

Board Byline: Why water conservation is more important than ever this summer

This year, the state is facing well below average snowpack levels, according to the USDA Oregon Snow Survey. Mountain snowpack acts as a natural reservoir, slowly melting and feeding rivers and streams. Lower snowpack typically means less water available in summer.

As of April, it's too soon to know exactly how our source, the Clackamas River, will be affected, but we're proactively planning for multiple scenarios.

How we're planning for lower river levels

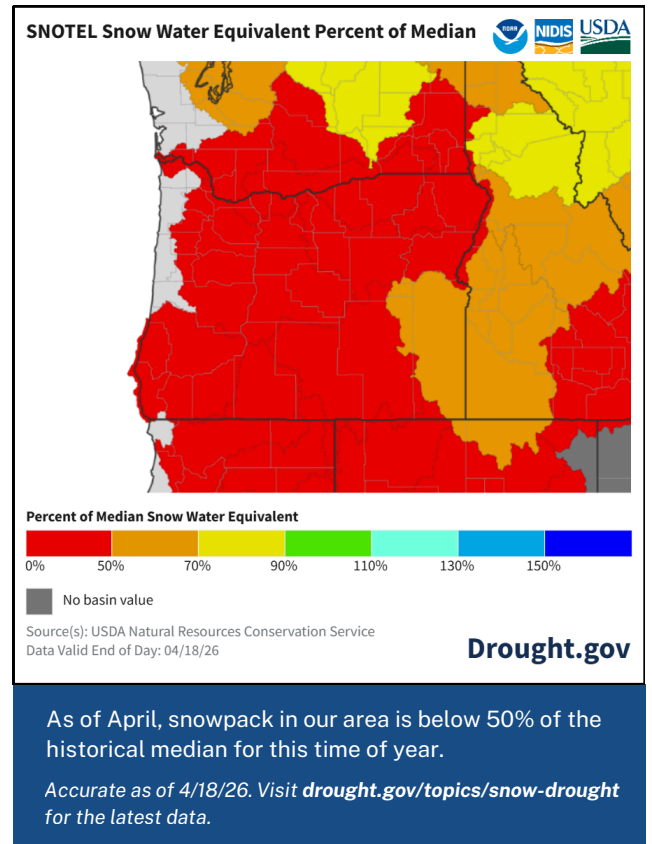
We're working with regional partners who rely on the Clackamas River to monitor conditions and ensure adequate water for essential needs. We're also reducing our own use, including pausing outdoor irrigation at our facilities this summer.

Use water wisely to keep our rivers flowing

This summer, it's especially important for all of us to use water as efficiently as possible. We're asking for your help to protect our water supply during what's expected to be a warm, dry summer.

Reminder: Upcoming public hearings regarding FY27 budget and rates.

Details on the reverse side.



How You Can Help Conserve Water at Home This Summer

WATER SMARTER



Overwatering your garden can result in a lot of waste. Tools like the Weekly Watering Number help you water just enough to keep your plants healthy. Sign up at:

regionalH2O.org

USE WATER-EFFICIENCY TECH



Our partners at Clackamas River Water Providers offer rebates on hose attachments, irrigation controllers, and more, that can help automate conservation:

clackamasproviders.org/conservation-rebates

LIMIT NON-ESSENTIAL USE



Small changes add up. Consider forgoing lawn watering and cutting back on things like washing cars at home or filling pools. Find more conservation ideas at:

epa.gov/watersense/start-saving

Upcoming Budget and Rates Public Hearings

The OLWS Board of Directors will hold two public hearings to receive community input on the proposed budget and **rate increase of 4.7%**. If adopted, the average cost per household would increase by approximately **\$6.47/month**, starting July 1, 2026.

Budget Adoption Hearing | May 12, 2026, at 4 p.m.

The purpose of this meeting is for the board to hear input on the approved fiscal year 2026-27 budget. At this point in the process, the budget is a recommended plan from the budget committee but has not yet been adopted.

Rates Adoption Hearing | June 9, 2026, at 4 p.m.

During this meeting, the board will hear public input on the new schedule of rates and fees. After considering public input, the board will vote on whether to authorize the legal adoption of the new budget, including the new rates.

You can attend the hearings in person at 14496 SE River Rd. or via Zoom video conference. Visit oaklodgewaterservices.org/meetings for more details.

Register For Public Comment

All community members are invited to submit public comment on these matters. Register at: oaklodgewaterservices.org/public-comment



Why Are Rates Increasing?

An Aging System

Parts of our water and sewer systems are past their useful life, leading to main breaks and other costly repairs. Replacing aging infrastructure helps maintain reliable service and avoid expensive emergency fixes.

Regulatory Updates

New regulations require upgrades to our operations. For example, to comply with current Department of Environmental Quality water quality rules, we're expanding our wastewater treatment plant.

Increasing Costs

The cost of providing service has increased due to higher prices for electricity, materials, and labor.

This Summer: Smoke Testing for Sewer System Improvements

This summer, we will be performing smoke testing in Oak Grove ahead of planned sewer system upgrades. We know it can be worrying to see smoke coming from the ground, so we wanted to give you advance notice and share more information about what to expect.

What is smoke testing?

Smoke testing is a way to find cracks and other problems in the sewer system.

How does it work?

A white, odorless vapor (colloquially called "smoke") is blown through sewer pipes. If there are cracks or openings, the vapor rises to the surface through the ground, showing us where repairs are needed.

Is it safe?

Yes. The vapor is non-toxic to people, pets, and plants.



Stay up-to-date on this project and others at:

oaklodgewaterservices.org/active-projects

Emergency Contact Information

Our team is available 24/7 at **(503) 654-7765**. Please call us if you see water gushing from the street, ground, or from a manhole, or if you notice a sewer spill or witness illegal storm drain dumping.

Board Meetings

You're invited to attend OLWS board meetings. Join via Zoom or in-person at 14496 SE River Road. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 4:00 P.M.:

May 12 | June 9 | July 14

Find more details at oaklodgewaterservices.org or email info@olws.org for assistance.