

Rain brightens SE Idaho irrigation picture

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

PALISADES, Idaho — Rains in May temporarily put a stop to worsening drought conditions in the Snake River drainage in southeastern Idaho.

The precipitation that fell in that month ranged from 160 to 200 percent of average, depending on the area, according to Mike Beus, the water operations manager in the Upper Snake River field office of the Bureau of Reclamation. He said there were some areas on the Snake plain that received “an extraordinary 3 inches a day.”

“It was especially wet on the south side of the Snake River plain and that’s where the irrigation takes place,” he said.

A dry spell in February had put the system well behind in storing water.

But the late spring rains lessened the demand for stored water for irrigation, demands that had come one to three weeks earlier than normal (early to mid-April). With demand



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

Three weeks of above average rainfall in the Snake River drainage in southeastern Idaho provided much needed water and helped Palisades Reservoir return to a nearly full level by mid-June. Water from the reservoir helps irrigate about 750,000 acres.

down, Jackson Lake, Palisades Reservoir and American Falls Reservoir were able to reload and as of mid-June, the entire system was 89 percent full. Beus said Jackson was 98 percent full on June 15, Palisades was 99.7 percent full and American Falls was 77 percent full.

Beus said most of the Snake drainage’s Snowtel sites

had no snow as of mid-May so the rain was much-needed.

“We were looking at a big hole left in the reservoirs and then three weeks of rain in May have given us a pretty adequate supply of water,” said Brian Olmstead, manager of Twin Falls Canal Co., the largest of the canal companies in Idaho. It has 120 miles of main canals and 1,000 miles of de-

livery laterals.

“Everybody is now starting out with full storage rights,” he said.

Southeastern Idaho producers are feeling fortunate because most other areas in their state, Washington, Oregon and California are suffering drought conditions and agricultural water users have already been cut off or

reduced.

Beus said this year for the Snake drainage has been the opposite of last year, when there was a big snowpack, but then a dry spring. In July last year there was concern about having enough water to get through the season, but then rain fell in August, giving the reservoir system a good carry-over for the 2015 season. Late summer crops, however, did get rained on.

“Sometimes you just have to hold your breath and hope for the best,” Olmstead said.

The Palisades Reservoir saves about 1.3 million acre-feet of water through the winter for use during the growing season on about 750,000 acres of irrigated land. Grain, alfalfa, pasture and a variety of vegetables and seeds depend on the water. The annual value of those irrigated crops is about \$575 million and the annual value of the livestock industry is \$314 million, making the water an important asset.

The Palisades Project was constructed during the 1950s to deal with possible drought conditions.

Twin Falls Canal Co. delivers water to 200,000 acres. Olmstead said if there is a shortage later in the summer, it would probably be alfalfa that would be shorted.

Beus said he expects hay growers in the upper Snake area to have enough water to get three cuttings and growers in the lower area to have four cuttings.

Beus said while it had been anticipated the reservoirs would be drawn drastically down, now it looks like at the end of the summer Jackson Lake will be half full, Palisades Reservoir will be 10-15 percent full and American Falls 8 to 10 percent full.

“That would be a little less than normal, but not a drought situation,” he said.

While the May rains were much needed and well received, they did ruin or lessen the quality of the first hay cutting.

“Sometimes that’s just how it happens,” Olmstead said. “But we’re a whole lot better off than a month ago. I think we’re going to make it through.”



PROUD TO SUPPORT
Members & Families of FFA

ALBANY - EUGENE - ROSEBURG - WOODBURN - CORNELIUS - OREGON CITY - GRESHAM - THE DALLES, OREGON
TAKIMA, EAST WENATCHEE, MOUNT VERMILION, AUBURN, WASHINGTON

www.CoastalFarm.com



29-2/#5



Proud Supporters of

Proud Supporter of FFA



Doerfler Tractor
Heavy Duty & Tractor Sales

12333 Silver Falls Hwy SE
Aumsville, OR 97325
Phone: (503) 769-2205
Fax: (503) 769-9450

ERNST IRRIGATION

20179 Main St., St. Paul, OR 97137



WE CAN HANDLE IT...
Sales, installation and service of all your
Electrical, Pump and Irrigation needs.

CALL TODAY!
503-633-1111

www.ErnstIrrigation.com

Proud Supporter of



Branson

Proud Sponsor of FFA



THE TRACTOR STORE
(541) 342-5464
5450 W. 11th, Eugene, OR
www.capitalpress.biz/hosted/tractorstore



Proud Supporter of FFA

P.O. Box 307 • Canby, OR 97013
888-877-7665

Washington FFA Foundation trains students, teachers



Stewart Padelford, executive director of the Washington FFA Foundation.

FFA members huddle before checking out the trade show at the Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum Feb. 5. The Washington FFA Foundation is offering several programs this month to get more industry technology into the hands of members, better preparing them for agricultural careers, says foundation executive director Stewart Padelford.

The program received a two-year grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Padelford hopes to continue to the program with support from the agriculture industry.

The foundation also hosts two 10-day training institutes for agriculture teachers. The first focuses on natural resources and environmental sciences July 12-22 in Elma, Wash., and the second focuses on animal sciences July 19-29 in Prosser, Wash.

The institutes use new Curriculum for Agriculture Science Education (CASE) teaching practices based on STEM, or science, technology, engineering and mathematics, as related to agriculture.

The teachers will purchase technology currently used by the industry for their programs, better preparing students when they enter the workforce, Padelford said.

“We have a generation of students coming through that have been raised on technology,” he said. “The more we can expose them to technology used in the agriculture industry, I think it’s going to be a great recruiting tool to get more students in ag careers.”

LEGACY

Legacy Ford Lincoln of La Grande
541-963-2161

Proud Sponsor of FFA



PROUD TO SUPPORT FFA




Wilbur-Ellis is proud to support the Future Farmers of America.

ag.wilburellis.com



LET'S GROW TOGETHER!

ARBOR GROVE



NURSERY

At **Arbor Grove Nursery**, we've learned the importance of investing in the future. That's why we support local FFA chapters and their work to create a brighter future for themselves and the agriculture industry.

We also apply this thinking to the work we do for our growers. By investing in new techniques and varieties, we grow plants that will lead to more successful futures for our customers.

Find out more at
AGNursery.com



2015 Ram 2500 Tradesman Crew 4x4 Diesel
RU6069/FG529751, 6 spd. manual, trailer tow mirrors and brake control, UConnect with Bluetooth.
MSRP \$49,375
Rebate \$2,500
Wilson Discount \$3,188
PRICE \$43,687

wilson MOTORS

425 NW Buchanan • Corvallis, OR
503-999-1109
www.saveatwilson.com

Talk directly to the Commercial Sales Manager
garrett.businesslink@wilsonmotors.org



Garrett Lovejoy
Commercial/Fleet Sales Manager

BUSINESS LINK

Proudly providing FFA officers with RAM Trucks this year.





2015 RAM 5500 Reg. Cab Chassis Diesel
RU6043/FG508622, Aisen HD Transmission, 12' platform bed upfit.
MSRP \$49,185
Upfit \$7,999
Discount \$1,997
PRICE \$55,187