

# Washington



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Keechelus Lake is shown along Interstate 90 just east of Snoqualmie Pass, Wash., on April 3. It is 95 percent full and is one of five reservoirs serving Yakima Basin irrigators.

## Snow doesn't do much to bolster water supply

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — A storm that struck the Washington Cascade Mountains before daylight April 14 dropped snow but didn't alter the statewide snowpack or alleviate water worries for August and September.

The storm hit after midnight and left a fresh dusting of snow in the foothills above Wenatchee and on the Waterville Plateau among other places on the eastern slopes of the Cascades.

Natural Resource Conservation Service measurement sites at 5,400 feet elevation along Nannum Ridge between Wenatchee and Ellensburg picked up 2 to 4 inches of new snow, said Scott Pattee, NRCS water supply specialist in Mount Vernon.

Lyman Lake, at 5,900 feet above Lake Chelan, received 4 inches and Stevens Pass had 5 inches, Pattee said. Fresh snow blanketed the Cascades and the northwest side of the Blue Mountains above Dayton but missed the Olympics and the northeastern corner of the state, he said.

Statewide snowpack was 107 percent of normal on April 5 but it's been rapidly melting since then because of hot weather, Pattee said. Statewide snowpack was 93 percent of normal on April 13 and the storm didn't change it, he said.

The storm did not change the probability that orchards along parts of the Wenatchee, Entiat and Methow rivers and other eastern slope basins with little or no reservoirs could run low on irrigation water in August and September, Pattee said.

"Once the snowpack is this ripe and has begun the melt cycle even cooling off and a light snow is not going to slow the

melt," he said. "It adds moisture but fresh snow on top of the old is mostly lost to evaporation as soon as the sun comes out."

Nonetheless, Washington still has the best snowpack in the 11 Western states, Pattee said.

Odds are this was the last snowfall of the season at mid-elevations in the Cascades, he said.

April through September streamflows are forecast at normal or slightly above with the exception of the Spokane River forecast at 98 percent of normal, Pattee said. The upper Columbia is 125 percent, the central Columbia 110 percent and the upper Yakima Basin at normal, he said.

The Yakima Basin, which saw the most severe drought in 2015, continues to expect full water supply for junior and senior water right holders, said Chris Lynch, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation hydrologist in Yakima.

The five reservoirs serving the Yakima Basin — Keechelus, Kachess, Cle Elum, Bumping and Rimrock — totaled 89 percent of capacity on April 14 up from 76 percent on March 7 and 57 percent on Feb. 1, according to the USBR. Keechelus, the one Interstate 90 motorists see, is at 95 percent. The five reservoirs now are storing 943,681 acre-feet of water and total capacity is 1,065,400.

Ideally the reservoirs won't fill until late May or early June right before drawdown for irrigation starts, Lynch said. They will top off sooner if snowmelt accelerates, he said.

Divisions for the Kittitas Reclamation, Roza and other irrigation districts has started but is mostly coming from points below reservoirs, he said. Some water is being released from reservoirs but is being replenished by inflows.

## WSU creamery adding whey processing facility

University seeks industry partners for equipment funding

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

Washington State University's creamery is adding a \$4 million whey processing facility.

The creamery processes 15,000 pounds of milk per day, resulting in 1,500 pounds of cheese, according to WSU. The remaining liquid, called whey, is a waste product.

The facility will use membrane filtration processing, said John Haugen, manager of the WSU creamery.

"If a student that works here goes out into the dairy industry to work in a cheese plant, they will be working with membrane filtration systems," Haugen said. "A



Courtesy Washington State University Creamery

An architectural rendering shows Washington State University's new whey processing facility, which could allow the university's creamery to gradually double its production capacity and give students experience with filtration processes found in the dairy industry.

big part of what we do at the creamery is give college students some experience they can take out there and make them more valuable to the dairy industry."

Whey powder or protein concentrate is used in energy drink mixes. Larger companies can use this outlet, but the WSU creamery doesn't

produce enough whey to dry. The membrane filtration unit will reduce the whey to a third of its present volume, Haugen said.

The creamery will pump the whey into a tanker truck, which will haul it to WSU's Knott Dairy Farm, where it is stored in a lagoon and eventually sprayed onto nearby farm

fields as fertilizer.

"We don't have a current plan for (the whey), except it will reduce our hauling costs," Haugen said. "There are definitely potential uses for it, anything from animal feed to some graduate student coming up with a drink you could make from that part of the process."

## Berry farm fined \$20,000 for polluting river

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A Whatcom County berry farm in northwestern Washington has been fined \$20,000 for twice letting manure-polluted water run into the Sumas River last fall, the state Department of Ecology said Monday.

Sarbanand Farms LLC applied a manure-sawdust mulch to newly planted blueberry fields in Sumas, near the Canadian border, according to DOE.

Precipitation washed the manure into Saar Creek, a tributary of the Sumas River, which runs into British Columbia, Canada.

DOE collected water samples near the farm twice. Fecal coliform bacteria concentrations were 30 times greater than acceptable levels on Nov. 17 and 175 times greater on Dec. 9, according to DOE.

Sarbanand Farms was fined \$10,000 for each day.

The farm's chief administrative officer, Cliff Woolley, said the farm had made the one-time application of mulch in October.

"Unfortunately, runoff was caused by heavy rains that flooded our fields," Woolley said.

The farm will not ap-



Courtesy of Washington Department of Ecology

Manure-tainted water flows from a Whatcom County berry farm into a creek leading to the Sumas River near the Canadian border in December 2015. The Washington Department has fined Sarbanand Farms \$20,000.

peal the fine to the state's Pollution Control Hearings Board, he said. "Our poli-

cy is to comply with everything," he said.

The applications were

poorly timed, according to DOE.

"Applying manure in the fall, at the start of our rainy season, is always risky," said Doug Allen, manager of Ecology's Bellingham office.

In setting the fine, the DOE says it took into account that the farm had been previously fined for contaminating Saar Creek.

The farm applied manure within 10 feet of ditches in late September 2013, according to DOE. As rain began to fall, the farm tried to plow a ditch to stop the runoff, but the effort was too late to prevent polluted water from flowing into the creek, according to DOE.

In that case, Sarbanand Farms was fined \$4,000.

## WAFLA warns of potential minimum wage hike

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Two initiatives that would increase Washington's minimum wage could be on the Nov. 8 general election ballot, the farm labor organization WAFLA is warning its members.

The state's minimum wage is \$9.47 per hour, but under Initiative 1433 it would increase to \$11 per hour Jan. 1 and add 50 cents per year to hit \$13.50 on Jan. 1, 2020. After that it would increase each year based on the consumer price index.

The measure was introduced Jan. 22 by the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO and the Service Employees International Union. Those groups are working to get the signatures of 246,372 registered voters by July 8 to get it on the ballot.

Rick Anderson, CFO of WAFLA, indicated he has little doubt they will make it. They have the money and organization and have been working hard since the end of January gathering signatures, he said.

As a less onerous alternative for employers, the Washington Restaurant Association put forth I-1518 on March 28 that starts at \$10.50 per hour Jan. 1 and increases 50 cents each Jan. 1 to reach \$12 on Jan. 1, 2020. Then it would revert to annual CPI hikes.

I-1518 also allows a training wage of \$9.50 per hour, or 80 percent of the minimum

wage, whichever is higher, for up to the first 180 days of employment.

Only one employee at a time can earn that training wage for employers with fewer than 10 employees. The limit is 10 percent of the workforce for larger employers.

Both initiatives accrue one hour of paid sick leave for every 40 hours of work. I-1433 does not cap sick leave accrual, but I-1515 does.

WAFLA CEO Dan Fazio said his organization opposes government-mandated wages. In general, some workers get more money and others lose their jobs when minimum wages go up because their production isn't commensurate with the wage, he said.

Employers are pressured, turn to more automation and research shows it does not lift people out of poverty even though it is politically popular, Fazio said.

Minimum wages make it harder for employers to hire workers without skills, he said, adding that entry-level jobs were not meant to be career destinations.

Tim Kovis, Washington State Tree Fruit Association spokesman in Yakima, said the association has not taken a position on the initiatives but generally opposes minimum wage hikes because they make the labor-intensive tree fruit industry less competitive.

Growers not using the H-2A visa foreign guestwork-

er program may have greater exposure, he said. H-2A workers are assured a minimum of \$12.69 per hour but usually H-2A and all other tree fruit pickers make more money on piece rate.

"As agriculture intensifies towards high yields and quality, Agriculturalist will have to expand their concepts and appreciation of Balanced Nutrition" ~Dr. Thomas Yamashita, Plant Pathologist

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