



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press
The issue of development pressure on Oregon farmland is on display in Clackamas County southeast of Portland. A local Soil and Water Conservation District has asked county commissioners to consider the impact on farmland as they pursue additional industrial and commercial land.

Conservation district fights farmland development

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

A renewed move by Oregon's Clackamas County to designate more land for future industrial and commercial development prompted an unusual response from the county's Soil and Water Conservation District.

Usually, the district's board isn't very political, General Manager Tom Salzer said. But the county's decision to review the status of 1,625 acres got the conservation district's attention. The county commissioners want to know if land in three areas south and southeast of the Portland urban center, now set aside as 50-year "rural reserves" and thus open to farming, would be more beneficial as "employment lands."

The commissioners want to review the status of 800 acres south of the city of Wilsonville; 400 acres adjacent to the urban growth boundary of the city of Canby; and 425 acres south of the Clackamas River along Springwater Road. County officials believe the land should revert to "undesigned" rather than rural reserves.

Board members of the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District decided they should speak up. On June 29, Salzer delivered a letter to the five-member county commission. The primary point was succinct: "The District believes the County's current initiative to create employment lands may not adequately consider the long-term value of high-value farmland. A significant amount of the land proposed for reconsideration as employment land is high-value farmland, an irreplaceable natural resource."

Salzer said the conservation district's board is concerned about the long-term future of farmland in Clackamas County, which despite

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Monarch listing decision due in 2019

Endangered or threatened status could affect biotech crops

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Federal wildlife officials have three years to decide whether monarch butterflies should be protected under the Endangered Species Act under a legal settlement with environmentalists.

The government's decision could have implications for genetically engineered crops resistant to glyphosate herbicides, which environmentalists blame for the loss of milkweed that's crucial for the

monarch's survival.

The Center for Food Safety and the Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service earlier this year for failing to make a timely decision whether to list the species as threatened or endangered.

Under the terms of the settlement deal, the agency has until June 30, 2019, to determine whether ESA protection for the butterflies is warranted.

The environmental

groups will be entitled to compensation for their attorney fees as "prevailing parties" in the lawsuit, according to the deal.

Unless they're able to strike an agreement with the government as to the total amount of compensation within two months, the plaintiffs can ask the court to order a payment.

The Fish and Wildlife Service may also get three additional months

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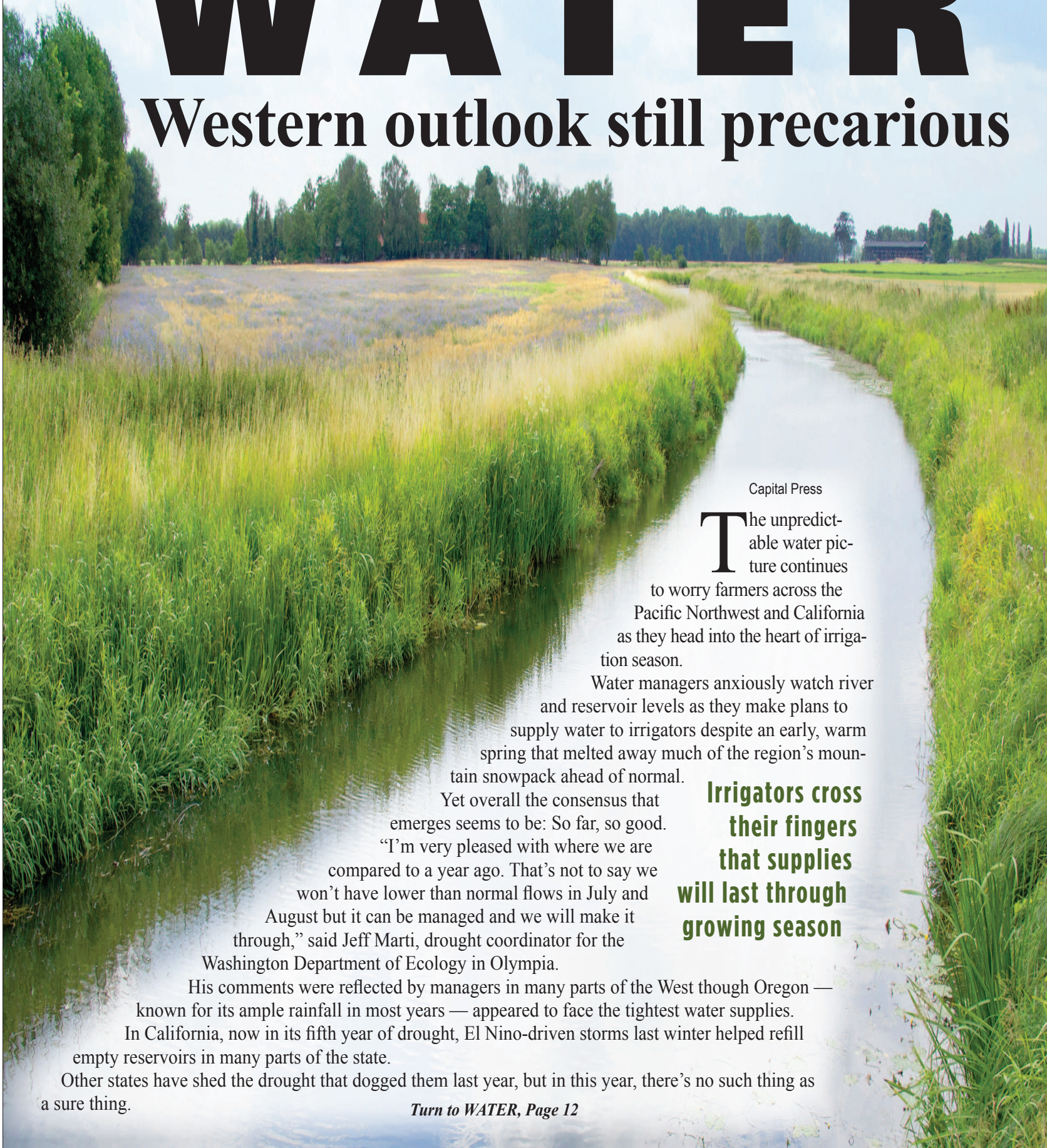


Courtesy of Elizabeth A. Sellers, USGS

Environmental groups have settled a lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for not making a final decision whether to list monarch butterflies as endangered or threatened within 12 months of finding such a listing may be warranted, as required by federal law.

WATER

Western outlook still precarious



Capital Press

The unpredictable water picture continues

to worry farmers across the Pacific Northwest and California as they head into the heart of irrigation season.

Water managers anxiously watch river and reservoir levels as they make plans to supply water to irrigators despite an early, warm spring that melted away much of the region's mountain snowpack ahead of normal.

Yet overall the consensus that emerges seems to be: So far, so good.

"I'm very pleased with where we are compared to a year ago. That's not to say we won't have lower than normal flows in July and August but it can be managed and we will make it through," said Jeff Marti, drought coordinator for the Washington Department of Ecology in Olympia.

His comments were reflected by managers in many parts of the West though Oregon — known for its ample rainfall in most years — appeared to face the tightest water supplies.

In California, now in its fifth year of drought, El Nino-driven storms last winter helped refill empty reservoirs in many parts of the state.

Other states have shed the drought that dogged them last year, but in this year, there's no such thing as a sure thing.

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Irrigators cross their fingers that supplies will last through growing season

Western U.S. drought conditions (As of June 21)

Legend

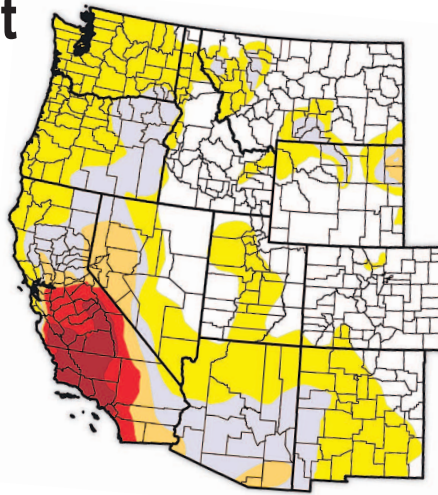
D0-Abnormally dry	D3-Drought (extreme)
D1-Drought (moderate)	D4-Drought (exceptional)
D2-Drought (severe)	

Intensity of drought by percent area affected

Date	None	D0-4	D1-4	D2-4	D3-4	D4
Current	37.9%	62	27.4	10.9	5.7	2.8
3 mo. ago	32.4	67.6	34.1	15.4	9.5	4.7
1 yr. ago	23.9	76.1	57.9	35.9	17.1	7.3

Source: National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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