

Drought

Low Oregon snowpack means low rivers

By JEFF BARNARD
Associated Press

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — Federal hydrologists say the latest numbers reinforce the forecasts: Rivers and streams throughout Oregon will have flows far below normal this summer due to the meager mountain snowpack.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service released its April surface water outlook on Tuesday.

Precipitation has been at or near normal in most basins, but warm temperatures have left the amount of snow in the mountains at record lows, between 8 percent and 32 percent of average across the state.

That means basins with major reservoirs for storage are expected to do relatively well. The Willamette River at Salem, for example, is predicted to have flows 76 percent of average.

But even they will drop far below normal as the summer wears on, due to low flows in streams feeding the reservoirs.

And basins depending on snowpack for most of their water storage are expected to do poorly. The Silvies River at Burns is forecast to be at 17 percent of average.

The water year started off well, with strong storms, even though they came with warm temperatures. The report says the most significant snowfall

came in late December, and if temperatures had remained that cold the rest of the winter, snowpack would be near normal. But January was relatively warm and dry, and the precipitation that has fallen since has been mostly rain. March came in warm and sunny, and left with raw cold and some snow in the Cascades.

As of April 1, 76 percent of snow monitoring sites were at their lowest level on record. Though April 1 normally marks the peak snowpack for the year, more than half the monitoring sites reported bare ground.

The U.S. Drought Monitor puts most of Oregon in drought conditions, with the

southeastern corner in extreme drought. Inflow to the Owyhee Reservoir is forecast at 24 percent of average.

Inflows to Upper Klamath Lake, the primary reservoir for the Klamath Reclamation Project straddling the Oregon-California border, are forecast at 39 percent of normal.

In southwestern Oregon, the Rogue River at Gold Hill is forecast to be 69 percent of average.

In central Oregon, the Deschutes River south of Bend is forecast at 79 percent of average.

In northeastern Oregon, the Grande Ronde River at Troy is forecast to be 52 percent of average.

Drought emergencies declared in 3 counties

SALEM (AP) — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has declared drought emergencies in three more counties — Crook, Harney, and Klamath — due to low water levels and record low snowpack.

Brown declared a drought emergency in Malheur and Lake counties last month. She added the latest three on Monday.

The counties asked the state to take action, and the Oregon Drought Council considered the requests in light of water

conditions, future climatic forecasts and agricultural impacts.

The drought continues to have significant impacts on agriculture, livestock and natural resources in each of the counties.

In the governor's words, "Oregon's unusually warm and dry winter has potentially dire consequences." The declaration allows increased flexibility in how water is managed to ensure that limited supplies are used as efficiently as possible.

Idaho eagerly awaits early water

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

ABERDEEN, Idaho — Canals throughout Southern and Eastern Idaho have turned on well ahead of schedule, providing desperately needed water for newly planted crops and moisture-stressed winter wheat following three consecutive dry months.

Lyle Swank, water master of Eastern Idaho's Water District 1, said all but a couple of the canals between Blackfoot and Idaho Falls were active by April 2, much earlier than he's ever seen in the past.

Swank said dryness and spring-like March temperatures have sped up irrigation demand.

"When winter wheat breaks dormancy, we're used to having conditions where we've gotten some significant moisture within the previous couple of months," Swank said. "This year, the storms we got were pretty small, and not the soaking type."

Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Blaine Jacobson said declining soil



Steve Howser, general manager of Aberdeen-Springfield Canal Co., notes the locations of sink holes as water fills a canal in Springfield, Idaho. Howser said he's rushing to fill the reservoir to deliver water to winter wheat crops that need the moisture.

moisture prompted many growers to plant spring grain early, and water companies have been striving to deliver water quickly.

"(Soil) moisture that in some years would last until late April was disappearing in March," Jacobson said.

Aberdeen-Springfield Canal Co. Manager Steve Howser opened his gates for

irrigation on April 1, the earliest in his company's history.

Howser said winter wheat growth is advanced for early spring and plants have gotten stressed without adequate water. He saw a few growers on his system mow their winter wheat last fall, worried the plants had grown too tall following a wet August and risked breaking under the

weight of snow. Furthermore, winter wheat broke dormancy early due to a mild winter.

"It's the winter wheat that's really suffering right now," Howser said. "There's no soil moisture left, and those young wheat plants had very shallow roots."

In most years, Howser spends 14 to 18 days slowly filling the system and making

preparations before starting deliveries. This year, his goal is to have everyone online within 10 days of opening his gate, starting deliveries earlier in the upper portion of his system to prevent the rapid filling from causing flooding near the canal's end. Howser said he lost a few weeks of maintenance time, when he normally makes repairs to his system such as filling sink holes, due to the early irrigation demand.

"I had one grower tell me if he didn't get some water soon, he estimated he'd lose 30 percent of his winter wheat crop," Howser said. "I think we're going to save most of it. The guys on the very end are going to have the biggest issue because they're the ones who won't get delivery until April 10."

Aberdeen farmer Dwight Horsch said his winter wheat still has a healthy color, which he attributes to his heavy soils, but farmers with sandy fields have endured more crop stress.

"We normally don't have it totally dry like this," Horsch said. "We normally have a shower or two in the spring."

Yakima Basin drought gets worse

DOE expected to step up response

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Junior water right holders in the Yakima Basin can expect 60 percent of their normal water supply during this irrigation season, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation said Monday.

The water supply forecast was worse than one month ago when the bureau forecast a 73 percent supply for junior rights. Senior water right holders are forecast to receive full supplies.

March's forecast was below the 75 percent figure that Washington state considers the threshold for drought conditions. Gov. Jay Inslee declared a drought emergency March 13 in the Yakima Basin, along with the Olympic Peninsula and Walla Walla region.

The April forecast confirmed expectations that the drought deepened in the past month. Yakima Basin reservoirs are full, but snowpack, already a fraction of normal, has worsened, the bureau's Yakima Project River Operations supervisor, Chuck Garner, said.

The Washington Department of Ecology will step up its response to drought because of the new forecast, agency spokesman Dan Partridge said.

DOE has requested \$9 million from lawmakers for drought relief, including \$4 million the agency tentatively planned to lease water in the Yakima Basin if the drought worsened during March.

The leased water would be put into streams to compensate for groundwater pumped from emergency wells. DOE considers activating emergency wells as an extreme measure.

"We kind of anticipated this day would come, and we planned for it accordingly," Partridge said. "We're refocusing our efforts on the Yakima Basin."

A DOE committee that evaluates statewide water supplies met Tuesday.

The bureau's April forecast is based on flows, precipitation, snow pack and reservoir storage as of April 1.

"The weather conditions this spring will influence the snow in the hills, the flows for fish, and the demands by irrigation. We hope conditions work together to keep the reservoirs full well into May," Garner said in a written statement.

If spring rainfall and temperatures are unfavorable, the water supply forecast for junior users could continue to decline, the bureau warned. The bureau will update its forecast in May.

Garner recommended that water conservation be considered by all users in the Yakima Basin.

During the last drought, in 2005, the bureau forecast in April that junior water right holders would receive 34 percent of their normal water supply. The supply forecast rose to 41 percent by mid-July.

Washington snowpack smallest in 35 years

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — Washington's winter snowpack now stands at 21 percent of normal, the lowest in at least 35 years, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation estimates junior water right holders in the Yakima Basin will be limited to 60 percent of normal water supply.

That means growers in the Roza Irrigation District and Kittitas Reclamation District probably won't get all the water they need in late summer. It could curtail some Timothy seeding in the Kittitas Valley surrounding Ellensburg and harm the expansion of hops fields planned in the Yakima Valley. However, those irrigation districts serve the outer edges of those valleys. Other districts with senior water rights serve the interiors and the bureau is forecasting full supply for senior water right holders.

"At 60 percent we can scrape through the season but there will



An irrigation canal west of the Beverly Burke Road, nine miles southwest of George, Wash., carries water on March 26. It will run strong all season because it's fed by the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project from Lake Roosevelt. Canals fed by the Yakima and Wenatchee rivers may run low this summer because of drought.

be some financial pain and hardship for our growers," said Scott Revell, Roza manager.

"Below 60 percent they make some tough decisions. We're watching the weather closely the next 30 days," he said.

The district leased 28,000 acre-feet of water in 2005, the last drought year, but it might

be harder to find that much this year, Revell said. Growers are keeping ponds full, some have wells and the district could shut off its canal for awhile in the middle of the season or terminate service early at the end, he said.

Seventy-five percent of normal water supply is generally considered the threshold for drought conditions. Gov. Jay Inslee declared drought emergencies March 13 for the Yakima

Basin, Olympic Peninsula and Walla Walla regions.

The bureau's April forecast is based on flows, precipitation, snowpack and reservoir storage as of April 1. It confirms conditions worsened in the past month. Yakima Basin reservoirs are full, but the snowpack has shrunk, the bureau said.

The state Department of Ecology continues to consider its drought responses. Spring weather can still change the situation in either direction.

About 8 to 10 inches of snow fell in Cascade elevations above 4,500 feet the night of April 5 but won't help much, said Scott Pattee, water supply specialist of the Washington Snow Survey Office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Mount Vernon.

The 21 percent statewide snowpack as of April 1 is the lowest on that date in the current data system that goes back to 1980, Pattee said. It's probably lower than the statewide snowpack of 1977, a big drought year for all Western states, but no statewide estimate was made then, he said.

Hydro
RESOURCES
WWW.HYDRORESOURCES.COM

Subsurface Imaging
(800) 401-9092

Drilling and Pumps
(303) 857-7540

Lic #1469, 1472

- Water Well Drilling
- Subsurface Imaging
- Pump Sales & Service

FIND AND DRILL
YOUR HIGHEST
VOLUME WELL

OVER 200 YEARS
COMBINED INDUSTRY
EXPERIENCE

15-1/#4X

CLEARY BUILDING CORP.

Custom Built With
Cleary Pride!

For a **FREE** consultation and
to find the office nearest you,
contact us **TODAY!**

800-373-5550

ClearyBuilding.com

CCB# 115247 CLEARBC044NE

FEATURING: **Cleary FABRAL**

LEGAL
PURSUANT TO ORS CHAPTER 87
Notice is hereby given that the
following vehicle will be sold,
for cash to the highest bidder,
on 4/13/2015. The sale will be
held at 10:00 am by
ANDY'S TRUCK REPAIR
1395 INDUSTRIAL WAY
WOODBURN, OR
Freightliner Semi
VIN=1FUVDSEB6YPH05512
Amount due on lien \$6,155.00
Reputed owner(s)
Mitchell Rickerd
Trimac Equipment Leasing

Legal: 14-2-1/#4

15-1/#4X