



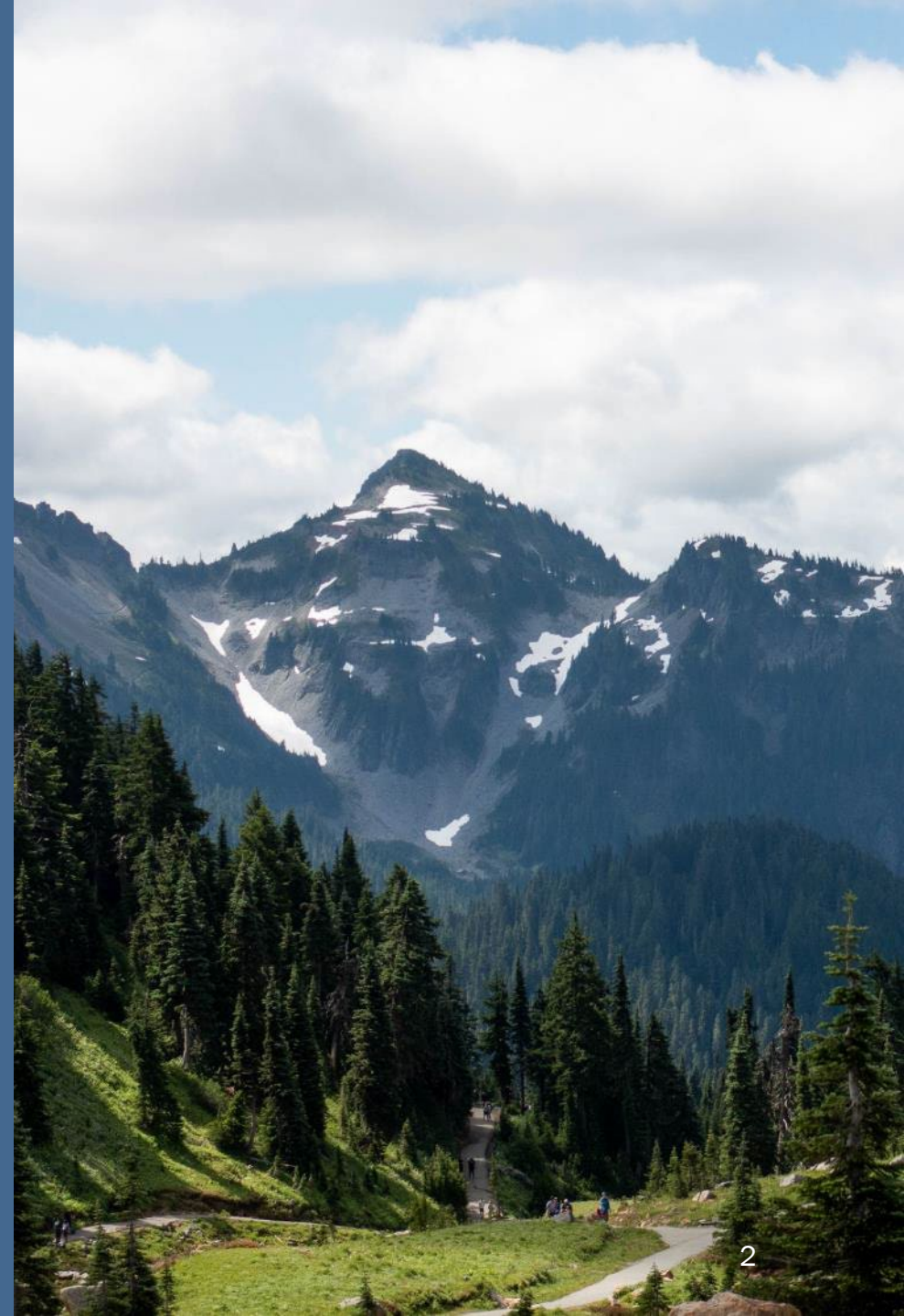
DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Water Supply Availability Committee

March 27, 2024



Recording!



Agenda



Time	Agenda item	Responsible
10:00a.m.	Welcome and agenda Drought processes and general conditions	Caroline Mellor, Ecology
10:10 a.m.	Regional Climate Setting / ENSO	Karin Bumbaco & Nick Bond, OWSC
10:25 a.m.	Mountain Conditions	Matt Warbritton, NRCS
10:40 a.m.	Streamflow and Groundwater	Andy Long, USGS
10:55 a.m.	Water Supply Forecasts	Robin Fox, NWRFC
11:10 a.m.	Yakima Project	Chris Lynch, BOR
11:20 a.m.	BREAK (5-minute)	
11:25 a.m.	Discussion: Has the hydrologic threshold for drought conditions been met or is forecasted to be met for additional geographic areas?	All presenters/ Committee members
11:40 a.m.	Discussion: What conditions and concerns do folks see on the ground?	All participants
11:55 a.m.	Wrap-up and next steps	Caroline Mellor, Ecology

Committee Role

WSAC provides an important consultative and advisory role to Ecology related to:

- Current and forecasted water supply conditions;
- Whether the hydrologic drought threshold has been met or is likely to be met.

Meeting Objectives

- Share pertinent info and assess water supply conditions in Washington.
- Discuss if the hydrologic threshold for drought conditions has been met or is forecasted to be met for additional geographic areas beyond the areas in the [existing drought declaration](#).

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.

This Committee advises on the hydrologic threshold.

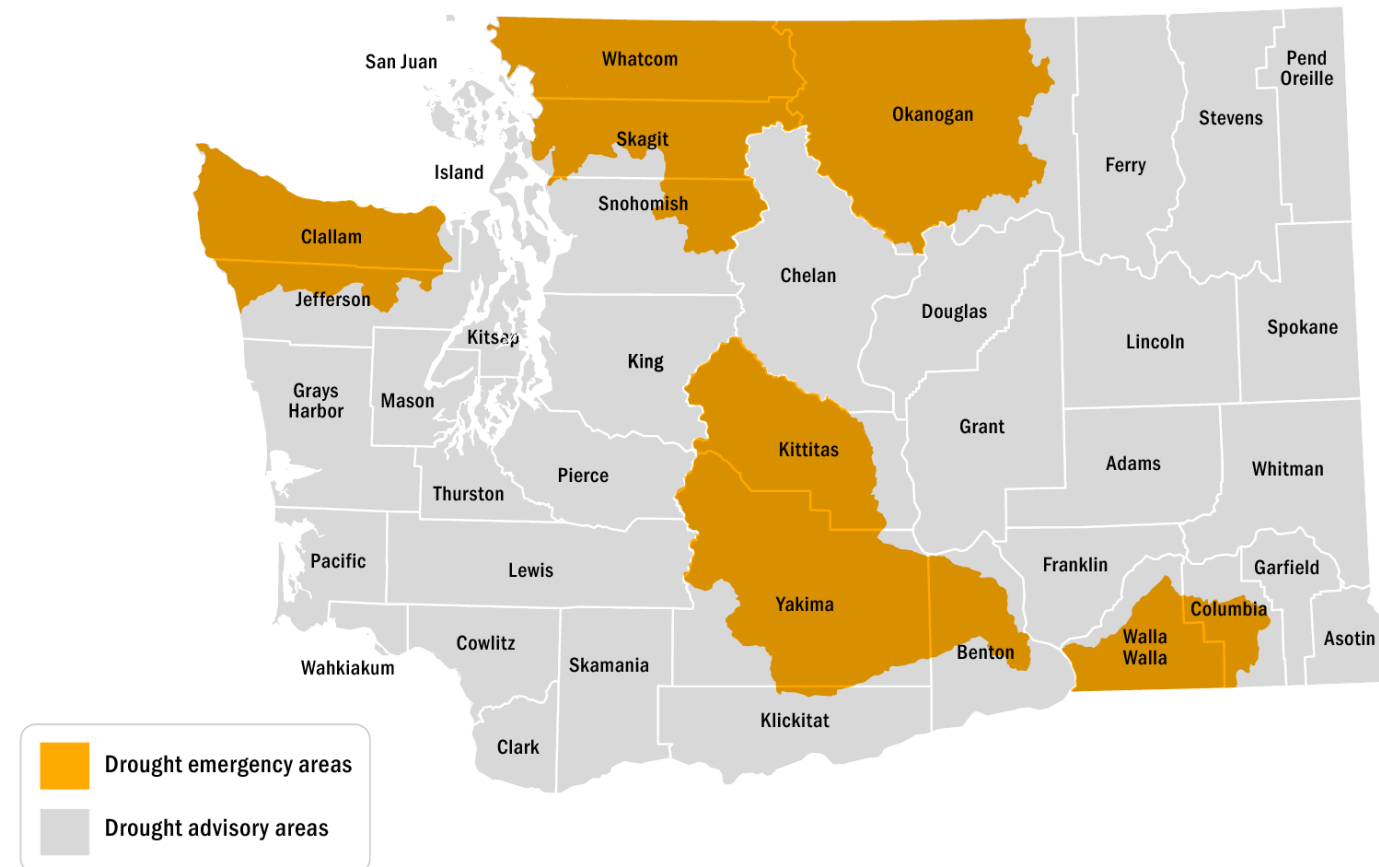
See: [RCW 43.83B.405](#) and [WAC 173-166-050](#).

Existing Drought Declaration Status

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



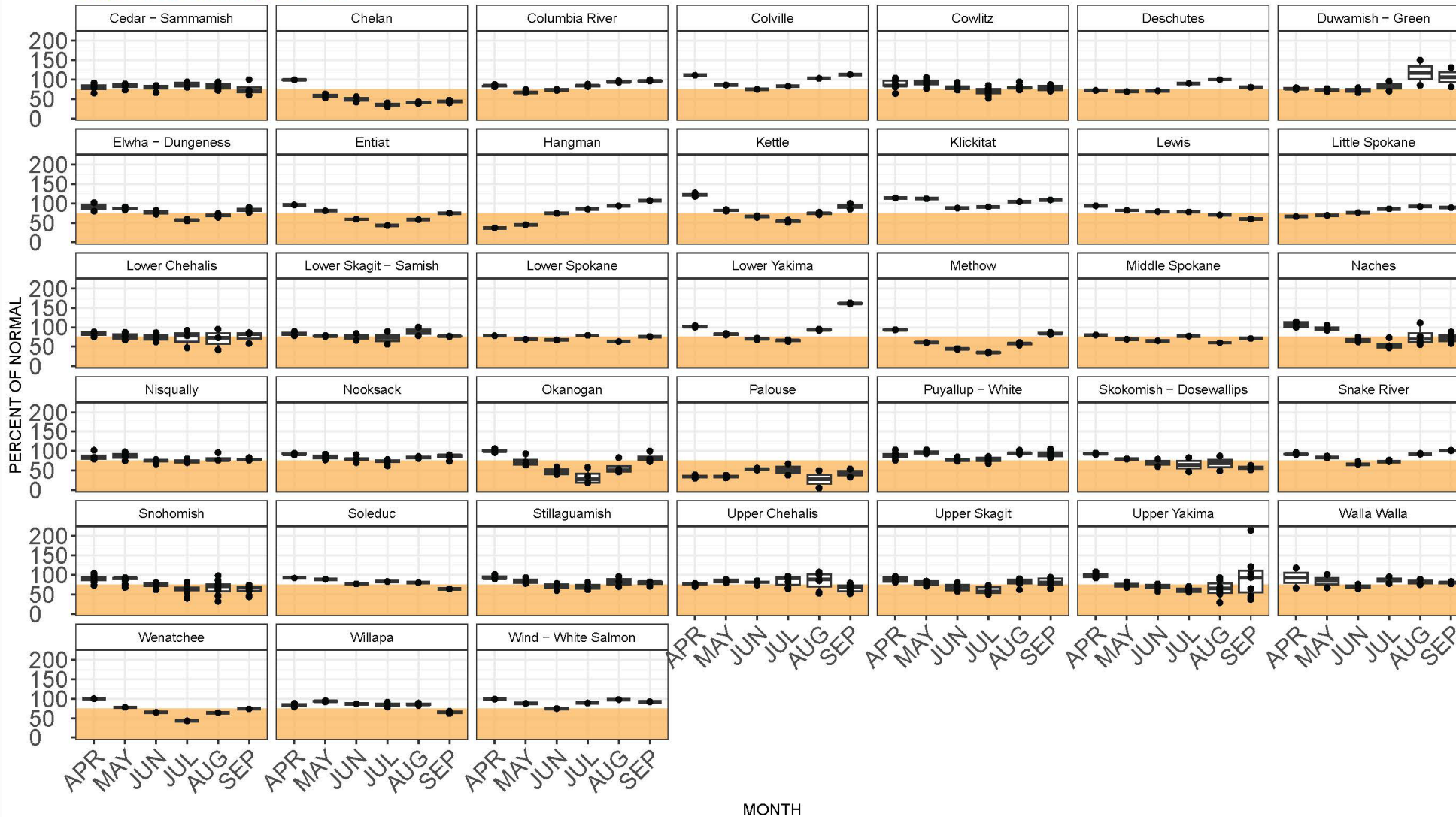
Drought conditions - Concerns

- With current deficits, even if we were to have above average precipitation this Spring, snowpack in many basins is still expected to be below normal.
- We are already seeing streamflow drop below normal in some areas.
- Upcoming forecasts are concerning for our snowpack and the potential for continued early snowpack loss with existing snowpack deficits.
- When water is available is impacted by snowpack drought in some watersheds, as earlier melts lead to less water in streams when needed for fish, people and irrigators.

Streamflow forecasts by basin

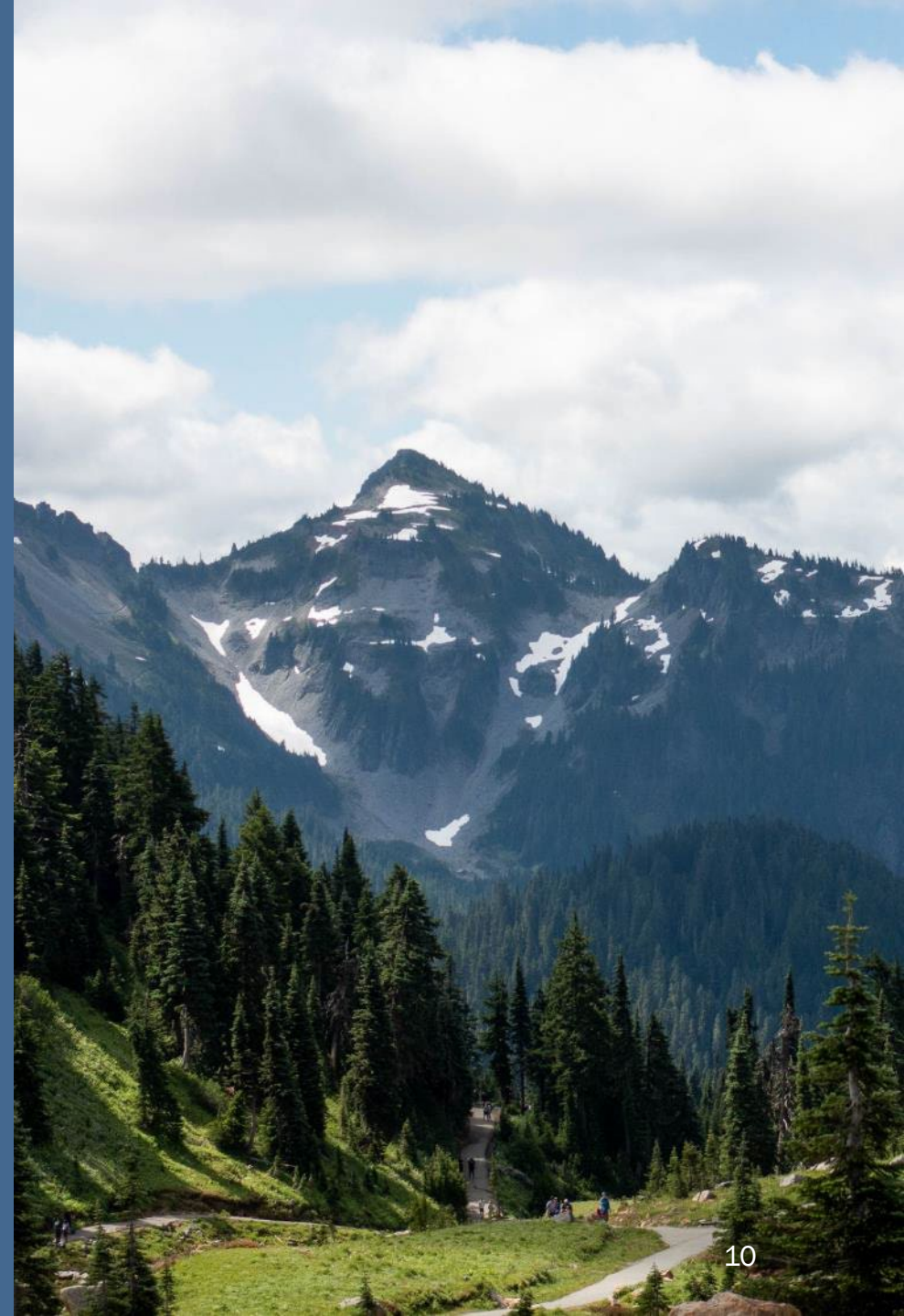
April – September Monthly Streamflow Forecasts, Washington | Forecast Date: 2024-03-25 | station count=125

Orange = Below State Drought Threshold





Presenters



For Presenters/ Committee members:

Has the hydrologic threshold for drought conditions been met, or is forecasted to be met, for additional geographic areas, beyond the areas in the existing drought declaration?

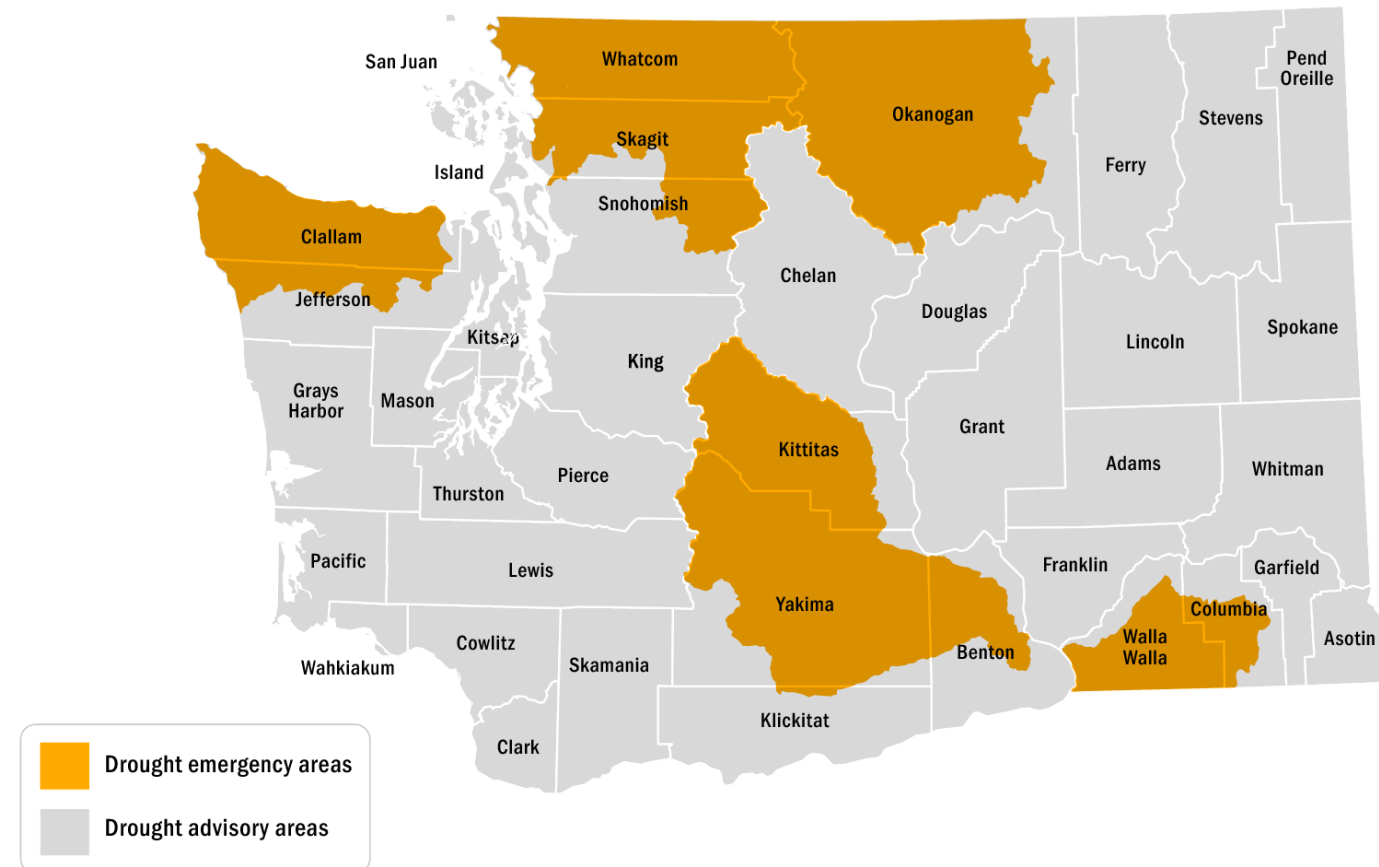
Discussion Question

Existing Drought Declaration Status

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

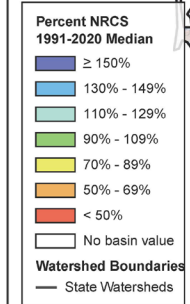
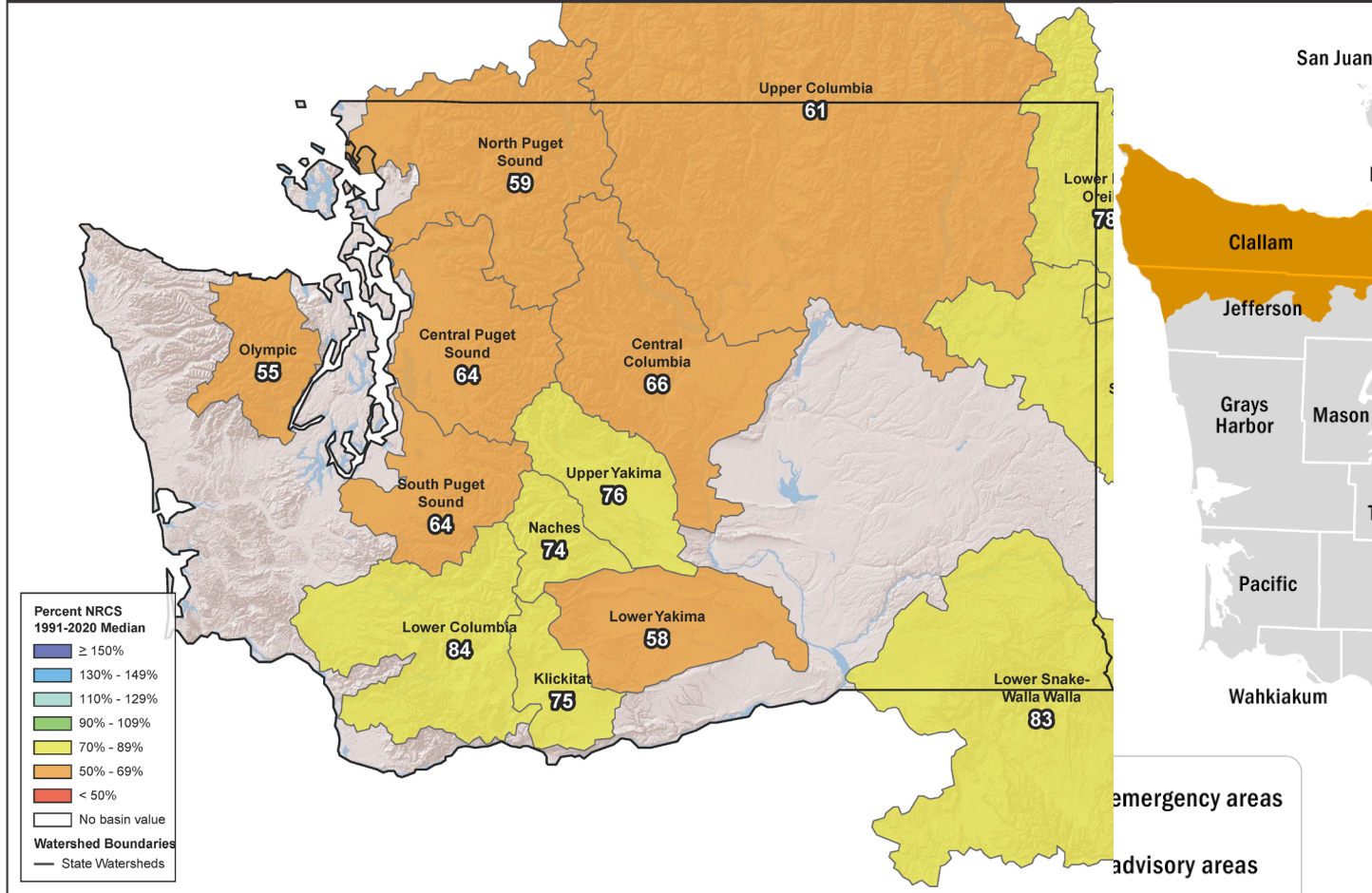


Snowpack Map Vs. Existing Drought Declaration

Snow Water Equivalent

Washington SNOTEL
Percent NRCS 1991-2020 Median

March 26, 2024, end of day



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service United States Department of Agriculture

0 10 20 40 60 80 100 Miles

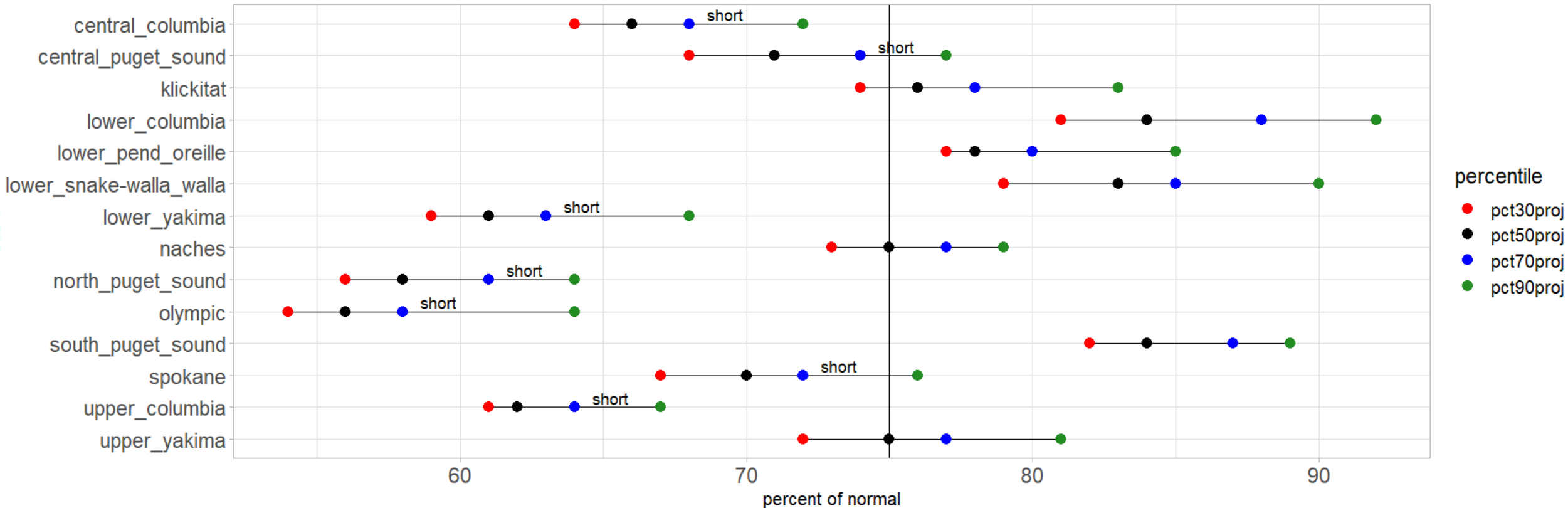
Created 3-27-2024

Snowpack as Snow Water Equivalent (SWE); Statewide 68%. (Source: NRCS).

Snowpack as Snow Water Equivalent

basin SWE projections to April 1 at low (30th percentile),
medium (50th percentile), high (70th percentile), and exceeds (90th percentile)
levels of accumulation

NRCS Data | query date: 03-25

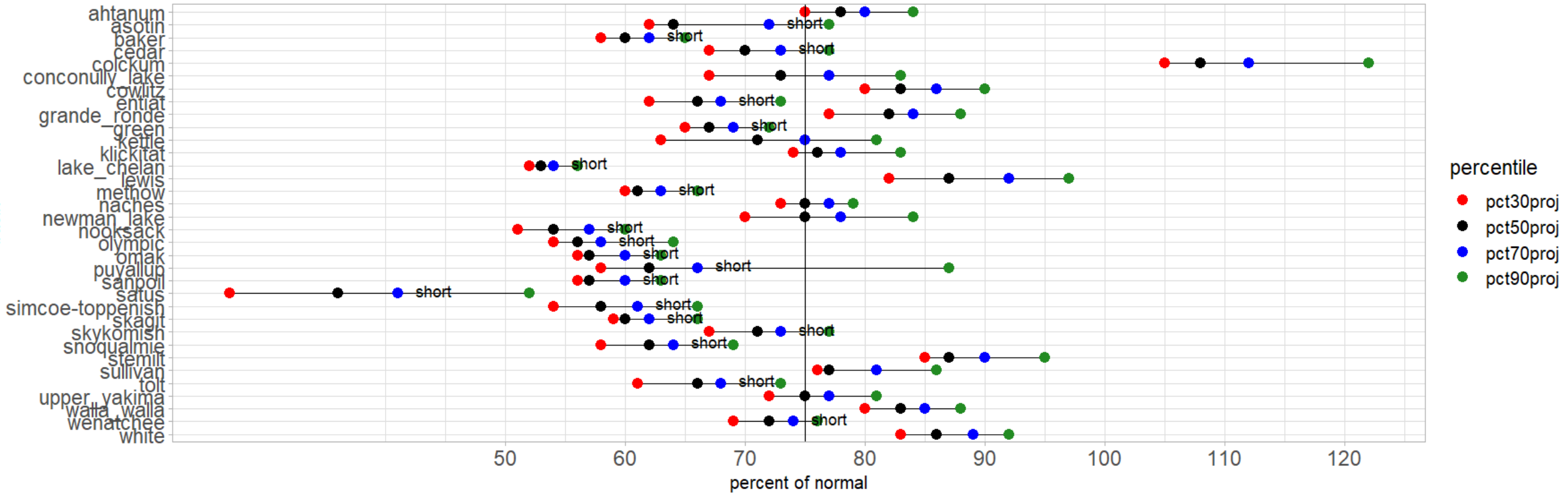


'short' means that even with much better (70th percentile) than normal accumulation the basin SWE average will be below 75 percent of normal

Drought Conditions Updates

basin SWE projections to April 1 at low (30th percentile), medium (50th percentile), high (70th percentile), and exceeds (90th percentile) levels of accumulation

NRCS Data | query date: 03-25



'short' means that even with much better (70th percentile) than normal accumulation the basin SWE average will be below 75 of normal

Discussion Question

For all meeting attendees:

What conditions and water supply concerns are folks seeing on the ground?

Next Steps

- Communications – [WSAC website](#) updated:
 - [Meeting materials](#)
 - Presentation recording
 - Updated [statewide conditions page](#).
- Next meeting
 - Tentatively April 24, 2024
- Ecology is closing monitoring conditions and coordinating with partners between meetings.
- Water users should plan for a drier than normal year. The magnitude of impacts is different for different areas of the state.



Thank you

Contact: Committee Chair
Caroline Mellor
Statewide Drought Lead
Caroline.Mellor@ecy.wa.gov