

TO: Public Works Committee  
FROM: Carrie Gillum, Senior Water Resources Specialist  
DATE: May 21, 2026  
SUBJECT: 2026 Drought Briefing

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1) Recommended Action:

No action requested, this is informational only.

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2) Background:

Each year, the Water Resources & Sustainability Department (WRS) completes a drought assessment for the city. The assessment reviews local conditions and uses state and national climate datasets to forecast drought severity during the peak water-demand season. For summer 2026, models indicate above-average temperatures and below-average rainfall in the region. The Washington Department of Ecology has also issued a statewide drought declaration for the fourth year in a row.

As in prior years, WRS recommends implementing Stage 1 of the city's Water Shortage Response Plan (WSRP), the lowest stage. The WSRP includes triggers that can escalate response actions through Stage 4 (Emergency Curtailment). During the peak water demand season (generally July 1–September 15), WRS monitors daily water production and consumption. Due to drier-than-normal conditions this year, monitoring will begin May 18.

If conditions indicate a need to reduce water use, the city's greatest near-term impact is likely to come from temporarily limiting irrigation at parks, facilities, and rights-of-way. Staff will provide an overview of current conditions, WSRP stages, and the monitoring conducted throughout the peak demand period.

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3) Policy Support:

- City of Tumwater Water Shortage Response Plan – 2019 Update
  - WAC 246-290-100 (Water System Plan)
  - Tumwater Municipal Code, 13.04.170
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4) Alternatives:

None, no action required

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5) Fiscal Notes:

None, no action required.

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6) Attachments:

- A. 2026 Drought Assessment Memo
- B. 2019 Water Shortage Response Plan