFP](#) and makes updates each Thursday.
- The [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#) provides eligible producers with compensation for above-normal costs of hauling water and feed to livestock as well as transporting livestock to forage or other grazing acres.
- The [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#) provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters including qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing). Producers must have obtained NAP coverage for the crop year in which the loss occurs.
- The [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) provides assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers for qualifying tree, shrub and vine losses due to natural disasters including excessive wind and qualifying drought.
- The [Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\)](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program \(EFRP\)](#) provide landowners and forest stewards with financial assistance to restore damaged farmland and conservation structures or forests, including implementing emergency water conservation measures. This program may also help with damage to farmland due to natural disasters such as wildfire.
- Emergency and non-emergency haying and grazing of [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#) acres may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought.
- [USDA Farm Loans](#) provide a variety of direct and guaranteed farm loans, including operating and direct emergency farm loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses, or refinance farm-related debts and other needs.

- Additionally, FSA has a variety of loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan debt to FSA because of reasons beyond their control.

U.S. Drought Monitor

The [U.S. Drought Monitor \(USDM\)](#) is an online map showing the location, extent, and severity of drought across the United States. The USDM provides producers with the latest information about drought conditions where they live, enabling producers to best respond and react to a drought as it develops or lingers.

USDA uses the Drought Monitor to determine a producer's eligibility for certain drought assistance programs, like [LFP](#) and [Emergency Haying or Grazing on CRP acres](#).

The USDM incorporates varying data – rain, snow, temperature, streamflow, reservoir levels, soil moisture, and more – as well as first-hand information submitted from on-the-ground sources such as photos, descriptions and experiences.

The USDM categorizes drought conditions and intensities as follows:

Drought Intensity Categories

- D0: Abnormally Dry - used for areas showing dryness but not yet in drought, or for areas recovering from drought
- D1: Moderate Drought
- D2: Severe Drought
- D3: Extreme Drought
- D4: Exceptional Drought

Drought or Dryness Types

- S: Short-term, typically less than 6 months (agriculture, grasslands)
- L: Long-term, typically more than 6 months (hydrology, ecology)
- SL: Area contains both short- and long-term impacts

Landowners and producers can contribute their observations to the USDM process using the [Condition Monitoring Observer Report \(CMOR\) system](#).

- The CMOR system is also mobile friendly, and a corresponding mobile field app is available for download.
- It's recommended that photos are submitted each month or each season, to provide an ongoing comparison of wet, dry and normal conditions. Of course, more frequent submissions are also welcome.
- Reporting regularly can help people see what normal, wet and dry conditions look like in specific areas of the country.
- The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) authors may consult the CMOR map to help identify areas that need more attention.

Intertribal Agriculture Council

The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) maintains a Technical Assistance (TA) Network that provides direct on-the-ground assistance with USDA program access and supplemental resource identification through conducting outreach, assessing program applicability and eligibility, supporting interface with USDA and partners, advising on contract implementation, and growing tailored support networks. Visit indianag.org for more information and to identify your technical assistance specialist.

Additional Resources

- [County and Individual Resources](#)
- [Tribal Resources](#)
- [National Drought Mitigation Center CMOR Fact Sheet](#)

State options available for water right holders

Water right holders in counties with a Governor-declared drought may have certain short-term tools available. See [Oregon Water Resources Department's Drought Emergency Tools document](#) or [contact your watermaster](#) for more information. Examples include:

- **Temporary Transfer:** Apply to change the type of use, place of use, or the location of the diversion under an existing water right. A temporary drought transfer takes place under an expedited process and is in effect for the duration of the drought declaration or up to one year, whichever is shorter.
- **Temporary Instream Lease:** Convert all or a portion of a water right to an instream use for a period of one year or the term of the drought declaration, whichever is shorter.

- Temporary Emergency Water Use Permit: An approved emergency water use drought permit allows a water user to temporarily replace water not available under an existing water right.
- Temporary Substitution: Any person holding both a primary right originating from a surface water source and a supplemental right from a groundwater source may apply to temporarily use the supplemental right instead.
- Temporary Exchange of Water: The Water Resources Commission can approve a temporary exchange of existing rights, such as using stored water instead of a direct-flow surface-water right.
- Special Option Agreements: A water-right holder can enter into an agreement that authorizes the use of water at locations, from points of diversion, and for uses other than those described in the water right. Interested parties must first work through the scoping of the need and propose it to the watermaster before ultimately submitting it to the Department for analysis and review. Once approved by the Water Resources Commission, these agreements would be usable the moment a drought declaration under Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter 536 is signed by the Governor and do not require approval each season.

Supporting Oregon Communities in Drought

The Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) and Water Resources Department (OWRD) continue working closely with federal partners and local communities to coordinate resources, share information and support preparedness efforts.

“Drought impacts every region of Oregon differently, but the message is the same everywhere: help is available,” said Erin Zysett, OEM Public Information Officer. “We encourage communities, water managers, and small businesses to review these programs and apply as soon as they are able.”

For additional drought information, planning resources, and situation updates, visit:

- Oregon Department of Emergency Management: oregon.gov/oem
- Oregon Water Resources Department: oregon.gov/owrd

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