

## Drought

## May rains had little impact on drought

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

Heavy rain that pelted much of the Pacific Northwest and Northern California in late May did not significantly ease the drought situation, federal water monitors said.

Rain increased topsoil moisture and temporarily reduced the need for irrigation during what was an unusually

cool, wet month, but provided “negligible” long-term relief from drought, according to the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service.

“Rain waters your lawns but snow fills your reservoirs,” as an NRCS official in Utah told the news media.

Scott Oviatt, an NRCS snow survey supervisor in Portland, said the rains pro-

vided short-term relief at best for agriculture. The Owyhee Reservoir in Southeast Oregon gained a week or two supply of water for irrigation of high value crops, he said.

Areas that don’t have storage reservoirs didn’t benefit, Oviatt said.

“A lot of it, because of the intensity of the rain, ran off into the streams,” he said. “A lot of it went down the river

and wasn’t saved.”

The next week will bring a ridge of high pressure and extremely warm weather to Western Oregon, Western Washington and Northern California, Oviatt said.

Reservoir operators have been “very proactive” in trying to maintain the water supply, but in some cases their hands are tied by rules that govern when reservoirs are

drawn down, he said. Operating rules are under review by the agencies that operate storage reservoirs.

Hydrologists have warned for months that 2015 would be a bad year for drought because mountain snowpack levels were so low across the West. While precipitation was near normal in some areas, it fell as rain rather than snow.

Warmer than normal tem-

peratures exacerbated the problem. By early May, the NRCS reported that much of the snowpack had already melted and would not be available to provide streamflow later this summer.

Nationally, the NRCS estimates 26 percent of the contiguous 48 states is in moderate drought or worse. The drought areas are home to nearly 94 million people.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Roza Dam is shown on the Yakima River in Yakima Canyon on May 28. Diversions for the irrigation district covering 72,000 acres of farmland in the Yakima Valley began again 11 miles downriver on June 1.

## Roza Irrigation District turns water on again

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — The Roza Irrigation District began drawing from the Yakima River again on June 1 to provide limited water to 72,000 acres of farmland after a three-week shutdown to conserve water.

Most of the district was to get water within three days but it takes about five days for users in the lower 30 miles of the system to get water, Scott Revell, district manager said. The main stem is 95 miles and laterals make up more than 350 miles.

Deliveries are at 1.8 gallons per minute, down from the normal 7.1 gpm, to continue water conservation. That’s a 75 percent reduction.

The Yakima County Superior Court approved more than 8,000 acre-feet of water transfers from the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District to the Roza on May 28, Revell said. A second round will provide more leased water, he said. The Roza is looking for more water leases, although the SVID lease window has closed, he said.

The 21-day shutdown and water transfers gain the district 23,000 acre-feet of water, which will keep the district from running out in mid-August and extend deliveries to Sept. 28 if the Yakima Basin supply remains at 44 percent of normal. Normally, the district provides water until Oct. 20.

Maintaining water deliveries 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.

The 1.8 gpm delivery is the minimum at which the system

can operate and is not enough for most growers without supplemental wells, Revell said.

The Roza plans to increase deliveries to 2.7 gpm in the first half of July and 3.3 gpm in the last half of July and first half of August during the hottest weather, Revell said. Deliveries will drop back 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 Roza board granted final authorization for the June 1 restart on May 29 after learning the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is holding steady, because of recent rain, with its May 19 forecast of 44 percent of normal water supply for junior water right holders in the Yakima Basin for the summer.

The Roza and other irrigation districts have been using water from mountain reservoirs earlier than normal this year. The scant snowpack in the mountains will not feed the rivers or replenish the reservoirs, as it normally does.

One of the main reservoirs, Keechelus Lake just east of Snoqualmie Pass, was down 20 feet from full pool on June 1. It had 110,990 acre-feet of water and has 157,800 full.

It’s 70 percent full when normally it would be 85 to 100 percent this time of year, said Quentin Kreuter, Bureau of Reclamation river operator.

Reservoir inflows are 25 to 30 percent of average, he said.

While the Roza hasn’t been using any water the past three weeks, the Wapato Irrigation Project, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District and Kittitas Reclamation District have been drawing large volumes.

Other Yakima Basin reservoir conditions: Kachess, 91 percent full; Cle Elum, 93; Bumping, 100; Rimrock, 100.

## State leases water from Olympic Peninsula farmers for fish

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

SEQUIM, Wash. — More than a dozen Olympic Peninsula farmers will lease their water rights, forgoing irrigating about 840 acres for one month this summer to leave water in the Dungeness River for fish.

The 13 growers, who submitted offers, will receive an average of \$150 per acre, Washington Water Trust project manager Amanda Cronin said. Two offers from farmers were rejected as too high.

“We’re very happy with the participation from the irrigation community,” she said.

The water trust is a nonprofit organization that arranges water leases between farmers and the Washington Department of Ecology. As part of a \$9.6 million drought-response plan, DOE allocated up to \$200,000 to lease water from the Dungeness. Cronin said the purchases will be well within the budget limit.

The Olympic Peninsula is Western Washington’s most drought-affected area and was the only westside region included in Gov. Jay Inslee’s original drought declaration in March. Inslee since has declared a statewide emergency.

Even peninsula farmers who aren’t leasing their water rights may face mandatory cutbacks this summer because of extraordinarily low flows in the Dungeness River.

The river originates in the Olympic Mountains and runs for 28 miles to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, providing irrigation water to some 5,700 acres of



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Clallam County farmer Ben Smith explains how the drought-stricken Dungeness River on the Olympic Peninsula will affect his farm and dairy. Smith and other farmers will lease water to bolster flows for fish in the late summer.

farmland in a rain shadow. Sequim’s average annual rainfall of 16 inches is nearly identical to downtown Los Angeles’.

Melting snow normally feeds the Dungeness into late summer as farmers irrigate crops and salmon migrate upriver to spawn. This year, the Olympic snowpack was less than 10 percent of normal through the winter and spring and is now virtually gone.

“Nobody has seen a year like this,” said dairyman Ben Smith, president of the Sequim-Dungeness Water Users Association. “We got the rain, but the snow didn’t stick.”

Farmers who leased water rights will shut off their irri-

gation systems Aug. 15 and leave in the river an additional 5.6 cubic feet per second, or 40 gallons. The irrigation season ends Sept. 15.

The Northwest River Forecast projects that late summer flows will be about one-third of normal, which would leave farmers only a fraction of the water they are usually allowed to withdraw.

Smith, who grows livestock feed and vegetable seeds on about 600 acres, said he believes chances are high that will happen.

He will lease water for about 300 acres and hopes to break even after buying more hay to feed his 400 milking cows.

Leasing the water will reduce the risk he will suffer greater losses, especially if the summer is dry and warm, he said.

It’s uncertain whether the water leased from farmers will be enough to get fish to spawning beds. The fish will include federally endangered chinook salmon and an expected huge run of pink salmon.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife drought coordinator Teresa Scott said the chinook salmon will need at least 10 inches of water and the pink salmon will need 6 inches.

Fish biologists may still have to intervene to create channels for fish to pass, she said.

## Delta watermaster pleased with plan participation

By TIM HEARDEN  
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — The watermaster of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta lauds farmers’ “significant participation” in a plan for senior rights holders to voluntarily cut their water use by 25 percent from 2013 levels.

In all, 229 applications from farmers in the Delta were received by the June 1 deadline, said Michael George, Delta watermaster for the state Water Resources Control Board.

Farmers are following portions of their fields, extending irrigation schedules and taking other measures to meet the terms of a deal that the water board announced on May 22, George said.

“I am very impressed with the level of participation,” he told the Capital Press. He added he was also pleased with the level of detail in the plans.

“They indicated pretty significant plans for actually saving water,” he said. “They go beyond just following 25 percent of the land to include changes in methods or technology used for irrigation, in some cases changes in crops, or changes in the way crops are managed or harvested.”

Some farmers have gotten together with their neighbors to create a program “on a combined basis,” George said.

It’s still uncertain how many acres will be covered or how much water will be saved, although the agreement had the potential to apply to about half the 600,000-acre central and south Delta region, he said. More than 1,000 statements of diversion and use are recorded in the Delta region, with some farmers holding multiple rights, he said.

Many growers hold riparian water rights, which are the

most senior in the state.

About 20 percent of farmland in the area is in permanent crops, so growers would have difficulty taking part in the pact unless they got together with a neighbor who was already following fields, George said.

The ability to participate “really depends on each individual farming operation and where they’re at,” said Bruce Blodgett, executive director of the San Joaquin Farm Bureau Federation in Stockton.

For instance, alfalfa growers typically keep their crop in the ground for five to seven years and rotate it out with less water-dependent crops for a year or two, he said. A farmer that just replanted alfalfa fields this year would have difficulty cutting water use by 25 percent, he said.

“I was talking to a grower yesterday who was the exact opposite,” Blodgett said. “In 2013 he had alfalfa and this year he has other crops in. For him, a 25 percent reduction is easy.”

John Kisst, who farms 900 acres in the Delta, will irrigate some of his fields once a month rather than twice and will leave some fields unplanted, he told The Associated Press. Some growers may switch to less water-intensive crops like safflower, corn and beans.

“This is not a science,” Kisst told the AP. “But we’re expected to make our best effort.”

John Herick, an attorney and manager of the South Delta Water Agency, believes as many as 90 percent of farmers eligible for the program will participate, he told the wire service. George told the Capital Press the participation level may be that high but he isn’t certain.

Delta farmers reached the agreement as junior rights holders throughout the state have had their water shut off or severely restricted for a second straight year because of the drought.

Signing up for the plan will give growers in the Delta region certainty if the water board has to start curtailing senior right holders, George said. The board told growers “that we won’t enforce against you as long as you’re in good faith following a plan for 25 percent in reductions in riparian use,” he said.

In other drought-related developments:

- California’s cities and towns achieved a 13.5 percent reduction in water use in April, according to the water board. They have until June to comply with a mandate to cut water use by 25 percent.

In addition, nearly 400 water suppliers responded to a first-ever enforcement report, signaling efforts to respond to reports of leaks and suspected water wasting, notes a state news release.

- Crews are finishing work about two weeks early on a 750-foot-long temporary barrier in the Delta to prevent saltwater intrusion, the state Department of Water Resources reports. About 100,000 tons of rocks have been placed in the West False River to create the barrier.

## LEGAL

**SECRETARY OF STATE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING HEARING**  
Oregon Department of Agriculture, Market Access & Certification Program, Administrative Rules Chapter #603, Sue Gooch, Rules Coordinator, (503) 986-4583.  
**Adopt:** OAR 603-052-0871 and  
**Amend:** OAR 603-052-0921.

**RULE SUMMARY:** The proposed rule mandates inspection of crucifer fields in the Willamette Valley Protected District (WVVD) for the disease blackleg. Blackleg attacks all the commercially grown members of the Brassicaceae family, including crucifers grown for vegetable seed, oil, forage, and the fresh market. In 2014, the Oregon State University Extension Service announced an outbreak of blackleg had been detected in Oregon, with 70% of crop sites surveyed found with the disease. While certain required mitigation activities have already been mandated by the ODA, the industry and the ODA believe a limited time period (5-years) of mandatory inspections in the WVVD is necessary to bring the blackleg epidemic back under control. The proposed amendment to OAR 603-052-0921 clarifies the crops that may be subject to enforcement activities. Hearing date: June 22, 2015 at 11:00 a.m., ODA, Hawthorne Facility, 151 Hawthorne Ave NE, Salem, OR. Last day for public comment is June 22, 2015.

23-2/#4

## LEGAL

**NOTICE OF OREGON HOP COMMISSION PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING**

The Oregon Hop Commission will hold a public hearing, pursuant to ORS 576.416(5), for the purpose of receiving comments on the Commission’s proposed 2015-2016 budget on Thursday, June 18, 2015, 12:00 noon, at Seven Brides Brewing, 990 N First St, Silverton, OR. At this hearing any producer of Oregon grown Hops has the right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget. Any person wishing to comment on the budget is welcome to do so either orally or in writing. A copy of the proposed budget is available for public inspection during normal business hours, under reasonable circumstances, at the Oregon Hop Commission office located at 3037 G Street - Hubbard, Oregon.

For further information, contact the Oregon Hop Commission office at (503) 982-7600 or nancy@oregonhops.org.

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. A request for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodations for persons with disabilities should be made at least 48 hours in advance.

23-2/#4

## LEGAL

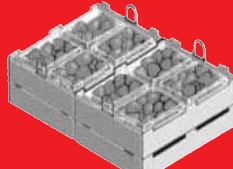
**SECRETARY OF STATE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING**

Oregon Department of Agriculture, Market Access & Certification Program, Administrative Rules Chapter #603, Sue Gooch, Rules Coordinator, (503) 986-4583.  
**Amend:** OAR 603-052-1230.


**RULE SUMMARY:** The most recent survey and detection data from the Oregon Department of Forestry and epidemiology research from Oregon State University indicate that Phytophthora ramorum has increased its rate of spread within Curry County from 1- to 2-mi per year pre-2011, to a current rate of 3- to 4-mi per year. In addition, new infestations have been found near the border of and outside of the existing quarantine boundary. In response, the ODA is proposing to expand the quarantine boundary in the county to encompass the new infestations and to address the increased rate of spread. The ODA is also updating the statutory authorities used to promulgate this rule. Hearing date: June 16, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. Location: Docia Sweet Exhibit Hall, 39392 Ellensburg Ave, Gold Beach, OR. Last day for public comment is June 22, 2015.

23-2/#4

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