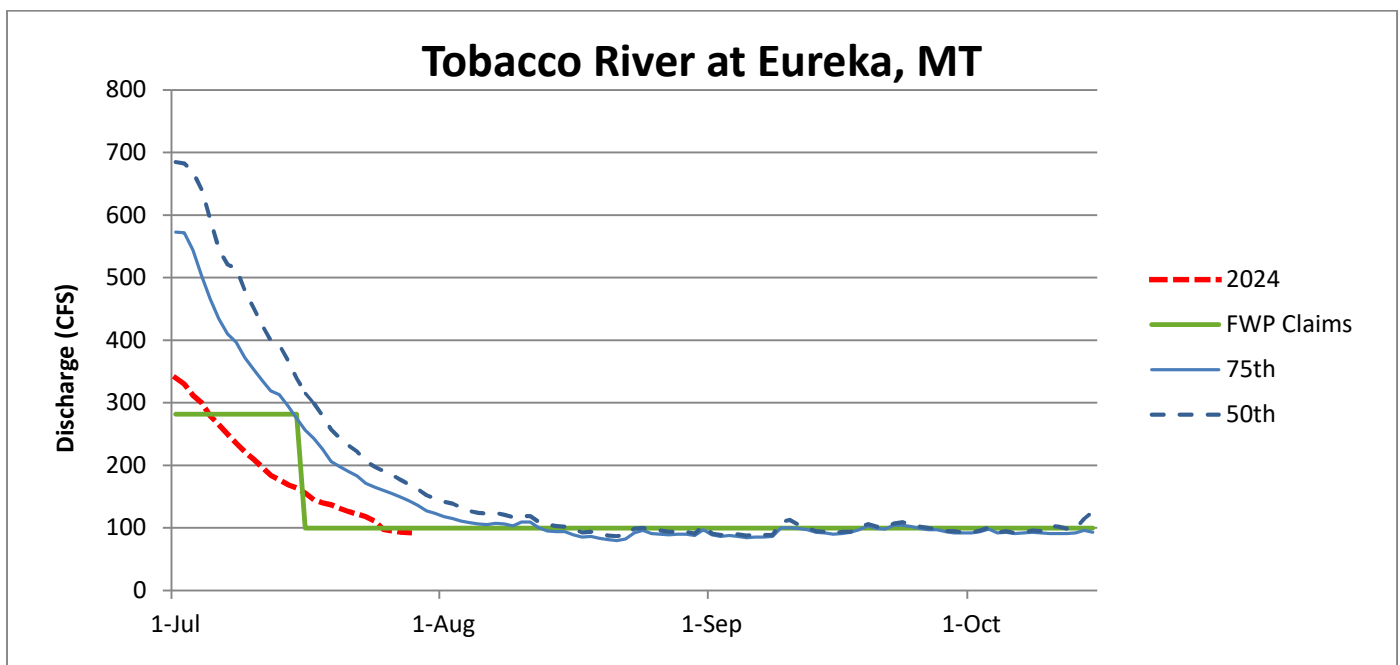




MEMORANDUM

To: Bill Schenk, Adam Strainer
C: Jay Pravecek, Lee Anderson, Mike Hensler, Stephen Begley, Andy Brummond
From: Amy Groen, FWP Water Program
Brian Stephens, Kootenai Fisheries Management Biologist
Date: July 31, 2024
Subject: Tobacco River – Call on Junior Water Rights

Fisheries and Water Program staff have monitored flows on the Tobacco River and consulted on river conditions and potential merits of placing call on junior water users. We jointly recommend that FWP make call on the Tobacco River as streamflow on that source has dropped below FWP’s instream flow right. The hydrograph below shows that flow is below the 75th percentile exceedance flow (level met or exceeded 3 out of 4 years) and the median for the USGS gage in Eureka, MT. We anticipate seasonal flow trends to continue throughout the remainder of the year; thus, it is highly likely that flows will not exceed 100 cfs until later in the year.

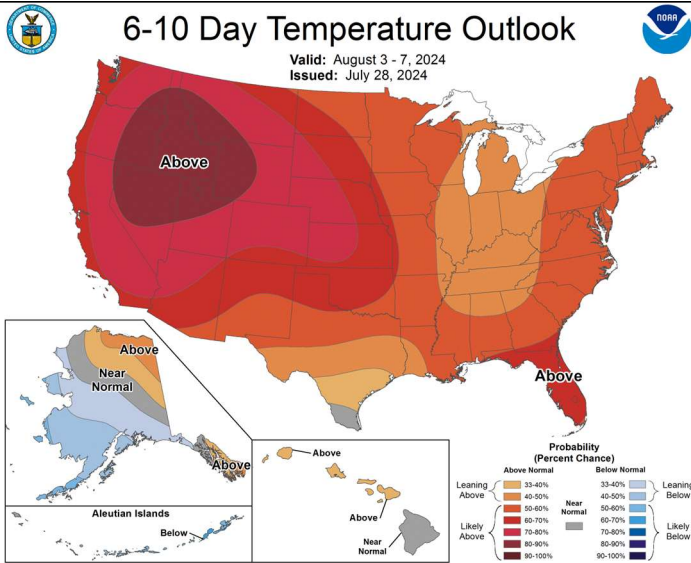


The 6-10 Day, 8-14 Day and Seasonal Temperature Outlooks lean towards above average temperature (graphics attached). The precipitation outlook through August 11th is normal to slightly above normal with below average chances for rainfall through October. Given expected weather conditions and high demand for irrigation water, streamflow is not expected to again meet FWP’s instream flow rights into the fall without some assistance from large and consistent precipitation events.

Climate Outlook

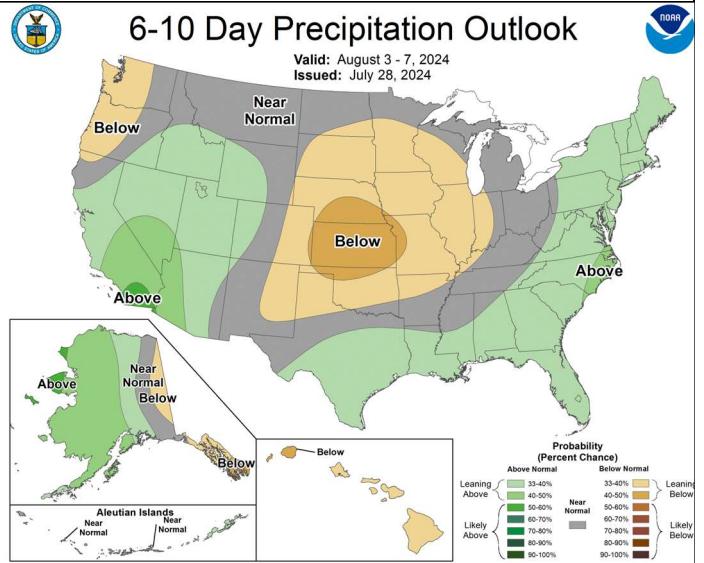
6-10 Day Temperature Outlook

Valid: August 3 - 7, 2024
Issued: July 28, 2024



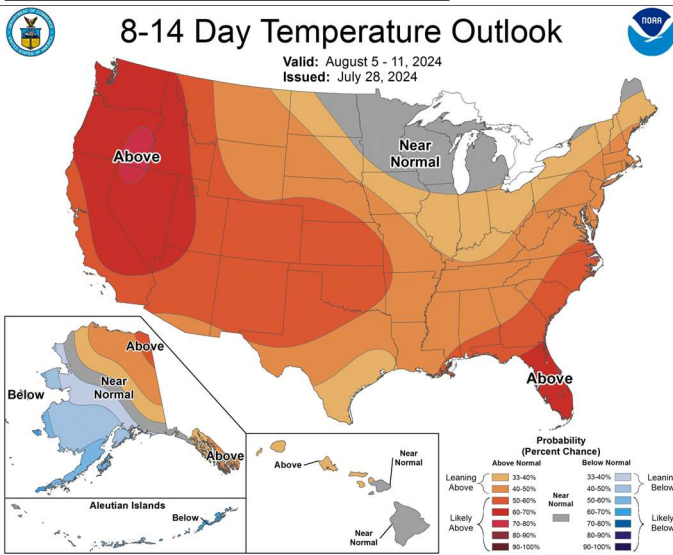
6-10 Day Precipitation Outlook

Valid: August 3 - 7, 2024
Issued: July 28, 2024



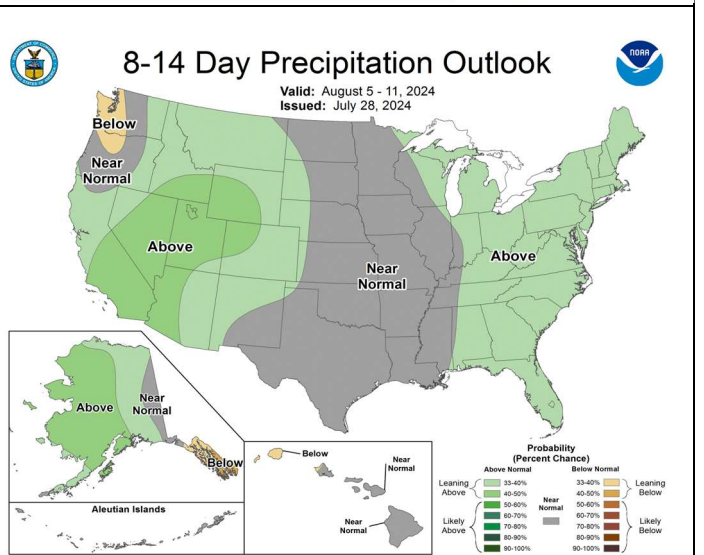
8-14 Day Temperature Outlook

Valid: August 5 - 11, 2024
Issued: July 28, 2024



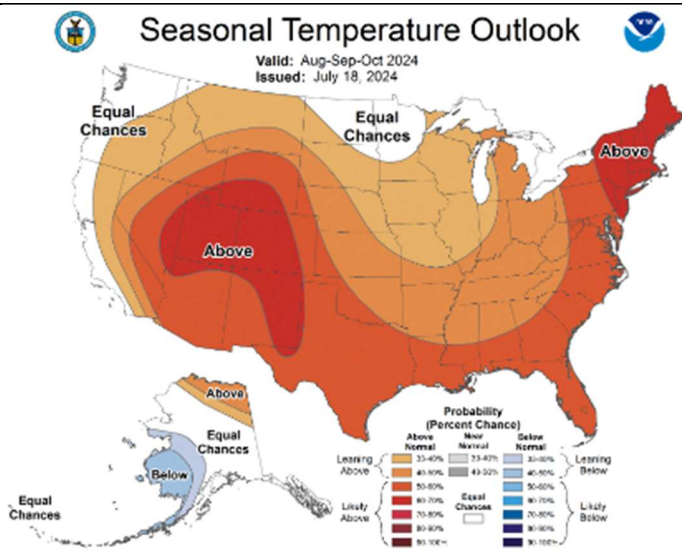
8-14 Day Precipitation Outlook

Valid: August 5 - 11, 2024
Issued: July 28, 2024



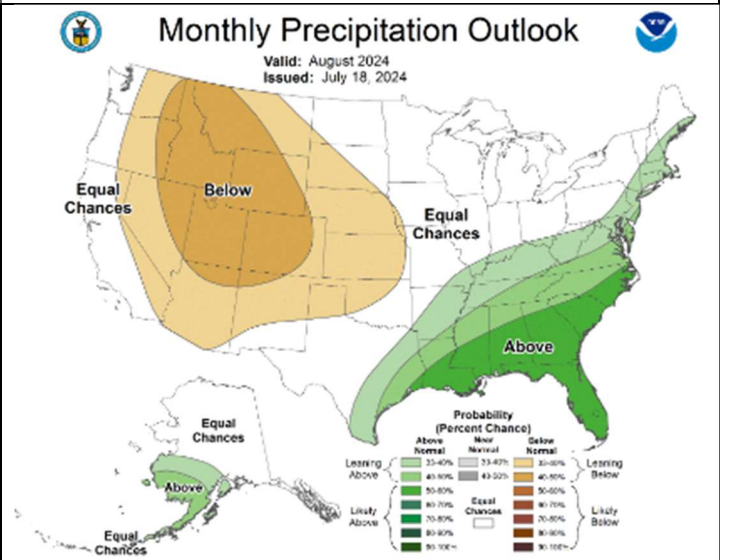
Seasonal Temperature Outlook

Valid: Aug-Sep-Oct 2024
Issued: July 18, 2024



Monthly Precipitation Outlook

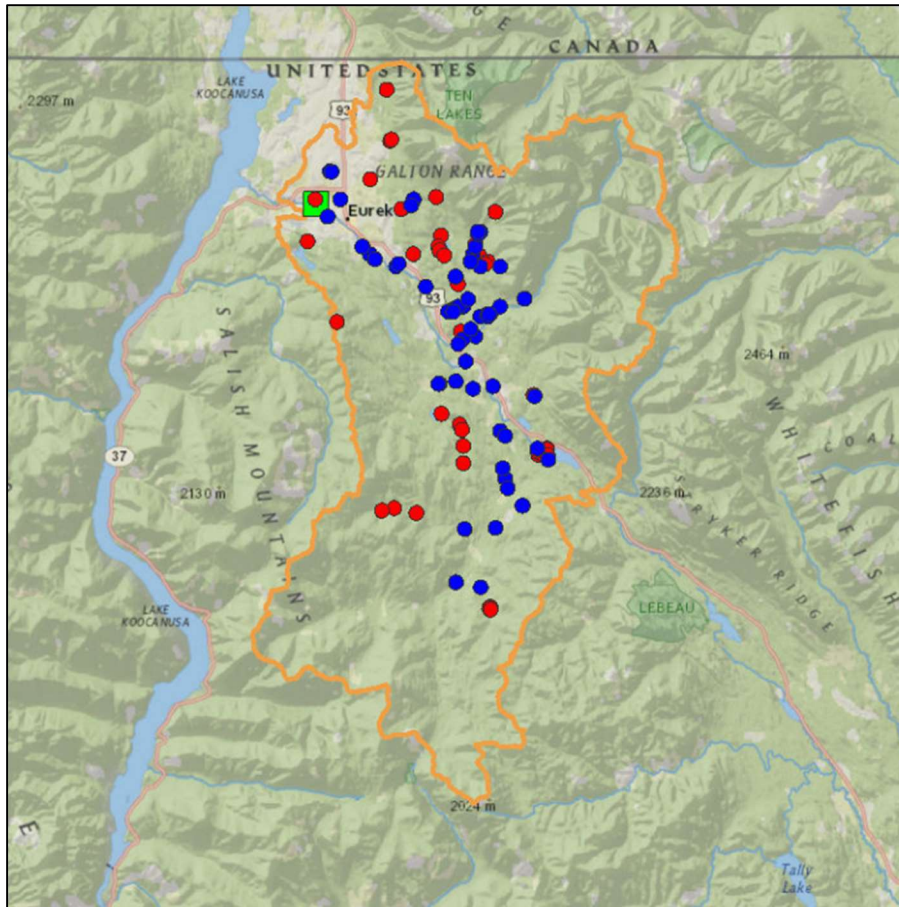
Valid: August 2024
Issued: July 18, 2024



A review of DNRC’s water rights database includes a list of 62 junior water rights, excluding instream flow rights, stock directly from the source, and domestic rights without irrigation. Each of the water rights was reviewed to determine if cessation of water use would likely result in additional flow reaching the Tobacco River. The result of that review is summarized as follows:

Purpose	Call	No Call	Total Called Flow Rate
Irrigation	43	0	29.53 cfs
Fish & Wildlife/Fishery	17	2	11.88 cfs
Lawn & Garden	2	1	0.11 cfs
Industrial	0	1	N/A
Power	0	5	N/A
Total	62	9	41.52 cfs

The following map shows the location of all junior water rights; multiple water rights that divert from the same point of diversion are represented by a single dot and so the number of dots doesn’t correlate to the total number of water rights. Those represented by blue dots would be called. Red dots represent water rights that would not be called as they are associated with purposes FWP has excluded or there is a low likelihood that call would result in increased flows to the river. The green square is the location of USGS Gage 12301250 on the Tobacco River in Eureka, MT.



The Tobacco River and its tributaries are important habitat for native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. The Tobacco River serves as a critical migration corridor for adult bull trout that spawn in Grave Creek, and rearing habitat for juvenile fish as they migrate to the reservoir. The Grave Creek bull trout population is especially important because it is the only population within the US portion of the Kootenai watershed upstream of Libby Dam. This population has declined substantially in recent years, and low flow conditions could contribute to further decline of this population. Dewatering and associated warm water temperatures can negatively impact the fishery and particularly these species. High-water temperatures and fragmented habitat can also increase acute stress, disease development and induce mortality. Although the USGS gage in Eureka, MT doesn't record temperature data, low flows are generally correlated with increasing water temperatures, particularly during the summer months when average day and nighttime temperatures are highest.

In conclusion, for the reasons stated herein, FWP Water Program and Region One Fisheries Staff jointly recommend that FWP make call on 62 junior water rights in the Tobacco River Basin.