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NO WATER FOR NOW



Photos by Dan Wheat/Capital Press

An irrigation outflow on the Roza canal sits high and dry with McDonald Road bridge in background. Orchards and vineyards are on either side. This is about seven miles northeast of Prosser, Wash.,

Fight over Clean Water Act rule enters new phase

Political action likely, lawsuit possible, experts say

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The fight over the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water Act rule is entering a new phase now that the controversial regulation has been finalized.

Opponents of the rule are expected to galvanize political pressure against it and potentially resort to litigation against the government.

Agriculture groups fear that EPA's new interpretation of the statute will greatly expand its authority over any water on farmland, while the agency contends the rule is necessary to clear up uncertainties about the law's scope.

An initial review of the nearly 300-page final rule indicates that EPA hasn't resolved the industry's main concerns about regulatory overreach, said Dustin Van Liew, executive director of the Public Lands Council, which represents ranchers who rely on public grazing allotments.

While the final rule has set some benchmarks for determining which water bodies will be regulated, much leeway is still left in the hands of bureaucrats, he said.

The American Farm Bureau Federation is particularly concerned about EPA's jurisdiction over ditches, ephemeral streams and isolated wetlands that may be found in fields, said Mace Thornton, the group's executive director of communications.

"There will be a lot of lawyers and policy experts going over the rule with a fine-toothed comb," he said.

Farm groups will be pressing Congress to stop the rule from taking effect, Van Liew said.

The House has already passed a standalone bill to block its implementation and the Senate is considering a similar action, he said.

President Obama would

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Growers in Washington state's Roza Irrigation District go without so they can have water left for late summer

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press



Brad Klingele, a tree fruit and grape grower in Prosser, Wash., is shown on May 20.

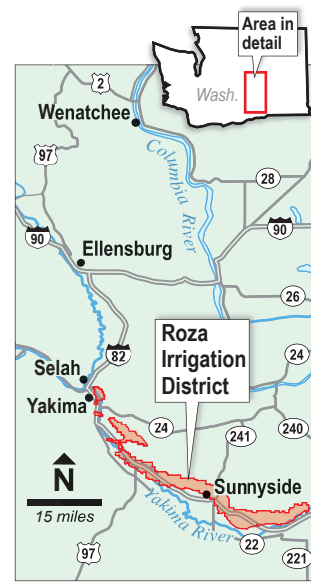
PROSSER, Wash. — The Roza canal normally runs big and fat through Brad Klingele's apple orchard and vineyard this time of year.

It's 20 feet wide, about 5 feet deep and full of that precious water from the Cascade Mountains, the lifeblood of more than 350,000 acres of farmland in the Yakima Valley. Some 72,000 acres of that is within the Roza Irrigation District, stretching 95 miles from Selah to Benton City.

But this May, the Roza canal is dry. The irrigation district's board voted to shut it down for several weeks to save

water for later in the growing season. The Roza and other irrigation districts throughout the Yakima Basin were forced to turn to reservoir water earlier than normal because of the scant Cascade snow pack. Klingele, 51, farms the land his father farmed seven miles north of Prosser. He raises apples, cherries, pears and juice and wine grapes. He hopes for full crops but figures the fruit might be smaller, tonnage may be down and he might have pockets of poor quality due to less water.

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Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

MORE DROUGHT COVERAGE ON PAGE 3

- Some fear SJ Valley ag could go way of timber industry
- Extra days may be added to Owyhee Project water season
- Moisture could help Idaho groundwater users
- Governor declares drought in 8 Oregon counties

Inslee taps Ecology water official to lead ag department

Washington Farm Bureau praises governor's choice

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Washington's incoming agriculture director says he has enough hands-on experience with farming to know it's not his field.

Derek Sandison dabbled in his spare time in the 1990s with a vineyard near Ellensburg. "I thoroughly enjoyed it, but I wasn't any good at it," he said. "I learned to leave that kind of work to a professional."

Sandison's occupation for several years has been to work with farmers and others to increase water supplies in Central and Eastern Washington.

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Office of Columbia River Director Derek Sandison stands on Pinto Dam in Grant County. Sandison, who has an extensive background in water issues, has been appointed state agriculture director.

Washington Department of Ecology

THIS WEEK IN THE CAPITAL PRESS



Iris yellow spot virus detected in volunteer onions

OSU researchers have alerted onion growers to be on the lookout for iris yellow spot virus.

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Scientists pursue gene-disrupting pesticides

Fruit fly sets back approach to controlling insects with biological methods.

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