

Water Supply Outlook

Frequently Asked Questions



April 2026

Is Medford currently in a drought?

On April 1, 2026, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners declared a drought in Jackson County, sending a letter to the state Office of Emergency Management requesting an emergency drought declaration by the Governor. On April 24, 2026, Governor Kotek declared a drought emergency in Jackson County. View the Executive Order [here](#).

The Governor or the Oregon Water Resources Commission can also direct state agencies and political subdivisions to implement a water conservation plan or water curtailment plan. Factors for declaring drought include precipitation, temperature, streamflow, reservoir levels, and soil moisture.

What is Medford Water doing to prepare for drought?

Drought planning is part of responsible water resource management; our [Source Water Protection Plan](#) and [Water Management and Conservation Plan](#) are guiding frameworks to protect our water resources from potential risks that could compromise not only water quality, but also availability. Additionally, Medford Water has plans and monitoring programs in place to help us continue serving our community when dry conditions develop. We regularly monitor the water quantity and quality of our sources, as well as the groundwater throughout the Big Butte Springs, the water upstream of our intake, and throughout the upper Rogue River Watershed. This helps ensure that we are on top of any changes or trends. We also prioritize responsible use of water, promoting water efficiency practices throughout our community by offering several programs, rebates, and resources to the community to assist in maximizing water use and minimizing water waste.

Where does the drinking water supplied by Medford Water come from?

Medford Water's principal source of water for the entire year is [Big Butte Springs](#), located about 30 miles northeast of Medford, Oregon, between Mt. McLoughlin and the town of Butte Falls. This pristine water begins as snowmelt on Mt. McLoughlin and percolates through volcanic soils to emerge again as springs. The [Rogue River](#) is treated at the Robert A. Duff Water Treatment Plant and used as a supplemental drinking water source during the peak-use months of May through September when water usage triples in our area due to landscape irrigation.

How much water do our communities use?

The typical total use of all customers we serve—within Medford, White City, Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Talent, Ashland, and the Elk City Water District—averages 15 Million Gallons Per Day (MGD) in the winter, and 45 MGD in the summer.

During the peak water demand months, demand is met through a combination of both sources; for example, to meet 45 (MGD) demand, 19 MGD might come from Big Butte Springs, and 26 MGD from the Rogue River via the

For more information on our source management, area water conditions, and what you can do to help, go to:

medfordwater.org/watersupply

Ask Questions:

541-774-2430

drinking water treatment plant. 26 MGD from the river represents 2% of overall river flows; the total flow in the river ranges from 1500-2500 cubic feet per second (cfs) throughout the year.

Our ability to supply water from two different sources helps to not only maintain reliability, but also redundancy if one source were to diminish. Efficient management of these sources helps us to continue serving our community when dry conditions develop.

How susceptible are these sources to dry years?

Fortunately, it takes several years of compounded drought to impact these sources. Wet spring weather can help to recharge streams and improve flows.

Does Medford have enough water for this year?

Our sources of supply from Big Butte Springs and the Rogue River (as of April 2026) are sufficient to meet the needs of the communities we serve, and we do not anticipate having to implement mandatory curtailment measures.

However, water is a finite resource, and we urge all water users to be mindful of their usage as we go into the summer season.

How much water is available from Medford Water's sources?

The capacity of Big Butte Springs fluctuates, depending on the year, from 25 MGD to 35 MGD; the maximum withdrawal from the Springs, limited by the capacity of the transmission facilities and water rights, is approximately 25 MGD.

Current permits allow the use of up to 65 MGD, which is equal to approximately 100 cfs of water from the Rogue River. We recently expanded the treatment capability of the Robert A. Duff Water Treatment Plant from 45 MGD to 65 MGD so that the capacity is available to meet the future needs of our growing community. The total Rogue River flow ranges from 1500-2500 cfs throughout the year.

Is drought unusual for Southern Oregon?

Historical drought conditions (and water surplus) have been recorded in Southern Oregon since the late 19th century, creating abnormally dry conditions and concerns of water availability in the valley. The reality is that water supplies are becoming more stressed each year as drought is occurring more frequently. It is important that we remember the delicate balance between human activities and the region's natural environment, and essential for our communities to work together to find ways to use the water we have as efficiently as possible.

What is the status of the snowpack in the mountains, precipitation in the watershed, and springflow, and how can I regularly check them?

As of early April, precipitation on the Big Butte Springs Watershed is below normal, and warmer than normal temperatures in late 2025 produced rain instead of snow in the mountains, resulting in below average snowpack for this time of year. Big Butte Springs springflow is below this time last year as well as the 30-year average, and Rogue River streamflow is low for this time of year, though these levels can bounce back if we get some

rain. You can find our supply status information on our new Water Supply Outlook Page at medfordwater.org/watersupply.

What is the status of reservoirs in the Rogue Basin?

As of late April 2026, Willow Lake is 80% full and is slowly filling, but the rain in the forecast will help to get this reservoir filled by the beginning of the irrigation season. Fortunately, irrigation district reservoir levels in the Rogue Basin have a good amount of carryover from last season. Lost Creek Lake and Applegate Lake are also at expected levels for this time of year.

Are pools allowed during drought conditions? What about car washing?

Yes, pools are allowed during dry conditions (though during periods of emergency/mandatory curtailment, the *refilling* of pools may be prohibited). It is recommended that pools be covered to reduce evaporation during extreme heat. This will be your ultimate tool for reducing water this summer.

Using a commercial car wash typically uses less water than washing your car at home with a running hose, as most recycle water. If you do want to wash your car at home, be sure to turn off your hose when you are not using it.

How do I report someone wasting water?

Call us at (541) 774-2430 and let us know the address, and we will get in touch with them.

How can customers measure their household water usage?

Take advantage of your online Watersmart account portal to track your water usage, check for leaks, and set high usage/leak alerts by logging in at services.medfordwater.org. If you need help, view our [Step By Step Guide to Watersmart Features](#) or call us at 541-774-2430.

How can customers reduce their water usage?

In our area, water usage triples during the summer months largely due to the increase in lawn and landscape watering. Love your water by making conservation a part of your daily life to help us to preserve essential water resources. Start with the following tips:

- **Stop leaks.** Check all water-using appliances, equipment, and other devices for leaks. Running toilets, steady faucet drips, and outdoor sprinkler systems are common sources of leaks.
- **Provide only the water plants need.** Adjust your irrigation controller routinely to make sure you are not overwatering. Once the watering season begins (generally sometime in May), go to medfordwater.org/infoline to learn exactly how much water you need to apply each week based on current local weather trends. Better yet, install a WaterSense labeled smart irrigation controller; we even offer a rebate!
- **Plant the right plants.** Use low-water and drought resistant grass, plants, shrubs, and trees plants that are appropriate for our climate. Our water-wise gardening website (medfordsaveswater.org) highlights water-wise gardening concepts tailored to the

climate of the Rogue Valley and includes hundreds of diverse photos providing a wide variety of attractive examples.

- **Schedule a Free Sprinkler Survey.** Medford Water offers free comprehensive sprinkler system evaluations to help you use water efficiently in your landscape. Call 541-774-2438 to schedule a survey.
- **Replace old toilets.** The major water user inside the home is toilet flushing. If your home was built before 1992 and you haven't replaced your toilets recently, you could benefit from installing a WaterSense labeled model that uses 1.28 gallons or less per flush. We have a Toilet Rebate Program as well!
- **Install WaterSense labeled faucet aerators and showerheads.** WaterSense labeled products use at least 20% less water than standard models, while providing equal or superior performance.

Find out more about stopping leaks, our rebate programs, and how you can conserve water this summer at [medfordwater.org/waterefficiency](https://www.medfordwater.org/waterefficiency) or by calling 541-774-2438.