

# Drought

## Strong El Nino likely this winter

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — It's now almost certain that strong El Nino conditions will dominate the West this winter, but forecasters still caution that resulting storms may not be enough to bust the drought.

Federal long-range forecasters say there's a 90 percent chance that El Nino, which generally pushes storms from the equatorial Pacific Ocean into the Southwest, will continue in the Northern Hemisphere through the winter of 2015-16.

Further, they give it an 80 percent chance of sticking around into the spring, according to a bulletin from the National Weather Service.

Still, a stubborn ridge of high pressure that's contributed to the drought may prevent the anomalous rains of a super El Nino such as 1997-98, asserts Brett Anderson, an AccuWeather senior meteorologist.

Michelle Mead, a National Weather Service warning coordinator in Sacramento, agrees. She has consistently

urged caution amid some media reports that suggested this could be a historically wet winter.

"As we get closer to winter, the skill in forecasting El Nino strength improves," Mead said in an email. However, graphics from the federal Climate Prediction Center are "already showing some probabilities of seeing above average precipitation for Southern California this fall and winter," she said.

"They continue to show equal chances (of above- and below-average rainfall) for Northern California," she added.

State officials have said California would need above-average rainfall and snowpack this winter to begin to recover from the drought, which is now in its fourth year. El Nino's warm storms could mean snow levels are stuck at higher elevations, which was the case last winter when the state ended up with a historically meager snowpack.

And one wet winter may not be enough to end the drought, AccuWeather senior meteorologist Bernie Rayno advises.

"Current rain deficits are way too large," Rayno said in an online weather bulletin. "Even if California receives that rain that fell in 1997-98, it will not come close to ending the long-term drought."

Forecasters also expressed concerns that strong El Nino conditions would favor a milder-than-normal winter in the Pacific Northwest, causing droughts in Washington and Oregon to persist.

Warming sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific have coupled with wind and storm shifts

to reflect an ongoing and strengthening El Nino, Mead explained.

The development comes as some periodic, unseasonable rain has spritzed California, including last week, when some mountain areas saw as much as 2 inches of rainfall and hail fell around Lake Tahoe and Mt. Shasta, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

However, the temperature and precipitation impacts from El Nino are minimal during the summer, Mead said.

## Irrigation water outlook varies in Treasure Valley

By **SEAN ELLIS**  
Capital Press

The water supply for farmers in the Treasure Valley region of Southwestern Idaho and Eastern Oregon is a mixed bag.

Many farmers will see their irrigation water flow until the first part of October, as normal. But for others, the season could end much earlier.

For those on the short end of the water stick this year, a recent heat wave that saw high temperatures top 100 degrees for a record nine straight days didn't help.

"The hot weather certainly didn't help us; it was really starting to takes its toll," said Jay Chamberlin, manager of the Owyhee Irrigation District, which supplies water to farmers in Eastern Oregon.

Water demand went up by at least 20 percent during that heat wave, he said, and water loss to evaporation and canal seepage was about 45 percent greater than normal.

OID will likely stop delivering water the first week of August, two months earlier than during a decent water year, Chamberlin said.

Farmers on the Idaho side who receive irrigation water from Water District 67, the Weiser River system, are also facing an early shutoff this year. The district began drawing from water it has stored in reservoirs on June 9, one month ahead of normal.

Farmers on the lower end of the Weiser basin will run out of irrigation water in the next couple of weeks "and the rest of us aren't far be-



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Water from Pioneer Irrigation District's Phyllis Canal flows by a farm field in Southwestern Idaho April 13 in this file photo. Many farmers in the Treasure Valley will see their irrigation water flow until the first part of October, but for others, the season could end much earlier.

hind them," said watermaster Brandi Horton.

The heat exacerbated the situation and water deliveries will likely stop the first week of August, she said.

"Evaporation loss from that triple-digit heat we experienced was astronomical," Horton said. "The end of the season is coming real early this year."

But officials from other irrigation districts say the water should flow until the first part of October.

"The heat was devastating" but "we're still looking to get into October," said Alan Newbill, president of the Pioneer Irrigation District board of directors.

Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District, the valley's largest, started drawing from reservoir storage three weeks earlier than normal this year. The district still expects to have a normal season but will likely end the year with

virtually no carryover water, said water superintendent Greg Curtis.

"It looks like we will be able to have a full season; I think we'll at least get to the end of September," he said. "But it looks like it's going to take every bit of storage water we have to do that."

The Boise Project Board of Control, which delivers water to five irrigation districts and 165,000 acres on the Boise River system, expects to continue delivering water until the first part of October, said BPBC Manager Tim Page.

A series of May rainstorms, as well as conservative use of water by farmers who planted more crops that use less water this year, helped significantly, he said.

"I think that made a difference (and) I suspect we will have some carryover water at the end of the year," Page said.

## House GOP, Democrats trade barbs over competing drought bills

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

California lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives are mostly talking at each other as they tout competing measures aimed at easing impacts from the state's historic drought.

Republicans have pushed a bill to the House floor by Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford, which seeks to provide better access for farms and cities to water now set aside for fish under the Endangered Species Act.

Rep. Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, failed at attempts to amend the legislation as it passed the House Natural Resources Committee by a 23-12 vote on July 9. He has unveiled his own bill, which would set aside more than \$1.3 billion for various agency projects such as groundwater recharge and cleaning up contaminated groundwater.

The two bills have been characterized as veritable wish lists from the two parties, but both sides insist their legislation has the best chance of making it through the Senate and being signed by President Obama.

"We're certainly optimistic that some version of this — either on its own or part of a larger bill — will go to the president's desk," said Kevin Eastman, a spokesman for Rep. Doug LaMalfa, R-Richvale, a co-sponsor of Valadao's bill.

The legislation is primarily based on negotiations last year between House Republicans and Democratic Sen.



Courtesy Rep. Jared Huffman

U.S. Rep. Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, speaks at a recent Sonoma County Water Agency-sponsored gathering. His bill proposing more than \$1.3 billion in response to the California drought is one of two competing water-related bills in the House of Representatives.



Courtesy Rep. Jared Huffman

U.S. Rep. Jared Huffman, second from right, tours Littorai Wines in Sebastopol, Calif., while giving the business a sustainability award in April.

Dianne Feinstein, Eastman said.

"We think it's a very balanced, even-handed approach."

Feinstein's office did not return a call or email from the Capital Press seeking comment about the two bills.

Valadao's bill was expected to pass easily in the House but faces dubious odds in the Senate, where some Demo-

crats' support would be needed to overcome a filibuster. The bill is similar to one by Valadao the GOP-led House passed last year but couldn't be reconciled with a Senate measure sponsored by Feinstein. Within its 170 pages, the current bill would cut funding for a San Joaquin River salmon reclamation project that settled a lawsuit, increase operational flexibility for the Central Valley Project during droughts and cut red tape for major water storage projects.

The bill's cosponsors are mostly Republicans, except for Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, who serves on the Agriculture and Natural Resources committees. Costa said the legislation unveiled June 25 "is a comprehensive, common-sense approach that includes short- and long-term solutions" to the drought's impacts.

## Brown's new tunnels plan ratchets back habitat restoration

By **ELLEN KNICKMEYER**  
Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — The latest version of Gov. Jerry Brown's plan to build two giant tunnels ferrying water across California locks in just 15,600 acres for habitat restoration, one-sixth of that committed under Brown's original tunnels proposal, state officials confirmed Monday.

Spokeswoman Nancy Vogel of the Natural Resources Agency said Monday that the state's original pledge to restore 100,000 acres for native fish and other wildlife, at \$8 billion, is no longer warranted because the state is no longer pursuing a sweeping, 50-year environmen-

tal permit for Brown's tunnels project.

Brown is seeking to build twin tunnels to carry water from the delta of the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers to supply what the state says are 25 million residents and 3 million acres of farmland in Central and Southern California. Last week, his administration released a revised proposal with a less ambitious plan to restore habitat, after federal officials balked at the original 50-year environmental permit sought.

The cost of the 50-year environmental mitigation effort, with its 100,000 acres of habitat restoration, also threatened to raise the cost of the project "beyond affordable levels" for the water districts that are slated to pay for much of the tunnels, Mark Cowin, head of the state Department of Water Resources, told reporters.

State and federal officials said Monday that the current, aging system of canals and other conduits ferrying water south from the Delta is broken, and that wildlife will benefit from

modernizing it. Environmental groups and others blame the current state and federal water projects, drought, and other factors for endangering several species of native fish. One, the Delta smelt, turned up in so few numbers in a June state survey that the state Fish and Wildlife Department rated its relative abundance in the wild at 0.0, the lowest rating for the smelt ever.

"We feel we would be remiss if we didn't try to fix the system," Cowin said.

The revised plan commits to 15,600 acres of habitat restoration to offset any environmental harm from construction of the tunnels. State officials now are waiting for a verdict on the revised tunnels plan from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other agencies.

At the same time, the state announced in April that it was dropping the proposal to rehabilitate 100,000 acres in habitat as part of the tunnels plan. Brown announced what state officials called EcoRestore — a project to restore 30,000 acres of habitat.

### LEGAL

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) will hold its regular quarterly meeting on Tuesday, August 4, 2015, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at Miller Woods, 15580 Orchard View Road NW, McMinnville, OR 97128. The meeting agenda covers SWCC reports, advisor reports, Soil and Water Conservation District programs and funding, Agriculture Water Quality Management Program updates, and other agenda items.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need special accommodations to participate in this meeting, please contact Sandi Hiatt at (503) 986-4704, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

29-4/#4

### LEGAL

#### NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces a meeting of the Washington State Technical Advisory Committee on July 28, 2015 from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm, 316 W. Boone Ave., Suite 450, Spokane, WA. Remote access is also available.

For more information contact Sherre Copeland, (360) 704-7758.

29-2/#4

### LEGAL

#### PURSUANT TO ORS CHAPTER 819

Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 7/26/2015. The sale will be held at 10:00am by Wiltse Towing, LLC

3120 Cherry Ave NE Salem, OR

2005 GMC Sierra 1500 PU VIN= 1GTEC14X352208712

Amount due on lien \$1,940.00 Reputed owner(s) Raymond Pederson

Legal-29-2/#4



### PUBLIC HEARING ON WC RANCHES RANGELAND FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

**WHAT:** Public hearing on proposal to include certain lands in the Oregon Wildfire Protection System.

**WHEN:** 2:00 p.m., July 21, 2015.

**WHERE:** Spray Grange, 807 Winlock St., Spray OR 97874

**WHY:** The area currently is covered by Wheeler Co. Fire & Rescue for fire protection, but the landowners have chosen to provide their own fire protection.

**WHO:** Interested members of the public are invited to attend and give testimony.

**MORE INFO:** Public comment is sought on the proposal to: 1) include the WC Ranches Rangeland Fire Protection Association area into the Oregon Wildfire Protection System; and, 2) develop an agreement with the WC Ranches Rangeland Fire Protection Association to provide fire protection to rangelands in portions of Wheeler County. The Association would operate in cooperation with the Oregon Board of Forestry.

Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF) staff will provide background on the proposal and answer questions. A report of the public testimony will then be provided to the Board for review prior to its consideration of the WC Ranches Rangeland Fire Protection Association proposal at its next meeting.

If the proposal is ultimately approved by the Board, the new fire protection association would be directed and managed by local rangeland owners. Associations prepare annual budgets for review by the Board. Operating funds for Association activities typically are derived from annual dues assessed by an association on its members. Grants provided through ODF may provide supplemental funding.

Rangeland fire protection associations were authorized by the Oregon Legislature in 1963 to fill a gap in protection for portions of the state that do not lie within a rural fire protection district or a forest protection district. There are currently 19 active Rangeland Fire Protection Associations.

To ensure the broadest range of services to individuals with disabilities, lead-time is needed to make necessary arrangements. If special materials, services or assistance is required, please contact Marvin Vetter at the Oregon Department of Forestry office in Prineville at least 48 hours in advance, (541) 447-5658 extension 237, text telephone (TTY) (800) 467-4490 (outside Salem) and (503) 945-7213 (in Salem).

29-2/#4