



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Water floods a farm field in the Chehalis River Basin in southwestern Washington. A study by the Washington Department of Ecology looks at ways to minimize flooding damage in the area. The options include building a dam or buying out farms.

Ecology weighs flood-control options for Chehalis River

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A Washington Department of Ecology report on minimizing damage from massive floods in the Chehalis River Basin considers two main options — build a dam or move farms to higher ground.

The study, which is being circulated for public comment, stems from major floods in 2007 and 2009. High water closed businesses and damaged farms, particularly in Lewis County.

Since then, local and state officials have searched for ways to reduce flooding while also enhancing fish runs.

A panel appointed by the governor recommended in 2014 building a dam on the Chehalis River. The Quinault Indian Nation proposed letting the river spread out.

Ecology studied both options, along with ideas such as constructing walls along I-5, and raising levees and buildings.

Ecology's report estimates the dam and associated projects would cost \$601 million to \$1.2 billion.

The alternative that includes buying and relocating farms that now occupy as many as 12,100 acres would cost \$1.4 billion to \$1.7 billion.

To keep farming in the area, growers would have to move to steep and forest-

ed land with unsuitable soil, Lewis County farmer Dave Fenn said.

"Basically, it's totally impractical," he said.

Ecology's program manager, Chrissy Bailey, said the agency undertook the study at the request of the governor's work group. Ecology hasn't decided whether it will make its own recommendation, she said.

"We understand people's concerns and reaction," Bailey said. "This is not something that would happen without landowner willingness on a broad scale."

Lewis County farmers produced \$132 million worth of crops and livestock, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2012 census. Fenn said a shrinking farm economy could affect growers who stay.

"What happens if half the people are willing to sell and half aren't? What happens to the half who aren't?" he asked. "The impact to (farm) suppliers might be severe."

Ron Averill, the legislative chairman of the Lewis County Farm Bureau, said it was good that Ecology held the proposal up for scrutiny.

"What farmer is going to move to where he would have the wrong soil and no water rights?" Averill asked. "Needless to say, the Farm Bureau is not happy about the alternative."

Idaho-Eastern Oregon region produced more, bigger onions in 2016

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

NYSSA, Ore. — Onion yields and sizes in the Idaho-Eastern Oregon growing region were both bigger than normal this year.

Prices, however, are down near break-even for the 300 growers who produce roughly 25 percent of all the Spanish bulb onions consumed in the United States.

"We had a very good growing season and we had some good yields; quality looked very good and size is larger than normal," said Snake River Produce Manager Kay Riley.

Riley said the result is a larger-than-average crop that has led to depressed prices at the moment, a situation exacerbated by a strong U.S. dollar and weak export market.

Bulb onion prices are off close to 50 percent from this time last year and are near the break-even price for farmers, he said.

Onion growers in the Treasure Valley region of Eastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho are under a federal marketing order and produce more than 1 billion pounds of bulb onions each year, making this the nation's largest onion-growing region in terms of volume.

About 90 percent of the bulb onions grown in this area are yellows, while the rest are red and white varieties. Harvest usually begins in August and is mostly complete by the end of October.

There are 36 packing sheds in the valley and the industry's annual economic impact is estimate at about \$1.3 billion, making onions the backbone of the region's economy.

Onion acres were close to 20,000 this year and production is about 10 percent more than last year, said Riley, marketing order chairman of the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee.

Growing conditions this



Photos by Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Bulb onions dry in a southwestern Idaho field Sept. 15. The 2016 Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion crop was larger than normal and quality was excellent, according to farmers and industry leaders.



year were superb and as a result, the area produced an unusually large amount of super colossals, the biggest bulb onion size.

"The crop is looking really good," said Nyssa grower Paul Skeen, president of the Malheur County Onion Growers Association. "The one negative

is that they're actually too big. We have more super colossals than normal and less jumbos and mediums because of that. We may have a shortage of mediums and jumbos."

The season got off to an early start, growing conditions were ideal and the oppressive heat that affected the crop the

past two years skipped 2016, said Stuart Reitz, an Oregon State University cropping systems extension agent in Malheur County.

"Those onions just got bigger and bigger," he said. "It was a good growing season so the onions naturally are big."

Reitz said onion sizes were so big that a farmers cooperative in the area held a "biggest onion" contest this year and a lot of 3- pound onions were brought in. Super colossals are typically 1.5 to 2 pounds.

"There were some big ones out there," he said.

The good news, he added, is that quality is excellent. "There are some really nice looking onions out there."

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 <p>JD 9770, 3688 hours, small grain, level land, 635F platform and cart.....\$189,000 Colfax A0736737</p>	 <p>JD 9770, 3079 hours, small grain, 35% Rahco leveler, 630R platform & cart.....\$225,000 Colfax O5730470</p>	 <p>JD 9760, 2616 hours, small grain, 27% Hilco leveler, duals, 630R platform and cart. \$130,000 Walla Walla 05710903</p>
 <p>JD 9870, 2335 hours, small grain, 35% Hilco leveler, duals, 635F platform and cart.....\$289,000 Colfax O5730229</p>	 <p>JD 9760, 244 hours, small grain, 27% Hilco leveler, duals, 635F platform and cart.....\$500,000 Moscow OE0775045</p>	 <p>Case IH 9230, 536 hours, Hilco 27% leveler, small grain, no platform.....\$430,000 Tekoa YEG224449</p>

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