

Okanogan CD Drought Preparedness Plan – December Planning Meeting
January 12th, 2026 | 1:00pm – 3:00 pm

SUMMARY NOTES

Meeting started at 1:00 pm

Introductions: Attendees introduce themselves & Affiliation.

Attendees:

Jack Owen (Okanogan CD)
Jordana Ellis (Okanogan CD)
Rosalie Powell (Okanogan CD)
Emmy Engle (Okanogan CD)
Brent Paul (TU)
Cindy Fabbri (WSU, WRC)
Greg McLaughlin (WWT)
Celeste Acord (NRCS)
Hanna Tomlinson (NRCS)
Elianna Rosenthal (DFW)
Sandra Streiby (MWC)
Tessa Reeder (WWT)
Jon Yoder (WSU, WRC)
Stuart Crane (YN)

Community Profiles:

Jack Shared the mismatches of census data and the sub regions. Jack identified 5 areas where communities are misrepresented by the census data. Sandra raised concern with the Chiliwist Valley and how they were severely impacted by the Carlton Complex fires.

Would this misrepresentation cost any single community on justifying projects for any vulnerable communities? Jon advised that if they can't be resolved, the most important thing to do is to be clear about the discrepancy. We could reclassify the results to be as accurate as we can. This classification can be problematic just due to the nature of assigning categories to things.

Jordana proposed to keep the subregions where they are and to add a disclaimer to the census data presented in the plan.

Sandra agreed that conclusions drawn about projects can point to this justification/disclaimer as well.

The group reached consensus on the community profile data analysis: To keep 'as is' and add disclaimer about census data

Survey:

Cindy provided a quick overview of who has taken the survey.

- Respondents to the English survey: 169
- Respondents to the Spanish survey: 1
- Respondents to the purveyor survey: 25

Rosalie is drafting a bilingual advertisement that will be promoted on social media towards the Columbia Basin sub-region to help gather survey data. The ad will likely be live Jan 13.

Celeste thinks that not putting logos on the ad would seem like the CD is "hiding" the partners from the public and wouldn't look as good.

Sandra noted how important it is for the ad to feel safe, and mention that the survey is anonymous.

Hanna mentioned anytime there is a drought, the Whitestone Irrigation District is under threat of shutting down. Also, Spectacle Lake is a recreation destination. Whitestone RD conveyance system improvements are mentioned as a project in the Okanogan Watershed Plan. Jack will review literature to see if there are any other projects identified in the basin

Jon added that this survey was not intended to provide a population-weighted representation of the county; this gives us flexibility to target outreach to areas which we haven't heard back from.

Elli asked if we are targeting irrigation district shareholders. It would be good to reach out and ask irrigation districts to share the survey with their shareholders. Mailers would be nice too, but they can be expensive. The irrigation districts might have an email list that could be easy to utilize.

Risk Assessment:

Sectors that there are still no responses from:

- Fire districts
- Hydropower
- Industry (Packing sheds)

- Utility (stormwater, treatment)
- Golf? (We don't know. Most golf courses get their water from irrigation districts.)

Do utilities have the option to choose both water treatment and drinking water? There is a second category to specify. Sandra assumed that most municipalities do all 3, so they just chose the first option. There is no stormwater treatment in Okanogan County.

Disclaimer, the data is preliminary; Jon would like some time to update the slides before they are shared. A few of them didn't translate well to charts. Jon can upload the preliminary results once they are ready.

General responses:

Most respondents are homeowners. Most are exempt well owners. Most have no secondary source. For the primary source, almost as many don't know what it is as those who have exempt domestic wells. Aquatic wildlife impacts and wildfire damage were the highest reported impacts.

Most preliminary data is looking good, no questions were obviously misunderstood by respondents.

Jordana asked if we can discuss project development before we have the risk assessment? We are already asking this in the survey. We need to be careful about interpreting survey data (which may say that there are little impacts on water storage). The data is not representative of the scale of the impacts OR the scale of those affected. With this in mind, yes.

Is the data shaping up to match our intuition on risks and impacts? Jon mentioned to take the survey results with a 'grain of salt' since they are incomplete. They will also need to be interpreted by all of us who understand the context in which they were answered. There are varying ways to interpret this data.

Discuss timeline:

We are behind schedule, but not far off. The full draft for the risk assessment is due in September. Cindy is meeting with Jon this week to hopefully get started on it in Q1.

Project ID:

Some surveys generated responses with project suggestions. Jordana read through all the responses to this question.

Craig mentioned a project that has been designed to increase storage capacity of Conconully Lake by removing septic systems. This project was Identified in the Okanogan Watershed Plan

Eliana and Jack are working on identifying drought relevant projects submitted to WDFW for HPAs.

Lee Webster (Brewster) has an aquifer storage project in the works among others.

Public meeting round 2

Jordana is proposing another round of community meetings. This time there should be less meetings with a stronger outreach push. She proposes one on the Methow side and one or two on the Okanogan/Reservation side.

The group agrees that there should be at least one meeting in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys.

Okanogan CD staff will be discussing outreach planning for Drought in the near future to determine staff capacity and budget for public meetings.

What are the purposes of round 2 public meetings? Their purpose will be **to share preliminary results of the survey and collect ideas for projects**. Early to mid-summer would be better. Sandra suggests not to have the meeting during the busy startup season. Summer may be the best time to host round 2.

Upcoming outreach opportunities & ideas:

- Feb 11 is the Washington Hort meeting at the Agriplex. Okanogan CD will have a booth and will promote the LDPP.
- May Day in Oroville.
- March 5th in the Okanogan County weed certification meeting.
- Greg has experience hosting water rights workshops, lots of people were interested in looking up and learning about their water rights.

Action Items:

Rosalie will create and promote a bilingual advertisement for the Columbia Basin Sub-region.

WSU team will create figures to represent survey data.

Jack and Elli will look into WDFW data for projects related to drought.

Jack will look into drought mitigation projects around Whitestone Lake area.

Okanogan CD staff will determine capacity for round 2 of public meetings.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:33pm