

San Joaquin growers to get 65 percent of requested CVP water

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Growers on the San Joaquin Valley's west side will get 65 percent of their requested Central Valley Project surface water supplies in 2017, federal officials announced March 22.

Agricultural water users north of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta will get their full supplies, as will Northern California urban areas and customers of the Contra Costa Water District, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation officials said.

Municipal and industrial customers south of the Delta

will get 90 percent of requested deliveries. More water could be provided south of the Delta this year if conditions allow, officials said.

Bob Curtis, the Almond Board of California's director of agricultural affairs, said the 65 percent allocation is "welcome" after the Westside received little or no federal surface water during the drought. But he hopes the allocation will be increased, he said.

"That's a significant portion of our industry," Curtis said of Westside almond orchards. "On the Westside, individuals have been playing catch-up."

To make the most of water stored in the San Luis Reser-

voir, Reclamation will limit the amount of water carried over to the 2018 contract year to 150,000 acre-feet, or about 10 percent of this year's allocation, a bureau news release explained.

The announcement follows the bureau's decision in late February to give full allocations for many growers served by the Central Valley Project, including the settlement and exchange contractors on the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, respectively, and the Friant division in the eastern San Joaquin Valley.

Westside growers weren't expecting a full allocation, which Fresno County Farm Bureau chief executive of-

ficer Ryan Jacobsen called "unacceptable" considering the winter's abundance of rain and snow.

As of March 21, California's snowpack water content was 158 percent of normal statewide and the San Luis Reservoir west of Los Banos, Calif., was at 99 percent of capacity, according to the state Department of Water Resources.

"It really shows you how broken the system is and how frustrating it is for those folks who are not able to receive the water they're contracted to receive," Jacobsen said. "When you look at a year like this year, how can anything short of 100 percent be possible?"

But that's realistically what we're looking at."

Hundreds of thousands of acres on the Westside have been followed in recent years as surface water supplies have steadily decreased because of protections for imperiled fish, growers' advocates say. The Westside only received 5 percent last summer despite late-season storms that provided more water elsewhere.

Bureau officials were weighing several factors in determining the remaining allocations, including reservoir levels and hydrologic conditions. They were also waiting for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

to complete its fisheries' temperature management plan for Shasta Lake, the centerpiece of the CVP.

The bureau typically announces its initial allocations in mid-February, although it waited until April 1 last year to take into account anticipated storms in March while giving informal reports to water districts.

The federal allocations come as the State Water Project has so far promised 60 percent of requested deliveries to its 29 contracting agencies. State officials said an increase is being discussed, but they couldn't say when or by how much the allocation could be raised.



Courtesy Owyhee Irrigation District

This aerial picture of the Owyhee River basin was taken March 13. The basin received snowpack levels that were well above normal this year and the Owyhee Reservoir is expected to receive so much runoff water from the basin this year that water managers have turned their attention to preventing major flooding.

Owyhee Reservoir water managers focus on preventing major flooding

By **SEAN ELLIS**
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — The Owyhee River basin is expected to provide the Owyhee Reservoir so much water this year that water supply managers are now focusing much of their attention on flood control efforts.

The reservoir, which provides water for 1,800 farms and 118,000 acres in Eastern Oregon and part of southwestern Idaho, is 90 percent full and would completely fill within nine days at the current pace.

However, Owyhee Irrigation District board members have opted to increase the already high rate of release below the dam to keep a 50,000 acre-foot buffer in the reservoir for the next several weeks in case warm temperatures or a significant rain event result in a rush of water toward the reservoir.

If that happened, reservoir outflows would have to be increased dramatically, which could result in major flooding of farm fields along the Owyhee River.

"The basin is just saturated; there's water everywhere out there," OID Manager Jay Chamberlin said March 21 during the district's annual meeting. "We're running out of room (in the reservoir). We're going to have to pick up the releases below the dam ... and slow the rate of fill."

For now, there is minor flooding occurring at the bottom ends of some farm fields but water managers want to ensure major flooding doesn't occur, said Malheur County farmer and OID board member Bruce Corn.

"Barring a major rain event, I don't think we'll have any major flooding on the Owyhee this year," he said. But in order to ensure that doesn't happen, "we're trying to save about 50,000 acre-feet of storage to be able to absorb any short-term, rapid increase in flows."

Even with the increased releases, filling the reservoir to its 715,000 acre-foot storage



Courtesy Owyhee Irrigation District

Water is released for flood control purposes from the Owyhee Reservoir dam March 13. The Owyhee Reservoir is expected to receive so much runoff water from the basin this year that water managers have turned their attention to preventing major flooding.

capacity, which hasn't happened since 2011, won't be a problem this year.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation forecasts that hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water is still headed toward the reservoir, which can hold a two-year supply of water.

That's great news for local farmers, who had their normal 4-acre-foot allotment of water significantly reduced from 2012-2015 due to drought conditions.

"That means we will have two adequate water years," Corn said. "That sits well for next year already and it takes one big worry out of farming."

As expected, the OID board set this year's allotment at 4-acre-feet March 21 and it also decided to allow the sale of excess water, which hasn't occurred on this system since 2011.

In a typical year when excess water is available, about 30,000 acre-feet is purchased by irrigators, depending on weather conditions and crop rotations.

Due to warmer than normal temperatures, snowmelt and runoff in the basin is occurring earlier than normal, "but we have lots of it," said Brian Sauer, water operations manager for the Bureau of Reclamation's middle Snake

River field office.

"Everything looks pretty good in most of East Oregon," he said. In fact, he added, "The whole northwest is looking pretty good this spring."

Willamette Valley vineyards building facilities to make white, sparkling wines

By **ERIC MORTENSON**
Capital Press

At least two Willamette Valley vineyards are building new wineries to produce white and sparkling wines, perhaps indicating an expanding market in a region best known for red Pinot noir.

Domaine Serene, of Dundee Hills, has begun construction of an 8,000-square-foot winery dedicated to producing Chardonnay, sparkling wine and a white version of Pinot noir, the wine that made the Willamette Valley a player in the international wine scene.

The facility is expected to be ready in time for the 2018 harvest. Domaine Serene also has planted 25 acres of Chardonnay grapes over the past three years.

"We're doubling down on it," company spokesman Matthew Thompson said. "We feel very good about the high quality of Oregon Chardonnay."

Reviewers appear to agree. Wine Spectator magazine rated Domaine Serene's 2014 Evenstad Reserve Chardonnay second among the 10 best wines of 2016, and the top-rated white.

Instead of producing white wine elsewhere, Domaine Serene's new winery will have dedicated facilities for Chardonnay and sparkling wines, plus cold storage capability. Construction began March 1.

Meanwhile, Willamette



Courtesy of Domaine Serene

In a photo taken earlier this winter, an excavator clears space for a new, 8,000-square-foot winery at Domaine Serene vineyard in Dayton, Ore. The new winery will focus on white wine production.

Valley Vineyards, based near Salem, added seven acres of Chardonnay grapes and is working with architects on a planned sparkling wine facility in the Dundee region as well.

Company Winery Director Christine Collier said consumer demand for lighter, crisp whites is driving the changes. Rosé wines also are increasingly popular.

"We're definitely seeing a trend in Oregon wine to ex-

pand Chardonnay programs," she said. "The demand is high right now."

Michelle Kaufmann, newly appointed communications director at Stoller Family Estate, said Chardonnay is "absolutely on the rise" in Oregon.

"Many people believe that it will overtake Pinot gris as Oregon's number one white wine, though I'm not sure there's enough data yet to make that claim," Kaufmann said by email.

She said the nuances of producing exceptional white and sparkling wines are different than making red wines, so wineries' decision to have facilities dedicated to that production makes sense.

But Pinot noir isn't fading by any means.

The Oregon Wine Board's 2015 report showed Pinot noir accounted for 62 percent of the 24,742 acres planted to wine grapes in Oregon. A pair of whites were a distant second and third: Pinot gris with 3,403 acres, and Chardonnay with 1,181 acres.

"I don't think it's too far of a stretch at all that Oregon is entering the next chapter in our wine history," Kaufmann said.

Kaufmann previously was communications director for the Oregon Wine Board. She and vineyard manager Jason Tosch are recent hires at Stoller, in Dayton. Also at the company, Ben Howe was promoted to winemaker and Austin Raz to digital brand manager.

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NOTICE OF OREGON MINT COMMISSION BUDGET HEARING
TO: ALL OREGON MINT GROWERS
Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Thursday, April 13, 2017 at 10:00 a.m., at the White Buffalo Bistro, 4040 Westcliff Drive, Hood River, Oregon upon a proposed budget for operation of the Mint Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018. At this hearing any producer of Oregon Mint oil has a right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget, a copy of which is available for public inspection, under reasonable circumstances, in the office of each County Extension Agent in Oregon. For further information, contact the Oregon Mint Commission business office, P.O. Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302, telephone 503-364-2944. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. Please make any requests for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodation for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944.
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