

Washington

Snow mold damage minimal, researchers say

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Eastern Washington farmers who had snow mold on their wheat earlier this year had to wait to see if the crop would recover, and now it looks like the damage will be minimal, researchers say.

"Which was a little bit surprising," said Ryan Higginbotham, director of Washington State University's cereal variety testing program. "Given the level of snow cover we had, I expected to see more long-term damage. But the resistant varieties bounce back very well."

Higginbotham expected some areas where the snow cover lasted longest to have more damage.

"If it didn't recover, it's not going to," he said.

WSU Extension plant pathologist Tim Murray also expected worse damage. Snow covered most of Eastern Washington for 60 days, and up to 110 days in the Waterville Plateau, an area that often has snow mold.

Farmers there tend to plant varieties with good snow mold resistance, he said.

"In a way, it's not surprising that the damage wasn't really all that severe," he said. "Nobody's growing something up there that is fully susceptible."

Twenty farmers in Prescott, Wash., got a rare instance of snow mold due to different varieties and earlier planting dates.

Actual damage varied in the Prescott area of southeastern Washington, Murray said.

"This is one of the diseases that is just very weath-



Tim Murray/Washington State University
Washington State University researchers say much of the wheat impacted by snow mold has rebounded nicely.

er-dependent," he said, pointing to frozen soil and length of snow cover as key factors.

During a 20-year period, snow mold occurs about half the time, he said.

"It's not like you can predict which half of those years it's going to be," Murray said. "You might have it three or four years in a row, and then not have it at all for three or four years."

Wheat breeders now have good information on the next wheat variety lines in development and can discard susceptible lines, Higginbotham said. His field trials didn't produce any big surprises.

"The ones we have known possessed snow mold resistance still showed to be resistant," Higginbotham said.

Higginbotham recently released snow mold ratings for wheat varieties. Growers who worry about snow mold each year should select the highest-rated variety for their production needs, he said.

"If you only see snow mold once every 20 or 30 years, then I wouldn't sacrifice yield potential for snow mold resistance," he said.

WSU dryland research station reports record snow cover

May, June rains would boost wheat yields

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Precipitation is near an all-time high at Washington State University's dryland research station in Lind, Wash., after a record number of days with continuous snow cover.

The 76 days of snow cover beat the previous record of 70 days in 1985, said Bill Schillinger, station director.

The station has had 14.13 inches of precipitation for the crop year, which runs Sept. 1 through Aug. 31. That puts the year at fourth-place in the station's recorded history, dating back 97 years.

The station received the most precipitation in 1948, with 22.71 inches. The aver-



Courtesy Washington State University

WSU's dryland research station in Lind, Wash., reported a record 76 days of continuous snow cover.

Online

<http://lindstation.wsu.edu/>

age is 9.56 inches.

"It's so wet this year, it's already moved our 97-year average," Schillinger said. "Even if we don't get another drop of rain, we've gone from 9.56 inches of annual precip average long-term up to 9.60 inches. We gained four one-hundredths."

Farm Bureau, allies drop suit against minimum wage

Coalition won't appeal ruling of lower court

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The Washington Farm Bureau and other business groups have dropped their effort to overturn the voter-approved initiative that raised the minimum wage and mandated paid sick leave for workers.

The business coalition

announced Friday it won't appeal a judge's ruling that upheld the constitutionality of Initiative 1433.

The coalition had argued I-1433 violated the state constitution by having two subjects. Kittitas County Superior Court Judge Scott Sparks ruled I-1433 had just one subject, labor standards.

National Federation of Independent Business state director Patrick Connor issued a parting criticism of the decision.

"What this ruling tells future initiative drafters is that

they can overlook the Washington Constitution's crystal clear instruction that the titles of ballot initiatives be a single subject," Connor said in a written statement.

I-1433 passed in November and raised the minimum wage to \$11 an hour on Jan. 1, tying Washington with New York and Massachusetts for the state with the highest pay floor. Yearly increases are scheduled until the wage reaches \$13.50 in 2020, with annual increases for inflation after that. Employers will be required to provide paid sick

leave beginning next year.

In a written ruling, Sparks said he set a high bar for overturning a voter-passed law. He said the challengers failed to show beyond a reasonable doubt that I-1433 was unconstitutional.

For precedent, he cited a 2015 state Supreme Court ruling, *Filo Foods v. City of SeaTac*. The court upheld a city ballot measure that raised the minimum wage for some workers in the city and included other labor provisions. The court held the measure's only subject was labor standards.

bushels per acre. Schillinger expects "substantially" higher yields this year, but says anything can happen between now and harvest.

In 1997, when the station received 15.01 inches of precipitation, yields averaged 77 bushels per acre.

"These farmers are about ready to get a break here," Schillinger said. "They've gone through some drought years and wheat prices went low."

Washington FFA chooses new state officers

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

PULLMAN, Wash. — Washington FFA installed a new slate of officers to cap its annual gathering, which attracted 3,318 members and advisers.

The new officers will demonstrate the power of letting the student leadership organization truly be guided by students, the organization's officials say.

New officers elected during the 87th Washington FFA Convention and Expo in Pullman, Wash., are president Seth Smith of Tonasket, vice president Mollee Gray of Medical Lake, secretary Taylor Enns of White River, treasurer Sydney Klaveano of Pullman, reporter Kelci Scharff of Cheney and sentinel Matt Rounsley of Tenino.

Smith said he hopes to talk about FFA's possibilities for all students in the coming year.

"It's really open for everybody," he said.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

A joyous Seth Smith of Tonasket, the incoming president of the Washington State FFA, hugs a friend at the end of the FFA convention May 13 in Pullman, Wash.

Smith said he doesn't have an agriculture background, but became involved in FFA through a novice parliamentary procedure leadership development event.

"It opened up all these doors and this new journey I'm on ... learning about this industry," he said. "I realized how passionate I was about it and how effective it was in our world."

Smith hopes to attend law school and ultimately work in natural resources law or water rights law.

Outgoing president Alyssa McGee in her retiring address urged members not to get so distracted by their goals that they miss the beauty of living in the moment.

"Over the next few years, that (FFA) jacket will serve as a collection of both great mo-

ments as well as moments of struggle," she said. "Hold on tightly to both."

"I'm excited to hear from them what they envision Washington FFA to be in the next year," Rebecca Wallace, Washington FFA state adviser, said of the new officers.

"I can't wait to see what kind of expectations they set for themselves this year, and then surpass," said Abbie DeMeerleer, Washington FFA Association executive director. "This is a dynamic new group of individuals, and I think they're going to have some pretty innovative and exciting ideas for the association."

DeMeerleer hopes the industry greets the new officers with open arms, to help them better understand the "ins and outs" of the industry and its trading partners "so that these six students, in all of their travels throughout the year, can best represent not only FFA, but Washington agriculture as a whole."



Washington FFA Association

From left, new Washington FFA state president Seth Smith of Tonasket, treasurer Sydney Klaveano of Pullman; reporter Kelci Scharff of Cheney; vice president Mollee Gray of Medical Lake; secretary Taylor Enns of White River and sentinel Matthew Rounsley of Tenino.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Outgoing Washington State FFA president Alyssa McGee of Sumner delivers her retiring address during the convention May 13 in Pullman.

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