

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Free Water Storage Tanks, Water Filling Station and Water Delivery in Response to Dry Wells in Klamath County, Oregon

#### 2021 Drought

*These FAQs may be updated periodically as information changes.*

## Background

The Klamath Basin is experiencing exceptional drought conditions according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Temperatures have been warmer than normal; precipitation has been significantly lower than normal; soil moisture has been at or near historic lows as have streamflows. As a result of these drought conditions, aquifers that support many domestic wells in the Klamath Project area have received less recharge than normal resulting in an unprecedented number of domestic wells going dry or producing less water than is needed.

To assist, Klamath County, in coordination with partners, has arranged for a free potable water filling station, free water storage tanks, and free water delivery to assist households whose well is dry or producing less water than needed for household purposes. The details of these temporary emergency services are outlined below. These services are intended to be temporary and are contingent upon resources.

## What is being done to help?

Klamath County, as the local emergency management jurisdiction, is coordinating with other partners to help provide a temporary supply of water to households whose wells have been impacted. Klamath County has requested state assistance. Klamath County, in partnership with Oregon Office of Emergency Management, Oregon Department of Human Services, Oregon Water Resources Department, the City of Klamath Falls, Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network, Klamath Water Users Association, and other partners are all working together to locate resources to assist well owners whose domestic wells are experiencing conditions that impact their daily lives and who are in need of water for household purposes.

The following services are being provided:

- **Free Water Filling Station:** Klamath County in coordination with other partners, will be providing a water filling station at 6100 Wesgo Drive, Klamath Falls, OR 97603 where individuals can bring their own containers to receive up to 20 gallons a day of potable water for domestic use free of charge.
- **Free Water Storage Tanks:** Klamath County in coordination with other partners has ordered potable water storage tanks, which will be provided free of charge to households that meet criteria discussed below.
- **Free Water Delivery to Fill Water Tanks:** Klamath County in coordination with other partners has arranged for a free water delivery service to fill water tanks one time per week, dependent on demand and available resources. Deliveries will be provided free of charge to households that meet criteria discussed below.

## If my well has gone dry, or I am experiencing lower yields, what should I do?

Individuals who believe their well is dry or producing less water than is needed should submit a Dry Well Report Form to the Oregon Water Resources Department's Klamath Watermaster Office online (<https://go.usa.gov/xFbW3>) or via phone at 541-883-4182. **Due to the high number of calls and limited staff, we encourage you to use the online Dry Well Report Form, if possible.**

Staff from the Department will be in contact with you to follow up. They will set a time to visit your well to take a water level reading to assess the well.

In addition, you can find tips online if your well goes dry (<https://go.usa.gov/xFbW3>) or contact the local Watermaster office at (541) 883-4148. A pump company or well drilling company should also be contacted. Note that they are currently experiencing significant work backlogs.

## What do I need to know if I want to obtain water from the free water filling station?

Klamath County in conjunction with other partners, will be providing a water filling station at 6100 Wesgo Drive, Klamath Falls, OR 97603, where individuals can bring their own containers to receive free of charge up to 20 gallons of potable water for domestic use, per household per day on days that the filling station is open. Starting July 28<sup>th</sup>, the Water Filling Station will be open from 10 AM – 2 PM Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The hours and days of operation are subject to change depending on demand. Please visit [www.KlamathCounty.org](http://www.KlamathCounty.org) or call (541) 883-5100 to confirm hours of operation. The continuation of this service is dependent on resources and is a temporary emergency solution to provide time for well owners to seek another permanent water supply solution. No more than 20 gallons per household per day will be provided. Individuals must have submitted the Dry Well Report Form online (<https://go.usa.gov/xFbW3>) or call the Oregon Water Resources Department's Klamath Watermaster office at 541-883-4182 to submit a Dry Well Report in order to obtain water.

Water containers used for transport, storage, distribution lines, and all components in contact with water should be properly disinfected to prevent contamination. Be sure to read information below on "*Disinfection: Can I drink the water and what do I need to do to prevent contamination of the water?*" Klamath County and partners provide no guarantees of potability and recommends bottled water for drinking and cooking.

## What are the criteria for obtaining a free tank or water delivery?

Individuals must submit the Dry Well Report Form online (<https://go.usa.gov/xFbW3>) or call the Oregon Water Resources Department's Klamath Watermaster office at 541-883-4182 to submit a Dry Well Report. The watermaster's office staff will visit your well to confirm that it is experiencing difficulties due to the drought.

A representative from the Oregon Water Resources Department will contact you to schedule an appointment to check your domestic well. Any well information that you can provide, such as pump or well contractor maintenance records, will be beneficial.

Please see the Klamath County Oregon Watermaster Water Tank Usage Criteria and Approval handout for program eligibility including what residential property owners or individuals may be eligible. Visit [www.KlamathCounty.org](http://www.KlamathCounty.org) or obtain handout from the Klamath Watermaster's Office.

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You will be required to review, agree to, and sign the following documents: Hold Harmless, Right-of-Entry, and Water Tank Program Agreement; and a Cautionary Boil Notice. See [www.KlamathCounty.org](http://www.KlamathCounty.org) for more information or contact the Klamath Watermaster's Office.

### **Are there limits on what I can use the water for?**

This program has been developed by the County. Funding to support this program is provided by the County, State and Federal agencies. Every effort is being made to offer homeowners assistance to provide immediate relief to domestic well users experiencing issues due to drought.

Water provided free of charge to the consumer will be limited to use within the footprint of the home or for livestock watering, shall not be used externally to the footprint of the home (prohibited uses include but are not limited to: a. car washing, b. lawn and or garden watering, c. dust abatement) except for livestock needs, and shall not be sold or provided free of charge to nonresidents of the authorized home. Participants must agree to provide access to the well associated with this program to staff from the Watermaster's office for well inspections (a 24-hour notice will be provided).

Please see more information below advising that water should not be used for drinking and cooking.

### **How long will services be provided?**

The continuation of water filling or delivery services is dependent on resources and is a temporary emergency solution to provide time for the well owner to seek out a permanent water supply solution. Tanks are provided to the extent resources allow and a supply of tanks can be found.

### **Disinfection: Can I drink the water and what do I need to do to prevent contamination of the water?**

While water provided onsite will be safe to drink, Klamath County and partners cannot guarantee that methods to transport, store, or distribute the water are safe. As such, Klamath County and partners provide no guarantees of potability and recommend bottled water for drinking and cooking, or following procedures to disinfect the water as a precaution. See handouts provided on [www.KlamathCounty.org](http://www.KlamathCounty.org).

Water containers used for transport, storage, distribution lines, pumps, and all other fittings must be disinfected appropriately for water to be potable (see Klamath County Public Health/OHA handout *Shock Chlorination for Storage Tank, Well, and Distribution System-Procedure and Volume Calculation* weblink for details on [www.KlamathCounty.org](http://www.KlamathCounty.org)). Water may be considered safe to drink only from the original point of delivery. Bottled water is highly recommended for drinking. All plumbing and components should be approved for potable water, and approval must be requested through the local building code authority.

Water containers used for transporting water should be properly disinfected to prevent contamination. Review Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) *Drinking Water Hauling Guidelines* (<https://go.usa.gov/xFbgK>) to ensure water is safe to drink. Please also see information provided Klamath County Public Health at [www.KlamathCounty.org](http://www.KlamathCounty.org).

### **Who should I contact if I want to obtain a water tank or free water delivery?**

After you submit your Dry Well Report Form (<https://go.usa.gov/xFbW3>) to the Klamath Watermaster's Office, the watermaster's office will visit your well to assess the groundwater level. Once the well is

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inspected, the watermaster's office will provide you with a form to request either a water tank, free water delivery, or both. Follow up questions about the status of your request should be directed to the Klamath Watermaster's Office at 541-883-4182.

### **What else do I need to know if I want to obtain a free water storage tank?**

Due to the extreme drought conditions across the western states, it is difficult to find water storage tanks. Oregon Department of Human Services has been able to order more than 300 tanks. Since supplies of storage tanks are limited, some tanks may be shipped from other states. Tanks will be provided to the extent resources allow and a supply of tanks can be found. Some tanks are expected to start arriving in the Klamath area during the week of July 26; however, it may take longer for some tanks to arrive. Individuals will be contacted by the Klamath Watermaster's Office when their tank is available. Tanks will be provided in the order in which the dry well report was received by the Klamath Watermaster's Office.

The homeowner assumes responsibility to connect the tank to their water system and any damages resulting from the installation are the homeowner's responsibility. All plumbing and components should be approved for potable water, and approval must be requested through the local building code authority.

If you pick up a tank and want to have it filled at that time, the water in the tank will be considered non-potable. Refer to the *Drinking Water Hauling Guidelines* attachment for safely sanitizing your water.

Be sure to read information above on "*Disinfection: Can I drink the water and what do I need to do to prevent contamination of the water?*" Water containers used for transport, storage, distribution lines, and all components in contact with water should be properly disinfected to prevent contamination. Klamath County and partners provide no guarantees of potability and recommends bottled water for drinking and cooking.

### **What else do I need to know if I want to obtain free water delivery?**

The start date for deliveries is still being determined and will begin as soon as storage tanks are available. Updated information will be posted at [www.KlamathCounty.org](http://www.KlamathCounty.org). Individuals can sign up to receive a free water delivery to fill their tanks. Individuals must report their dry well or well issue to the Water Resources Department in order to utilize this service.

A representative from the Oregon Water Resources Department will contact you to schedule an appointment to check your domestic well. Any well information you have, such as pump or well contractor maintenance records that you can provide will be beneficial.

The County will make periodic deliveries of water on a schedule to be determined by the County. Typically, the County will deliver sufficient water to fill the water tank(s) on approximately a weekly basis, but both the schedule and the amount of these deliveries are at the sole discretion of the County and may be changed without notice.

The service is currently anticipated to end October 31, 2021; however, the continuation of this service is dependent on resources and is a temporary emergency solution to provide time for the well owner to seek out a permanent water supply solution.

Be sure to read information above on "*Disinfection: Can I drink the water and what do I need to do to prevent contamination of the water?*" Water containers used for transport, storage, distribution lines,

and all components in contact with water should be properly disinfected to prevent contamination. Klamath County and partners provide no guarantees of potability and recommends bottled water for drinking and cooking.

## **Why should I report my dry well to the State?**

Reporting your well is necessary to be eligible for a free storage tank or for the free water delivery service. Reporting your dry well also helps scientists and water managers better understand changes in groundwater supplies and how those changes may be impacting people who rely on those supplies.

## **What can I do to reduce the likelihood of my well going dry?**

To preserve water in your well, consider eliminating outdoor water use. Outdoor watering typically accounts for the largest amount of a household's water use. This may help preserve water for critical uses such as drinking, cooking, bathing and sanitation. In addition to eliminating outdoor water use, consider water conservation strategies outlined below to further reduce use and stretch supplies.

## **How can I conserve water to reduce impacts on my well or to help hauled water last longer?**

These actions identify immediate actions you can take to conserve water. For more tips, visit: [www.drought.oregon.gov](http://www.drought.oregon.gov) and click on "[Learn More on What You Can Do to Use Water Wisely.](#)"

### *Outdoor Water Use*

- Avoid outdoor watering.

### *Indoor Use - Bathroom*

- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues, insects, and other similar waste in the trash rather than the toilet.
- Take short showers instead of baths. Turn on the water only to get wet and lather and then again to rinse off.
- Avoid letting the water run while brushing your teeth, washing your face, or shaving.
- Place a bucket in the shower to catch excess water for watering plants.

### *Indoor Use - Kitchen*

- Operate automatic dishwashers only when they are fully loaded. Use the "light wash" feature to use less water.
- Hand wash dishes by filling two containers—one with soapy water and the other with rinse water containing a small amount of chlorine bleach.
- Clean vegetables in a pan filled with water rather than running water from the tap.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator. Do not let the tap run while you are waiting for water to cool.
- Avoid wasting water waiting for it to get hot. Capture it for other uses such as plant watering or flushing, or heat water on the stove or in a microwave.
- Don't rinse dishes before placing them in the dishwasher, just remove large particles of food.
- Avoid using running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator or use the defrost setting on your microwave.

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### *Indoor Use - Laundry*

- Operate clothes washers only when they are fully loaded or set the water level for the size of your load.

## **Why are wells going dry or experiencing reduced yields this year in the Klamath Basin?**

We have seen wells in the off-project area and within the project area, experience issues this year.; however, the vast majority of wells experiencing challenges are in the on-project area. Domestic wells tend to be shallower than other wells and are more vulnerable to groundwater level declines. There are a number of conditions this year that collectively have likely contributed to domestic wells going dry. These conditions include: severe weather conditions including low precipitation and high temperatures resulting in reduced seasonal groundwater recharge; low water conditions that have resulted in less or no surface water being diverted and delivered through leaking irrigation canals that typically recharge groundwater; and increased groundwater pumping due to a lack of surface water supply.

## **Is there funding assistance to repair, replace or abandon my well?**

Klamath County, in coordination with several other stakeholders, have submitted a request to the Oregon Legislature's Emergency Board to request funding. Other potential funding sources are also being explored. If funding becomes available, all individuals who submitted the Dry Well Report Form will be notified.

- **Oregon Water Resources Department:** The Oregon Legislature approved House Bill 2145, which establishes a funding program for well abandonments and household water well repairs or replacements. Authorization for this program does not go into effect until 2022. Submit a Dry Well Report Form to be notified when funding is available. Contact: Bryn Hudson, [bryn.hudson@oregon.gov](mailto:bryn.hudson@oregon.gov) / (503) 302-7584
- **US Department of Agriculture Rural Development Single Family Housing Repair Loans & Grants:** <https://go.usa.gov/x6QaV> - Loans to low income homeowners of up to \$40,000 to repair or improve homes, including private water wells. Grants up to \$10,000 to low-income seniors (age 62 or older) to remove health and safety hazards. Contact: Brett Dixon, [bret.dixon@usda.gov](mailto:bret.dixon@usda.gov) / (541) 801-2681
- **Farm Service Agency Emergency Conservation Program:** <https://go.usa.gov/xFrmB> - This program provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers which may in some cases include replacing a well. Contact: Sarah Hanlon, [sarah.hanlon@usda.gov](mailto:sarah.hanlon@usda.gov) / (503) 404-1116
- **Rural Community Assistance Corporation:** May offer low interest Household Water Well System Loans ([www.rcac.org/lending/household-water-well-loans/](http://www.rcac.org/lending/household-water-well-loans/)) up to \$18,000 to construct, refurbish, or replace individual water well systems. Contact: Deborah Almazan, [dalmazan@rcac.org](mailto:dalmazan@rcac.org) / (725) 221-0474

## **How severe are the drought conditions this year?**

- This year started with low soil moisture, which exacerbated conditions including low streamflows.

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- Many locations in the state, including the Klamath Basin, have recorded all-time record low daily streamflows. The Williamson and Sprague Rivers have established new record low streamflows at daily and monthly time scales.
- Statewide, it was the second driest March-April-May since 1895 in terms of precipitation (worst since 1924, which was the number one ranking year). It was the driest March-April-May for Klamath County.
- Klamath Basin snowpack was well below long-term average (median) and melted out approximately three weeks early, driven by warm temperatures leading to rapid snowmelt.
- Most of Klamath County is considered to be in extreme drought or exceptional drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor; these are the most severe drought classifications under the U.S. Drought Monitor.
- Record setting heatwave in June contributed to second warmest June on record (2015 warmest)

### Website Resources:

- Klamath County: [www.KlamathCounty.org](http://www.KlamathCounty.org)
  - o Information on emergency water tanks, water delivery service, and water filling services.
- Oregon Water Resources Department: [www.oregon.gov/owrd](http://www.oregon.gov/owrd)
  - o Dry Well Report Form and Dry Well Resources: <https://go.usa.gov/xFbW3>
  - o Drought Resources: [Drought.Oregon.Gov](http://Drought.Oregon.Gov)