

Department of Ag estimates the drought will cost \$1.2 billion

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Higher expenses and lower tonnage equal less profit.

The state Department of Agriculture estimates the drought will cost \$1.2 billion, or about 12 percent in lost agricultural production. Klingele isn't sure total losses will be that high because of the much-needed rain that has fallen. He said most of the loss will probably be in tree fruit.

The Roza began water deliveries in mid-March at full allocations of 7.1 gallons per minute. It was reduced to 1.8 gpm on April 20 to save water and completely shut down on May 11 for several weeks to save water for July and August.

The 1.8 gallons per minute "is about what you get from a garden hose, not nearly enough," Klingele said.

He and his neighbors "were grabbing whatever runoff we could," from irrigation drainage and natural creeks and springs and storing it in ponds to cover a few acres of crops.

Klingele also has two wells, one that produces 200 gallons per minute, "which doesn't do a lot," and another that produces 500 gpm, "so it covers quite a bit."

"There's expense in making sure you capture every drop. I'm looking at doing a road crossing with an 8-inch line to better utilize the well," he said.

Timely rain

Then came the big rain of May 13.

"The rain was a game changer. The Roza district got some of the heaviest rain in the whole state. Most areas got 1.4 to 1.5 inches. That's equivalent to a couple of irrigations," Klingele said.

It should save his cherry crop and keep his apple trees from wilting, he said. The rain over watered his grapes but they will dry out.

"I heard of one guy in Grandview whose cherry trees were already too stressed and dry before the rain who apparently doesn't think he will have a cherry crop," Klingele said.

But that's the only one he's heard of in such dire straits. Most growers, he said, have



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Jim Willard thins shoots on Merlot wine grapes north of Prosser, Wash., on May 20. Willard is most concerned about having water for the vineyards in August and September.

supplemental wells, which help but are not enough alone. They are scraping by, he said.

There are different classifications of wells. Supplemental wells can be used at farmers' discretion. Emergency wells need state approval and the purchase of offsetting water.

"Without my wells and ditch drainage, I would be struggling to keep trees alive, let alone trying to size fruit like cherries or keep an apple crop on the trees," he said.

Complaint with the bureau

Klingele said the Roza Irrigation District does a good job of being efficient with water but that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation "screwed up big time" with its forecast for the Yakima Basin water supply.

The bureau, he said, has been slow on estimates. Had it more accurately forecast reductions for junior water rights earlier, more growers in the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District could have held off planting and leased water to Roza users, he said. The Sunnyside has senior water rights; the Roza has junior rights. Some Sunnyside farmers have leased their water to the Roza District, receiving \$500 an acre.

Also, Roza growers could have "loaded their soil" — over irrigated early on to store water in the ground.

"Normally, you don't do that because you don't want to slow down the progression of trees coming out of winter. But if you have to do it, you can get through," he said.

Chris Lynch, bureau hydrologist in Yakima, said the forecast of 73 percent of normal water supply on March 1 was reasonable given the weather forecast and recent trends of late winter snow in the mountains.

"But March and April turned out pretty poor. He (Klingele) wished we were able to foresee the future a little better, but we weren't able to," Lynch said. "This year was unique in that we got mostly rain and very little snow through the winter, which was difficult for our model to represent based on historical data."

Neighbors to the north

A short distance north of Klingele's orchard on McDonald Road, Patricia O'Brien, owner of Vine Heart Winery, said the drought is a "very serious thing with many crops" and that her orchards and vineyards would be hurting without wells.

"We checked our soil profile today (May 20) and at 3 feet there's plenty of moisture," she said. "That's because of the rain, wells and the weather hasn't been too hot."

North from O'Brien's, Jim Willard, a Roza board member, watched Roza employees running two excavators reshaping and clearing the dry canal lateral of weeds. The lateral feeds his orchards and vineyards, and the work will make flow more efficient when water is turned on again.

Willard is worried about lack of water affecting the size and quality of his cherries in June and his apples in the fall.

"Apples are just 10 millimeters now. Lack of water slows their growth and trees start to wilt. But if we have more rain — there are a lot of what-ifs," he said. "It's critical for me to be able to water into later September for my wine grapes."

The target, he said, is to have flow bumped up to 2.8 to 3.3 gpm from mid-July through August.

A hit to dairies

East of Sunnyside, on Factory Road, Roy Ruiz said he's sharing an irrigation well with four other growers and hopes to make it through the drought without losing crops.

"I came from Mexico in 1972. I'm living the American dream. Now we worry the American dream will go away with all the problems we're having," Ruiz, 63, said, noting the drought is on top of a year of low apple prices.

Webster Road runs be-

Roza District likely to turn water on again June 1

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — The Roza Irrigation District likely will start taking water from the Yakima River again on June 1, ending a three-week shutdown of water to 72,000 acres of farmland in the Yakima Valley.

However, if the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation reduces its current forecast of 44 percent of the normal summer water supply for junior water right holders on May 29, the district may delay the start-up, said Scott Revell, district manager.

Most farmers should have water within three days of startup but it takes about five days for users in the bottom 30 miles of canals to get water, Revell said.

The shutdown began May 11 and will save about 15,000 acre-feet of water. That along with 5,000 acre-feet of drainage water secured from the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District and 3,300 acre-feet secured through water leases, mainly from SVID, will keep irrigation water from running out in mid-August.

It will keep the season going to Sept. 28, if Yakima Basin water supply remains at 44 percent of normal for junior water right holders. It will be Sept. 3, if the supply drops to 37 percent, Revell said. The district has junior water rights.

In normal years, the district provides water until Oct. 20.

Keeping the season going

as long as possible mainly helps hops, wine and juice grapes and apples.

Those crops make up 45,000 acres, or 62 percent, of the district, Revell said.

Water deliveries will resume at 1.8 gallons per minute, which is 25 percent of normal. They will increase to 2.7 gpm the first half of July and 3.3 gpm the last half of July and first half of August for hot weather, Revell said. Deliveries will drop down to 2.7 gpm the last half of August and to 1.8 gpm from the end of August to the end of the season, he said.

The 1.8 gpm is the minimum water supply that allows the system to operate and is not enough for most growers without supplementing it with well water, he said.

"I've heard there will be cherries pushed under (orchards ripped out) after harvest. There are people taking first-cutting of hay and not another, moving water to other crops," Revell said.

A lot of corn silage for dairies will be light in yield, but the greater potential for loss is in hops, apples and grapes, he said.

The state Department of Agriculture consulted with him, Revell said, in making its \$1.2 billion estimate of crop loss and increased costs.

Asked what he thinks of the estimate, he said, "It's difficult to project. There are a lot of variables. How hot it gets and for how long and if we get any timely rains all play into this."

tween Ruiz's cherry orchard and J&K Dairy, formerly Tony Vega Dairy. Hundreds of Holsteins were in the dairy yard but the Roza canal to the east was dry. The dairy's operators could not be reached for comment.

West of Sunnyside, near Outlook, Genny DeRuyter, co-owner of DeRuyter Brothers Dairy, said the valley's dairies that depend on the Roza are in tougher straits than others.

Her dairy has enough water because it is on the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District.

"But a lot of people we buy corn silage from are on the Roza and aren't growing silage this year," she said. "So we have to go farther outside the local area and pay a higher price."

Corn silage is a main year-round feed for the dairies. They also use a lot of hay but already get a lot of it from outside the valley.

Most realistic avenue for stopping rule is by cutting funding

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probably veto such legislation, but it's nonetheless important to send a message that the people's representatives oppose the EPA's regulation, he said.

The most realistic avenue for stopping the Clean Water Act rule is by cutting funding for its enforcement by EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of a broader appropriations package, Van Liew said.

"If (Congress) were to act, that would definitely be the easiest path," said Kristine Tidgren, staff attorney for the Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation at Iowa State University.

However, it's unlikely Congress will be able to muster the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto of the stand-alone bills, she said.

President Barack Obama's administration is also too invested in the Clean Water Act rule to allow legislation that defunds the regulation to "float through," Tidgren said.

"This rule has been really important to the administration, so I don't think they would back down," she said. "It's a hallmark of what the administration wants to accomplish."

If Congress fails to stop the regulation, the next and more time-consuming step would be for opponents to seek an injunction through the federal courts, Tidgren said.

The eventuality of a lawsuit at this point is "speculative but not outside the realm of reality," said Van Liew.

Sandison takes over at the Department of Agriculture on June 15

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Gov. Jay Inslee cited Sandison's experience in solving complex water issues in tapping him May 21 to replace Bud Hover, who resigned in April after two years as Washington State Department of Agriculture director.

"Derek has a successful record of leading on complex and large-scale projects and brings a commitment to innovation, transparency and collaboration that is exactly what we need to maintain and grow Washington's world-class agriculture industry," Inslee said in a written statement.

Sandison, 62, has directed the Wenatchee-based Office of Columbia River within the Washington Department of Ecology since its inception in 2008. Previously, he was DOE's central region director and has worked for the agency since 2001.

He will take over at the Department of Agriculture on June 15.

"I see this as an important post and a challenge, but a challenge I'm willing to do," Sandison said. "The governor called for my services, and I was happy to oblige."

Sandison was the Washington Farm Bureau's top pick for the post. He knows agriculture and has built trust with farm groups, the bureau's director of government affairs Tom Davis said.

"He's not a bureaucrat who says 'no.' He works to find 'yes,'" Davis said.

The Farm Bureau's president, Grant County hay farmer Mike LaPlant, said it was important for WSDA to be led by a proven administrator.

"Derek fits that role perfectly," he said. "We believe he will be a tremendous director."



Washington Department of Ecology

Incoming Washington State Department of Agriculture director Derek Sandison, right, stands with state Sen. Linda Evans Parlette, R-Wenatchee, and Methow Irrigation District board member Greg Nordang during a ceremony in October to celebrate projects to increase flows in the Twisp and Methow rivers. Sandison will leave his position as director of DOE's Office of Columbia River to lead WSDA.

Washington Cattlemen's Association President Bill Sieverkropp, a Grant County rancher, said he's never met Sandison, but noted that Sandison will move over from Ecology. The agency and ranchers have clashed over the enforcement of water-quality regulations.

"I'm a little skeptical. He's coming from DOE," Sieverkropp said. "I've heard nothing negative about him. It's a wait-and-see kind of thing."

Hover's resignation was announced on the eve of a confirmation hearing scheduled two years into his tenure. Governor's appointees can serve without Senate approval, but can be ousted through the confirmation process.

It was unclear how much opposition Hover, who was a two-term Okanogan County commissioner, would have faced. Some senators were

concerned about the department's internal workings and that it had excluded lawmakers and farmers from early discussions on legislation to regulate the spreading of manure on fields. WSDA later dropped the proposal.

The former chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Raymond Democrat Brian Hatfield, said Sandison's calm demeanor should be an asset.

"I think there are a lot of great people at the department. Whatever the internal issues were, they sort of got in the way of them doing their jobs. Bringing in someone like Derek Sandison will allow them to take a breath," he said. "He's an excellent choice. He certainly has experience with water, the most difficult issue agriculture has to deal with."

Senate Agriculture Com-

mittee Chairwoman Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, also praised the appointment.

"I don't think the governor could have picked anyone more qualified or well respected," she said.

Warnick said she hoped Sandison will lead WSDA into taking a stronger role on farm-related issues, such as water quality and farmworker housing, that fall under the jurisdiction of other state agencies.

"As chair of the ag committee, I've been frustrated that agencies don't seem to be speaking with each other," she said. "I think as a member of the governor's cabinet, he'll be able to work on that."

Under Sandison's direction, the Office of Columbia River reports developing 375,815 acre-feet of additional water supplies for farms and fish.

"What makes Derek stand out is his ability to build bridges and work with others to find answers to very complex issues," Farm Bureau Chief Executive Officer John Stuhlmiller said in a written statement. "His work at the Office of Columbia River and on the Yakima Integrated Water Resource Management Plan are two great examples of Derek's work with agricultural, environmental and tribal interests to find answers that work on the ground."

Sandison said that while working with farmers and irrigation districts he has come to appreciate the challenges producers face.

"My intent is to rely on the existing management team" at WSDA, he said. "I don't have any initiative to launch as I come in the door."

Sandison also served as DOE's central regional director. Prior to joining the DOE, he co-founded a consulting firm and worked in water supply and waste programs at the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

The two most recent WSDA directors, Hover and Dan Newhouse, were farmers — and Republicans appointed by Democratic governors. Their immediate predecessors, Valoria Loveland and Jim Jesernig, were not farmers. All four had held elected offices before being WSDA director. Newhouse, Loveland and Jesernig served in the Legislature.

Sandison grew up in Port Angeles and earned a degree at Central Washington University. In mid-career, he earned a master's degree from Central in natural resources management.

As agriculture director, his annual salary will be \$126,000.