

# Oregon snowpack near normal levels heading into 2021

By **Bradley W. Parks**  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — People seeking any shred of normalcy as 2020 ends can find some in Oregon's snowpack.

Oregon is heading into the new year with close to normal levels of snowpack statewide, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"That's a good sign," said Scott Oviatt, the snow survey supervisory hydrologist with NRCS in Portland. "We have room for improvement, obviously."

Snowpack is one indicator of how much water will be available in Oregon come spring. Oregon will start 2021 with nearly 70% of the state experiencing severe drought or worse.

Many parts of the state will still fall far short of their average annual precipitation.

"We are a little concerned, and we will remain concerned as long as we're running that long-term deficit," Oviatt said. "Because it takes above-normal precipitation and above-normal snow accumulation to mitigate those deficits."

Lake County in south-central Oregon had barely exceeded half of its average annual precipitation by late December. The same can be said for the Owyhee Basin bordering Idaho and Nevada. Several other parts of Oregon are also running well short of annual averages.

The Northwest is in a La Niña winter, which usually

signals above-average precipitation and could help parts of the state make up deficits.

"Confidence is pretty high that the winter months will be wetter than normal," said Tyler Kranz, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Portland.

Signs point to above-normal snowpack by spring, but we're still a long way away from knowing how that will shape summer in Oregon. Last year, for example, high temperatures in the spring and early summer spirited away above-normal snowpack achieved in the winter.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service plans to release its first water supply report for 2021 on Jan. 1.



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North Sister and Middle Sister are seen Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020, from Pilot Butte in Bend. Snowpack is near normal levels across much of the state at the end of the calendar year.

## PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

### WEDNESDAY, DEC. 23

1:29 p.m. — La Grande police received a report of a wanted person on the 2600 block of Ash Street. The investigation determined the person was not wanted in Oregon.

3:33 p.m. — A caller reported a careless driver on the 1200 block of V Avenue, La Grande. Police took a report for juvenile traffic violations.

### THURSDAY, DEC. 24

5:58 a.m. — La Grande police responded to the 3000 block of Q Avenue on a report of a domestic disturbance. Officers determined the situation did not rise to the level of a mandatory arrest and separated the parties.

1:15 p.m. — A caller reported a dog attacked another dog on the 100 block of Willow Street, La Grande. The animal enforcement officer responded and issued a warning.

6:27 p.m. — A caller reported possible gunshots on the 10500 block of West First Street, Island City. A Union County sheriff's deputy checked the area and found nothing suspicious. Law enforcement received other calls during the weekend of a similar nature, and the noises may have been fireworks.

### FRIDAY, DEC. 25

1:09 a.m. — A caller reported a child walking alone on the 400 block of Fir Street, La Grande. An officer responded, found the juvenile was 14 and nearly home.

9:18 p.m. — A Union County sheriff's deputy responded to the 1000 block of Galveston Street, Elgin, on a report of a domestic disturbance. No one wanted to pursue a case, and the deputy determined this did not rise to the level of a mandatory arrest.

### SATURDAY, DEC. 26

10:55 a.m. — A caller on the 1700 block of Fourth Street, La Grande, reported a vehicle had two slashed tires. An officer took a report.

3:12 p.m. — An anonymous caller reported someone may have overdosed on the 2000 block of Adams Avenue, La Grande.

Police and medics arrived at the scene and did not find anyone overdosing.

8:40 p.m. — La Grande police received a complaint about a loud party on the 1900 block of Cove Avenue. Officers responded and counseled the subjects.

### SUNDAY, DEC. 27

1:02 a.m. — The Oregon Department of Transportation reported Interstate 84 eastbound was closed in Baker City at exit 304 due to a semitrailer crash near milepost 349 and dense fog that contributed to secondary crashes in the area. ODOT also closed Highway 245 southbound to all but local traffic. I-84 eastbound remained closed at 6:30 a.m. as tow companies, emergency response crews and ODOT crews worked to clear multiple semis that crashed. ODOT gave the OK to open the eastbound lane at Baker City at about 8 a.m.

6:52 a.m. — Union County sheriff's deputies responded to the 10200 block of South McAlistier Road, La Grande, for trespassers and arrested a 19-year-old female on a

Union County warrant for failure to appear on a trespassing charge and Colin Drew Dittmer, 21, on eight Union County warrants for failure to appear on charges of theft, theft of services and trespassing. Deputies also arrested him for third-degree criminal mischief.

3 p.m. — Police and medics responded to 11th Street and Washington Avenue, La Grande, for a traffic crash involving injuries. Police took a report.

5:13 p.m. — La Grande police responded to the 3000 block of Q Avenue on a report of a possible intoxicated driver leaving a residence. Officers arrested Jessie Aaron Whitmore, 58, on accusations of driving under the influence of intoxicants and cited him for driving with a suspended license.

6:14 p.m. — A caller reported a vehicle was on fire on Forest Phillips Creek Road, La Grande. A Union County sheriff's deputy advised the owner of the vehicle and the Oregon Department of Forestry about the fire.

## OBITUARIES

### Ernestine Ball

La Grande

Ernestine Ball, 97, of La Grande, died Dec. 27 at a local care facility. Arrangements are by Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory, La Grande.

### Gene Beeson

La Grande

Gene Beeson, 72, of La Grande, died Dec. 27 at a local care facility. Arrangements are by Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory, La Grande.

## Upcoming local services



Please follow guidelines regarding face coverings and social distancing at all services.

**Jan. 9 — LYLE HARMON:** 2-6 p.m. celebration of life, 1999 Alder St., Elgin.

— *Calendar courtesy of Loveland Funeral Chapel, La Grande*

### Mark D. Hoffman

December 22, 2020

After 68 years of forming his meandering sidewalk, Mark D. Hoffman finished his last stair, laid down his tools and stepped into his next journey. He took with him what he needed most — the love, thoughts, prayers, and memories then quietly slipped away on December 22, 2020.

Mark was a wonderful husband and father. We always counted on his emotional, physical and spiritual strength. He guided us through his own life experiences by embracing his flaws and balancing with reason. He gave the best hugs.

Mark completed our circle, embraced everyone who crossed his path and left no stone untouched. His humanity and integrity will be long remembered by his devoted family and friends. We will miss you and we will celebrate your life in the summer of 2022.

In Mark's simple way he touched the world and had great passion for the causes listed below. In lieu of flowers a donation to one of these charities would be greatly appreciated:  
United Farm Workers - (<https://ufw.org/sparechange/>);  
Native American Support Donation (<https://www.pure-wow.com/family/native-american-charities/>);  
Maggie's Hospice (<https://www.maggieshospice.com/>);  
St. Mary's Food Bank (<https://www.firstfoodbank.org/>);  
ACLU (<https://www.aclu.org/issues/immigrants-rights>)



### Lyle Jean Harmon

February 18, 1947 - December 18, 2020



Lyle Harmon was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 18, 1947, to Forrest Ward Lundin and Vera Cecelia (Willhelm) Lundin. It was Mardi Gras Day. Vera was not happy about missing the festivities to bring the youngest Lundin child into the world.

Before the age of 20, Lyle lived a gypsy lifestyle with her family. She ate oysters on the half shell at the Acme Oyster Company, while her family ran a couple of antique shops in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

From Louisiana, they moved across the upper gulf coast to Mississippi then Alabama. Her father's pursuit of jobs in antiques took them through Tennessee and Pennsylvania. Fleeing one of the worst winters in Pennsylvania history, they moved to Arizona, where Lyle lived from the age of 8 to 16. Lyle rode horses across the desert under the stars and played basketball on roller-skates.

Lyle finished high school in Santa Ynez, California. She planted baby orchids, shot a cougar, and was a nanny/housekeeper for 2 rich doctors. She took sailing vacations off Catalina Island, swam in the clear ocean waters off the boat and learned how to bodysurf.

After school, Lyle married William Spivey, they moved from California to Ohio then Oregon. While living with Spivey in Crane, Oregon, Lyle was keeper of the gymnasium at one of the last public boarding schools in the nation. Life there was rough, they lived in plank board house, with a Franklin stove. When a knothole fell out, they would flatten a can and nail it over the hole. In the brutal high desert winters of Crane, it could get so cold the vinegar would freeze next to the stove.

Lyle left Spivey behind but kept his daughter from a previous relationship to raise as her own. She met her second husband James Kem (Ruhle). While with Kem they lived in Colorado and Nebraska before putting down roots in Elgin, Oregon. Lyle started working at Boise Cascade's Plywood plant in Elgin. James ran away while Lyle was pregnant with her only biological child, Teri Ann. Lyle raised Teri with help from friends when she met the other half of her soul. Lyle married William (Boyd) Harmon on November 13, 1982, in Elgin at Dave and Judy Shepard's house. Together they brought up Teri, Bill and Wes, two of Boyd's children from a previous marriage.

Lyle and Boyd traveled the Northwest doing gun shows for years. She was by his side as they put together bigger and bigger setups. At their pinnacle, they outfitted six tables at once and attended 48 shows in a year. They were well known on the circuit.

Boyd introduced Lyle to her next biggest love in life, Harley-Davidson motorcycles. She rode dirt bikes in her younger years, but Harleys were a completely different beast. Boyd traded his late father's pickup in to buy her a sapphire blue Sportster.

Again, they traveled, this time on motorcycles. From Milwaukee, Wisconsin for Harley Davidson's 90th, 95th and 100th

anniversaries, to Texas and the Four Corners region for state rallies and joy. During one of these many trips, when following a canyon road in a desolate part of Nevada, Lyle was riding behind Boyd. Lyle wasn't riding on her Sportster because she didn't want her stepdaughter to feel left out. That was the type of person Lyle was. She would do almost anything to not make somebody feel bad. Coming up to the last 15 mph turn, an oncoming car was sideways on the shoulder on the wrong side of the road. Unable to avoid the vehicle, the car struck their motorcycle, instantly crushing Lyle's leg and sending her 50 foot down an embankment and left her draped over a boulder.

Labor Day weekend of 1992 left Lyle broken in a Salt Lake City hospital before being transferred to Boise. Lyle suffered a broken femur and many surgeries to clean and amputate her left leg. She was hospitalized for a total of 41 days. This was the end of her 16-year career with Boise Cascade. Lyle didn't let this get her down, though. It was the end of her job at the mill, but she still had lots of living left to do. Together with a group of friends, they traveled to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for the first time later that same year. Lyle drove her iconic red Thunderbird because they were still awaiting parts to install a sidecar on her little blue Sportster. She became more involved with Harley owners Group and coordinated a few Harley state rallies in Idaho.

All these things only slowed their travel slightly. Lyle and Boyd started driving for the Ford dealership in La Grande, then the Dodge dealership. They drove new and used vehicles all over the Western United States. Once they delivered a new vehicle to a customer under the Golden Gate Bridge. In Seattle traffic, they were sideswiped, which sent them crashing into the center concrete divider a few years before they retired.

She lived a wonderful life, with a heart full of love, of God, the freedom of her country, and the family she was born into and chose. Lyle never met a stranger and loved to spend time with her family and friends. She spent her final years, staying close to home with Boyd. She made dinner almost every night for the family seated around her table.

Lyle devoted time when she was younger to the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints. She was primary president, relief society president and various roles. Even though she may not have been the most active member throughout her life, the church was always important to her. The church was there for her family after the motorcycle accident and made sure they were well fed and taken care of.

Lyle was a genuinely kind and good person in a world that all too often isn't either of those things. She touched many in her lifetime, is greatly loved and will be missed deeply. She lived a good life and lived long enough to enjoy the fruits of that life.

She is survived by her sister Cherime MacFarlane of Wasilla, Alaska. Children Teri Ann Stearns and husband Pete of Elgin, Oregon, Bill Harmon and wife Denise of Baker City, Oregon, and Westly Harmon and wife Claudine of Elgin, Oregon. Stepchildren Christie Irving of St George, Utah, Nancy Bourne, Vallarie Harmon of McCall, Idaho, Jade Harmon of Weiser, Idaho, and Gladys Ann Harmon of Donnelly, Idaho. Along with 17 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

Lyle was predeceased by her mother, father, and sister, Beverly Roskopf.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to American Lung Association, 16037 SW Upper Boones Ferry Road #165, Tigard, OR 97224, St. Joseph Indian School, 1301 N Main Street, Chamberlain, SD 57325 or Wounded Warrior Project, 3315 South 23rd Street, Suite 310, Tacoma, WA 98405.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, January 9, 2021 at 1999 Alder Street, Elgin, OR 2:00-6:00pm.

Online condolences may be made to the family at [www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com](http://www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com).

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