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# Idaho

## Severe flooding hits Southern Idaho hard

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

Heavy rains, warm weather and melting snow have combined to cause widespread flooding across Southern Idaho, with Cassia County bearing the brunt of the damage.

Canals and creeks are overflowing, roads have been washed out or closed, basements are flooding and water is standing up to 2 feet deep in fields or causing erosion as it runs to lower ground.

"It's pretty devastating for sure. In the Malta area, there's 100 percent devastation; it's incredible," said Joel Packham, Cassia County Extension educator.

A lot of the area is under water, many houses are threatened and a lot of fields are going to be affected, he said.

"There's going to be a lot of erosion because of runoff; it's going to hurt a lot of fields," he said.



John O'Connell/Capital Press

A fall wheat field near American Falls, Idaho, is covered with standing water on Feb. 10. Widespread flooding is damaging crops and fields and stressing livestock in Southern Idaho.

Any crops that were planted in the fall are going to have a difficult time. The flooding will rot seed in the ground and make it difficult for young plants to survive. Alfalfa could see some winter kill, but it's pretty resilient, he said.

Dairymen are really struggling. They just don't have a

dry place for the cows. They're doing all the strawing they can, but the water is just sucking it up. It's going to be very difficult to mitigate this much water, he said.

"It's very difficult to take care of something that drastic," he said.

If it were just snow or just

rain without frozen ground, they could manage, but they're getting hit with all three, he said.

In addition, many wastewater lagoons are full because of all the water, he said.

"They were built for a 100-year storm, and we're probably in the middle of it," he said.

Many ranchers have hill country they can take cattle to, but it's going to be soft and muddy. One rancher just opened the gate to BLM land to get his cattle on ground and out of the water, he said.

"He was willing to deal with the consequences rather than have them in water. I hope the government would be understanding of that," he said.

"I've never seen it be this bad. I'm just fearful these mountains are going to cut loose with more water. The old-timers I've spoken with think there's a lot of water yet to come," he said.

Nearby in Minidoka Coun-

ty, staff at the county extension office said it's the worst flooding they've ever seen.

"Dealing with the flood is a big problem right now. A lot of people are trying to pump or sandbag trying to curb the flooding," said Carlo Moreno, extension educator.

Water on roadways and in fields is 1-1/2 to 2 feet deep, he said.

It's definitely going to delay field work. It's not uncommon for farmers in the area to be working the ground in February and March. But even after the water drains, the ground is going to be saturated for a while and they won't be able to cultivate or plant, he said.

The flooding is widespread and everyone in the Magic Valley is in the same boat, said Steve Hines, extension educator for Jerome County.

The major concern is for winter wheat, winter barley and alfalfa in low-lying fields with large areas under

water, he said.

"It'll wipe out anything that's under water. Some have been under water and ice since the last warm weather about a month ago," he said.

Any areas with a huge amount of runoff, such as Malta in Cassia County, are going to have significant erosion, which will require mechanical fixes, he said.

In recent years, farmers have planted sugar beets and spring wheat in late February and early March. This year, it'll be a rush to get them in the ground, he said.

The wet weather isn't helping livestock, either. No doubt those in the hardest-hit areas have had to move to higher ground. Ranchers are in the middle of calving, and the wet, sloppy weather is hard on newborn calves. Dairy dry lots are flooded, cows are dirty despite additional straw and the sloppy conditions are hard on equipment, he said.

## Idaho Grain Producers offering discount to build membership

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — Representatives of the Idaho Grain Producers Association are offering discounted memberships to build their ranks, seeking greater influence on priority issues ranging from drafting a new farm bill to protecting trade with key partners.

IGPA Executive Director Stacey Satterlee said the organization began covering \$50 of the \$75 annual enrollment fee in January and will offer the discount throughout February.

IGPA is funded through voluntary dues and contributions, including from industry supporters. IGPA serves as the legislative lobbying arm of Idaho's grain industry and also pays dues to the National Association of Wheat Growers and the National Association of Barley Growers.

Satterlee said IGPA made its major membership push



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Teton, Idaho, farmer Dwight Little, who serves as vice president of Idaho Grain Producers Association, recruits new members during the recent Agricultural Expo at Holt Arena in Pocatello.

during the week ending Feb. 11, sending grower leaders to speak at University of Idaho Extension cereal schools. She hopes new members will stick with IGPA upon learning of its efforts and accomplishments.

"IGPA undertook a stra-

tegic planning process at the end of last year, and part of that was recognizing that we as an organization are working on behalf of all of Idaho's grain producers," Satterlee said. "We represent over 600 farming families in the state of Idaho, but essentially, we'd like to say we represent all (grain farming) families in Idaho."

IGPA Vice President Dwight Little, a Teton farmer who is also slated to become the next National Association of Barley Growers president, recruited growers at the Feb. 9 cereal school in Idaho Falls.

"(IGPA) allows a producer who has a problem to have a place to go to express that problem," Little said.

Little spoke about his recent trip to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress on behalf of IGPA, as did a younger grower who made the trip through an IGPA mentoring program.

Nationally, Little said, IGPA will discourage any cuts to crop insurance in the next farm bill, and urge the reduction of the beer excise tax.

Satterlee said IGPA also met with federal lawmakers to encourage the continuation of a good trade relationship with Mexico. President Donald Trump has proposed a 20 percent tariff on Mexican imports to fund construction of a border wall. According to U.S. Wheat Associates, Mexican flour millers imported 2.4 million metric tons of U.S. wheat during the seven months preceding Feb. 2 — the largest volume of any country.

## Cattle grant helps Mackay school start ranch

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

MACKAY, Idaho — When sixth period begins, five Mackay Junior-Senior High School students become ranchers, responsible for a small herd of calves.

High schools commonly teach animal husbandry from textbooks and use oranges to simulate livestock when students practice administering injections.

But in Custer County, where more than 90 percent of the land base is federally owned and public lands grazing reigns supreme, agriculture teacher Trent Van Leuven decided there could be no substitute for the real thing.

"Instead of talking about a subcutaneous injection, we actually do it subcutaneously," Van Leuven said.

Van Leuven recently started his school's "ranch" with a \$3,900 grant from the Idaho Cattle Foundation, which administers a fund to benefit the industry and livestock education.

The fund is supported by \$28,000 to \$35,000 per year in donations and proceeds from the state brand department's sales of livestock with no clear ownership records, said DuWayne Skaar, the foundation's vice president and Lewisville feed lot owner.

"Our goal is to try to get the money back to the industry, and the youth in this industry so we can keep people interested in the industry itself," Skaar said. "The youth are the key to it."

Van Leuven constructed calf housing and bought supplies with the grant. He had to approach all of the surround-



Courtesy of Trent Van Leuven

From left to right, Macey Warner, Emma Patterson, Daisy Bernal and Courtney Michaelson, and Ally Freeman, front, who are students in the Agri 109 class at Mackay Junior-Senior High School, pose with the calves they're raising to learn about animal husbandry.

ing residents to obtain permission to raise cattle within city limits before the Mackay City Council would grant him a zoning exemption, allowing his students to raise up to 10 calves and four sheep. He also plans to plant sainfoin for grazing forage throughout the school's 5-acre "land lab."

Those who pass his senior-level Agri 109 class will get four credits at the College of Southern Idaho. He also uses the herd to teach eighth-graders about record keeping, in preparation for their own FFA projects.

He took Agri 109 students on a Jan. 11 field trip to the livestock auction in Idaho Falls, hoping to bid on calves, but ultimately purchased Holsteins from a local dairy.

Running a school ranch has required extra commitment from his students, who show up before school to bottle-feed and otherwise tend to the calves. The class would have been bigger, but Van Leuven said some students

withdrew when they learned they'd be expected to conduct artificial insemination. What some students viewed as unpleasant, others considered an opportunity.

"I want to be a veterinarian, so this class will really help when I get into that field," said Emma Patterson, adding she's benefited from a hands-on approach to concepts such as tube feeding and castrating livestock.

A few of the calves have already been sold to local ranchers to bond with mother cows that lost their calves — called grafting in the industry.

Mackay rancher Dan Mulick, who bought two calves, said they've grafted well, and he was pleased to support the school's program.

"It's fantastic really," Mulick said. "These kids have to be responsible for calves and show up before school and take care of them and make sure they're strawed down, and watered and fed."

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