

# WRAC Water Supply & Drought Update

WR Statewide Drought Lead, Caroline Mellor

March 11, 2024

# Quick agenda

- 1** Goals for WRAC
- 2** Recap: Drought declaration and process
- 3** Water supply and drought conditions update
- 4** Next steps for drought

# Takeaways

- Water users should plan for a drier than normal year.
- Ecology is closing monitoring conditions and coordinating with partners between WSAC meetings.

# Recap: Existing Drought Declaration

July 2023, Ecology declared a drought emergency for 12 watersheds in parts of Skagit, Whatcom, Clallam, Kittitas, Yakima, Snohomish, Jefferson, Walla Walla, Columbia, Okanogan, Benton, and Klickitat counties.

This is currently in effect through June 30, 2024.

## Washington Drought Declaration Areas





# Drought Conditions

Drought conditions - two requirements:

1. **Hydrologic threshold** – An area is receiving, or is projected to receive, less than seventy-five percent of normal water supply.
2. **Hardship threshold** – Water users and the environment are or are expected to experience undue hardship.

WSAC advises on the hydrologic threshold.

See: [RCW 43.83B.405](#) and [WAC 173-166-050](#).

# Provides Ecology with the authority to:

Expedite emergency water transfer applications.

Establish a grant program to mitigate hardships to water users and the environment.



# Emergency response funding

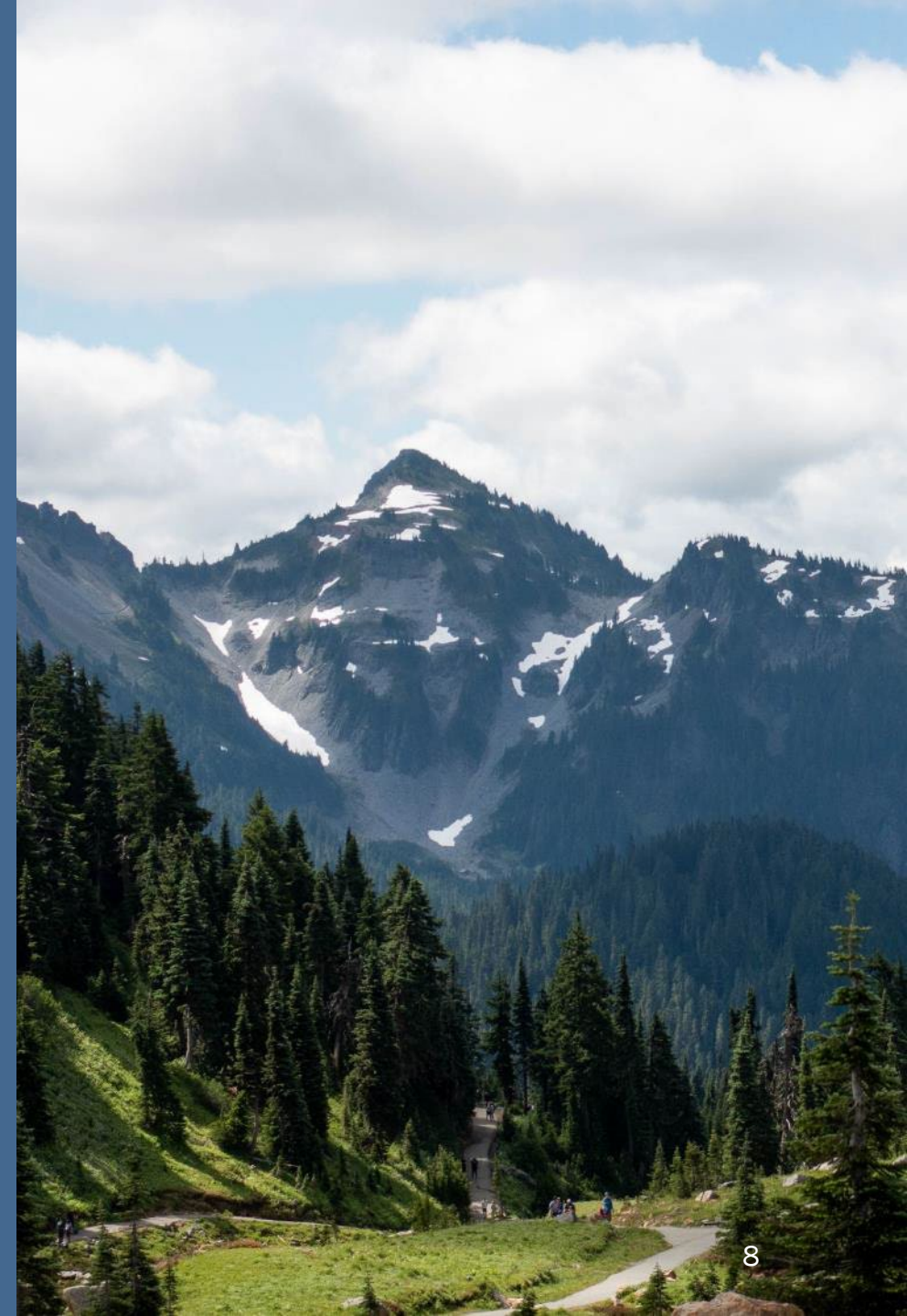
## Grants to governmental entities:

- Federally recognized tribes.
- Counties, cities, and towns.
- Water and sewer districts formed under chapter 57.02 RCW.
- Public utility districts formed under chapter 54.04 RCW.
- Port districts formed under chapter 53.04 RCW.
- Conservation districts formed under chapter 89.08 RCW.
- Irrigation districts formed under chapter 87.03 RCW.
- Watershed management partnerships formed under RCW 39.34.200.

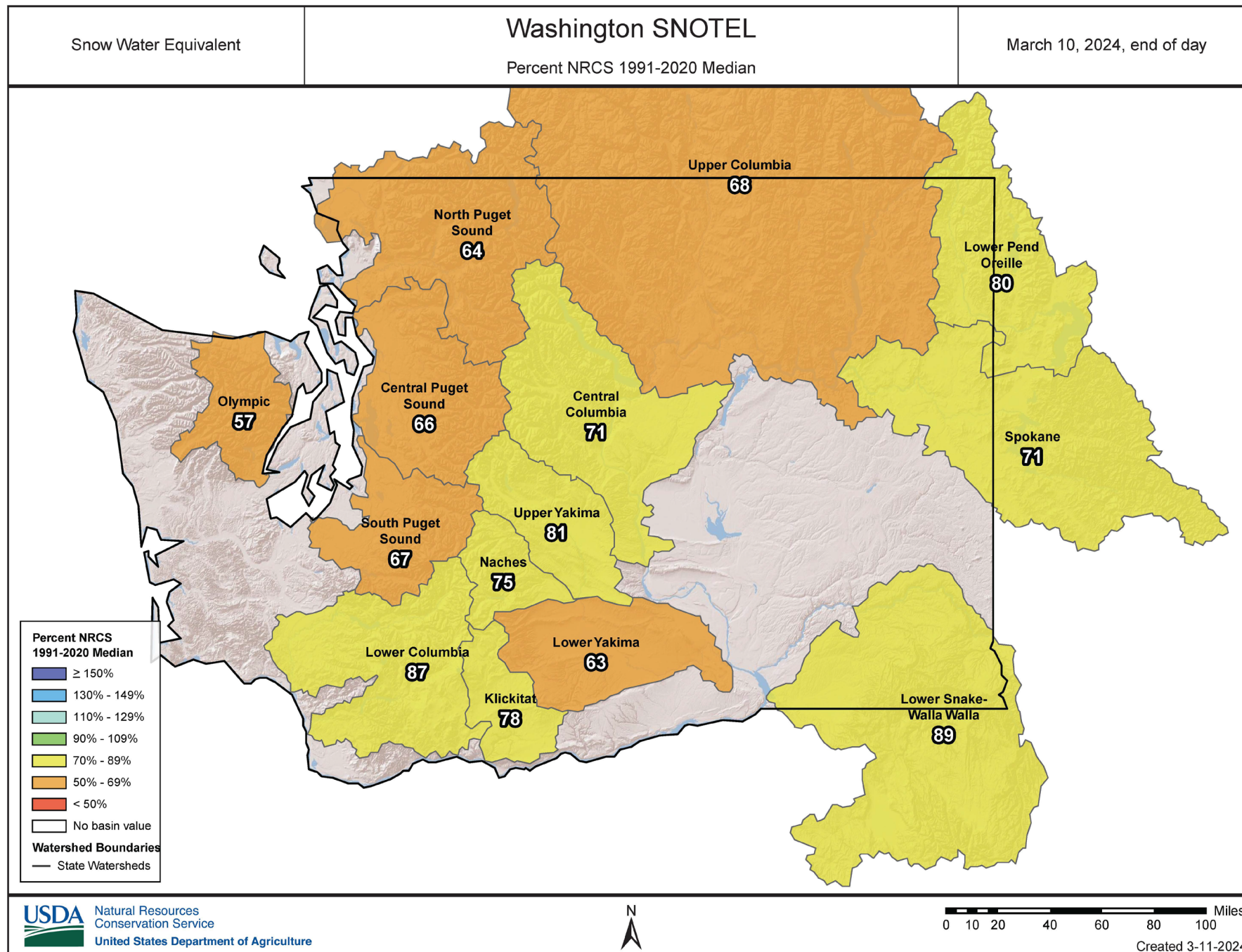
## Interagency agreements to state agencies



# Drought Conditions Update







# Snowpack Conditions

Statewide Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) = 72% today.

This date in 2015, Statewide SWE was 26% and the Olympics were at 5%.

(Source: NRCS).

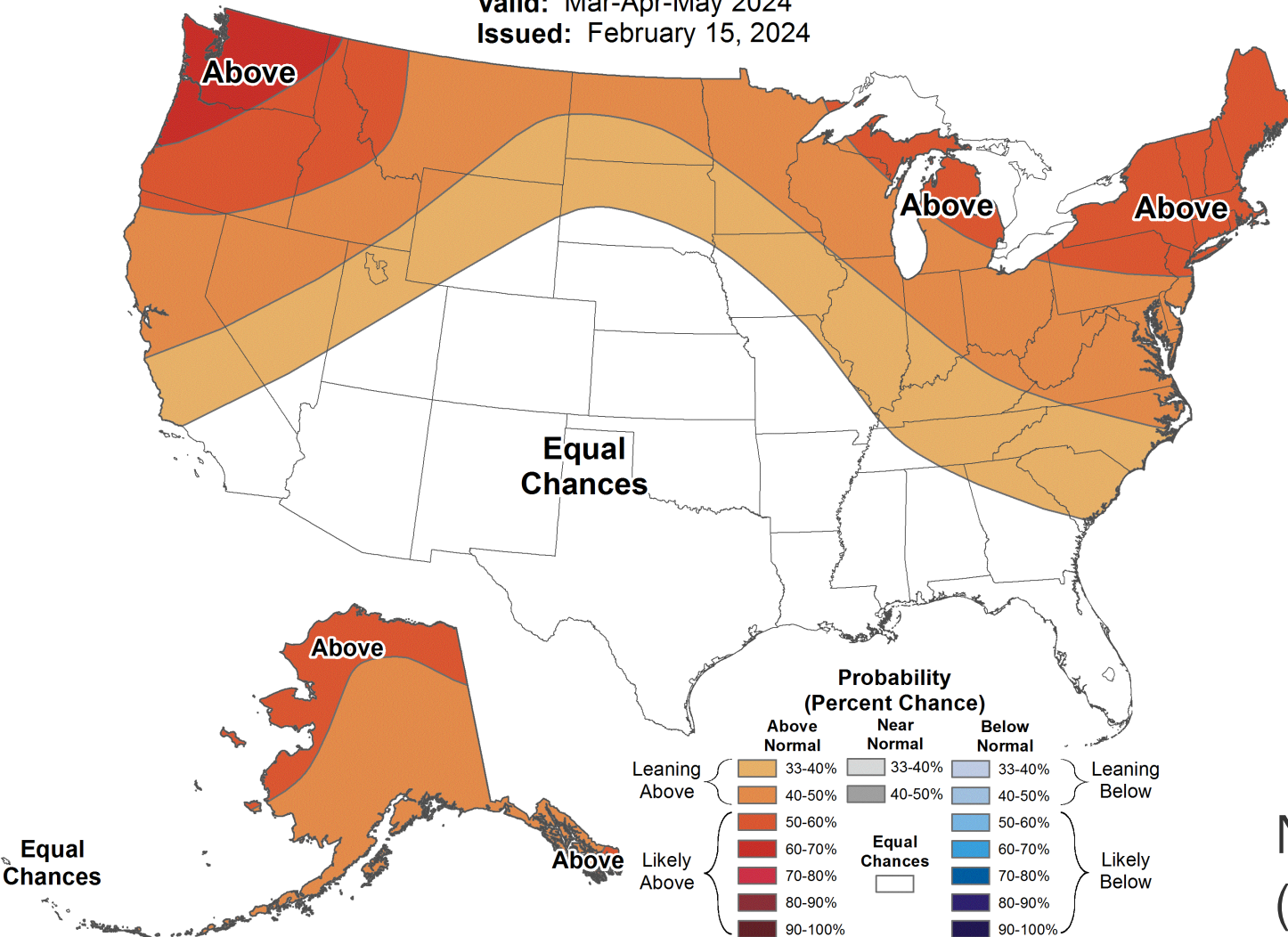
# Conditions – Predictions



## Seasonal Temperature Outlook



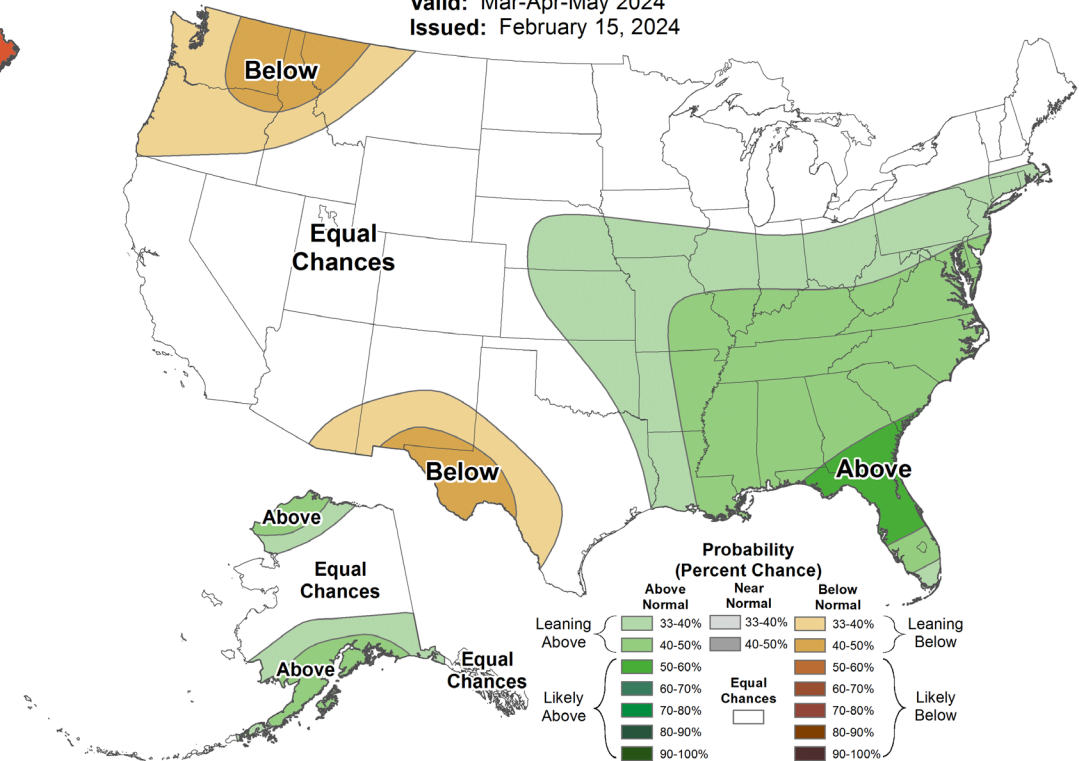
Valid: Mar-Apr-May 2024  
Issued: February 15, 2024



## Seasonal Precipitation Outlook



Valid: Mar-Apr-May 2024  
Issued: February 15, 2024



Next Update: March 21, 2024  
([Climate Prediction Center, NOAA](#))

# Drought Conditions Updates

- Snowpack remains below normal for much of the snow. The Olympics is the area most of concern for snowpack drought, with other areas to watch.
- With current deficits, even if we were to have above average precipitation, snowpack in some basins is still expected to be below normal.



# Drought Conditions Updates

- The next 10 days may be drier and warmer than normal for March  
(Source: NW River Forecast Center).
- The end of winter into spring is likely to be warm, and perhaps a bit dry, relative to normal for the season.



# Drought Conditions Updates

- Water year 2024 has had above normal temperatures and normal to below normal precipitation for a majority of WA  
(Source: [Office of the WA State Climatologist](#)).
- Water supply forecasts are a mix of normal to below normal, with some areas quite low compared to their historical record.

# Next Steps for drought

- Communications – [WSAC website](#) updated:
  - Meeting materials
  - Presentation recording
- Next WSAC meeting
  - March 27, 2024

# Takeaways

- Water users should plan for a drier than normal year.
- Ecology is closing monitoring conditions and coordinating with partners between WSAC meetings.



# Questions?





# Thank you

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