



**DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

FOREST PRACTICES DIVISION

1111 WASHINGTON ST SE
MAIL STOP 47012
OLYMPIA, WA 98504-7012

360-902-1400

FAX 360-902-1428

FPD@DNR.WA.GOV

WWW.DNR.WA.GOV

February 5, 2021

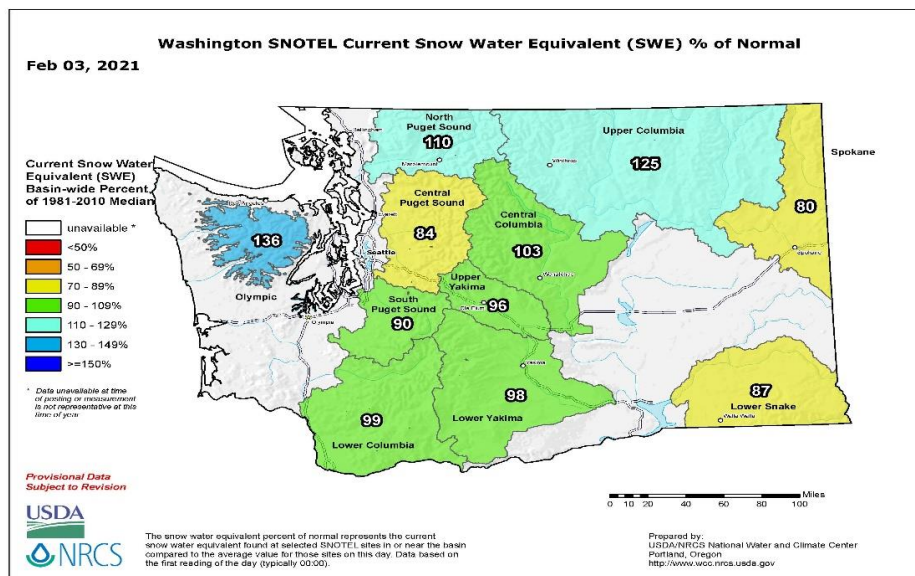
TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Teresa Ann Ciapusci, Region-Operations Outreach Manager
SUBJECT: 2021 Fish Survey Season-Water Level and Streamflow Forecast

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), provides the following forecast for statewide water abundance for the 2021 fish survey season to focus appropriate attention on potential drought conditions when scheduling and conducting fish surveys.¹ Many factors influence the extent and distribution of fish species in a watershed. Drought conditions can alter how fish species occupy or access streams.

Under Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) definitions, drought conditions may be present where basins have 70 percent or less of the basin’s snow water equivalent. Under Washington state statute, drought conditions can exist at 75 percent or less of the basin’s normal water supply. The 2021 NRCS report estimated Washington State snow pack (“snow water equivalents”) ranged from 80 to 136 percent of normal statewide as of February 3, 2021 (Figure 1). The January 2021 Water Supply Outlook Report reports basin percentages of normal ranging from 79 to 126 percent.

Figure 1. Washington SNOTEL snow water equivalent percentage of normal by basin as of February 3, 2021.

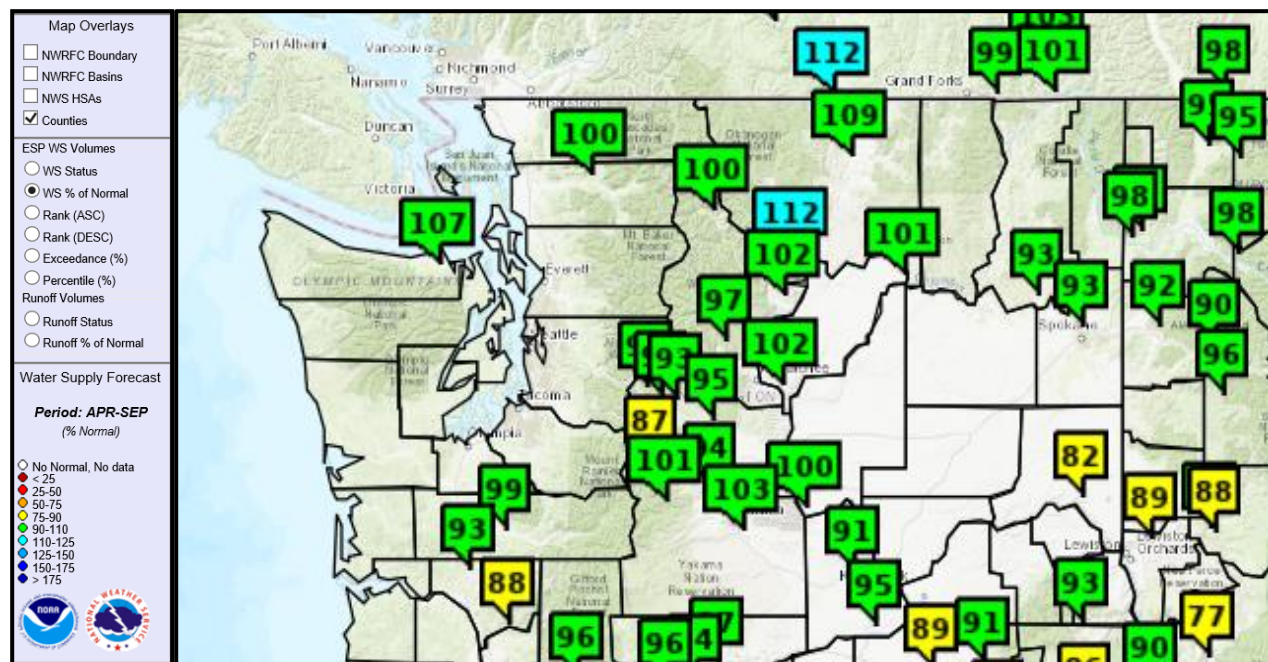
https://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftpref/data/water/wcs/gis/maps/wa_swepctnormal_update.pdf



¹ Forest Practices Board Manual Section 13, Part 2 “Guidelines for Determining Fish Use for the Purpose of Typing Waters” (see WAC 222-16-031 Interim Water Typing System)

Washington water and fish managers review several forecasting products when considering a drought declaration under state statute and rule.² In addition to the aforementioned NRCS information, Washington references the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Northwest River Forecast Center (NWRFC) forecast for water supply. Figure 2 depicts the NWRFC February 3, 2021 water supply prediction for the period April - September 2021. As of this week, water supplies are predicted to range between 77 and 112% of normal during April-September 2021 but are predominantly expected to be at about 97% of normal for Washington streams.

Figure 2. NOAA Northwest River Forecast Center water supply prediction for the period April through September, 2021



Map courtesy of <https://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/ws/>

The current snow pack levels (Figure 1) and predictions for streamflow (Figure 2) are predominantly at or above normal. As well, the January 2021 NRCS Water Supply Outlook Report indicates, in its most recent forecast through late-January, a high probability for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. Additionally, the report's 3-month forecast indicates below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation which is indicative of the forecasted Enso La Nina³. Surveyors should review specific stream flow conditions (using the links provided below) prior to conducting surveys in low-flow affected areas. Landowners should consult with their DNR forest practices forester, WDFW habitat biologist, and/or tribal biologist prior to conducting a protocol survey during low-flow conditions.

Proponents of water type changes need to answer all questions in the water type modification form and should provide specific information (pictures are strongly encouraged) demonstrating how stream flows

² Title 43.83B (400-901) RCW; Chapter 173-166 WAC

³ NRCS Water Supply Outlook Report, page 3; <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/wa/snow/waterproducts/?cid=stelprdb1265591>

and fish use determinations were unaffected by low-flow conditions, if present. If applicable, proponents should also provide information demonstrating how fish use determinations were unaffected by mass wasting or stream scouring events. DNR will process water type modifications only when complete information is provided on water type modification forms to support the proponent's request (for example, justification solely on a phrase such as "flow was good" is considered insufficient).

Landowners and interested parties can find details regarding drought effects in specific basins by reviewing the following water supply forecast and stream flow resources:

- The Natural Resource Conservation Service *Current Water Supply Outlook Report*: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/wa/snow/waterproducts/>
2 Title 43.83B (400-901) RCW; Chapter 173-166 WAC
- For drought status under the Washington State definition, as well as information about the state drought declaration process, review Ecology's drought information:
Statewide Conditions: <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Water-availability/Statewide-conditions>
- Ecology also provides links to a variety of water supply data and forecasting web sites: <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply>
- For details regarding whether or not drought may affect a specific basin, please review the Northwest River Forecast Center (NWRFC) "*Ensemble Streamflow Prediction (ESP) Water Supply Forecast as Percent of Average*": <http://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/ws/>.
- Please review stream flow conditions prior to conducting surveys in low-flow-affected areas. Review flows at specific Washington locations at:
Flow Monitoring Network: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/eap/flows/regions/state.asp>
WA Current Streamflow Summary: <https://waecy.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=832e254169e640fba6e117780e137e7b>

If you have questions about conducting protocol fish presence surveys or water typing in general, please contact Forest Practices staff at one of the six DNR region offices:

- Northeast: (509) 684-7474
- Northwest: (360) 856-3500
- Olympic: (360) 374-2800
- Pacific Cascade: (360) 577-2025
- Southeast: (509) 925-8510
- South Puget Sound: (360) 825-1631

cc:

Forest Practices Division

Joseph Shramek, Division Manager

Donelle Mahan, Assistant Division Manager-Operations

DNR Regions

Ken McNamee, Region Manager – Northeast Region

Jay Guthrie, Acting Region Manager – Northwest Region
Mona Griswold, Region Manager – Olympic Region
Eric Wisch, Region Manager – Pacific Cascade Region
Todd Welker, Region Manager – Southeast Region
Scott Sargent, Region Manager – South Puget Sound Region