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John O'Connell/Capital Press

The American Falls Reservoir in southeast Idaho remains full on July 13 even though most farmers in the area have passed their period of peak demand for water, thanks to abundant natural Snake River flows.

Upper Snake irrigators pass peak demand with full reservoirs

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — Most Upper Snake River irrigators are past their peak period for water usage, but they still have a full reservoir system to work with, water managers said on July 12.

Lyle Swank, watermaster for the Upper Snake District, explained the Bureau of Reclamation stopped releasing flood-control water below Milner Dam on July 6 to top off the reservoirs, effectively ending a prolonged spring aquifer recharge program following one of the wettest Idaho winters in recent memory.

Looking ahead to this fall and winter, Swank said conditions may again be well suited for additional recharge — which entails intentionally injecting surface water into the aquifer through unlined canals and spill basins to address a long trend of declining groundwater levels.

Swank anticipates the system's reservoirs will finish the year at half to 60 percent of capacity.

He explained the reservoirs recently reached "surcharge" levels — meaning they technically peaked briefly at more than 100 percent full, but were still within a safety margin requiring no "additional action." Jackson Lake Reservoir reached 100.5 percent full, Palisades Reservoir was 100.4

percent full and American Falls Reservoir peaked at 100.3 percent of capacity.

The day of allocation — when snowpack runoff begins to decline from its peak, flow augmentation to benefit endangered fish begins and the system's most junior natural flow water rights holders start drawing from storage — was declared on July 10. The system was down to 99.8 percent full by July 12, with natural flow rights with priority dates beyond 1921 shut off.

Luke Hicks, director of the Burgess Canal Co., said most of his grain growers have already shut off irrigation, and his company recently reduced its deliveries from 1,100 cubic feet per second to 1,000 cubic feet per second, due to the drop in demand.

"Our goal would be to carry over about 50 percent (of storage)," Hicks said. "If we carry over more, then we'll look to recharge or some way to use that."

Aberdeen-Springfield Canal Co. has also started reducing its diversions due to grain acres coming off the system. General Manager Steve Howser said his company's deliveries peaked at 1,250 cubic feet per second — roughly 100 cubic feet per second below the usual peak level due to the combination of new liner in a leaky reach of canal and heavy silt from flood-control releases helping to "seal the bottom."

Judge to decide on vote to save farm ground

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — The fate of a proposed petition to ask voters to save 1,400 acres of farmland from being developed could be decided during an Aug. 8 court hearing.

Farmers and other residents of the Dry Creek Valley five miles north of Boise are attempting to use a little known section of Idaho code to stop the Dry Creek Valley Ranch planned development from moving forward.

The \$100 million project would build 1,800 homes and 85,000 square feet of commercial space on the area.

Members of the Dry Creek Valley Coalition last month filed a petition with the Ada County clerk's office that seeks to put to a public vote an Ada County Commission ordinance adopted earlier this year that allows the project to move forward.

Idaho Code 31-717 provides a mechanism by which people can put a county commission decision to a vote during a special election.

Ada County Clerk Christopher Rich sent a letter to petition supporters saying his office could not accept the



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

The Dry Creek Valley north of Boise would be turned into homes and businesses unless a petition that seeks to ask voters to overturn a county ordinance is successful. A district judge has ordered the Ada County clerk to accept the initial petition for filing, but that decision is being challenged.

petition for filing "because it was not submitted within 30 days of final publication of the ordinance."

Petition supporters say Idaho Code actually says the petition can't be submitted until 30 days after the ordinance is passed and they filed a complaint against the clerk's decision in district court.

District Judge Jonathan Medema issued a writ ordering Rich to accept the petition for filing or appear before him Aug. 8 "to show cause why he has not accept-

ed that petition for filing."

The judge's order is encouraging, said Brian Ertz, an attorney for the development opponents.

"The fact that the judge issued a writ is a good sign," he said.

However, the developer, Boise Hunter Homes, has filed a petition with a different judge that asks the court to issue a writ preventing the clerk from filing the petition.

The clerk's office has filed a motion to consolidate the two competing complaints.

Medema will also hear that motion during the Aug. 8 hearing.

Phil McGrane, chief deputy of the Ada County clerk's office, told Capital Press that the clerk's office is waiting for the court to rule on the matter. Given the competing complaints, it would be premature for the clerk to file the petition before that happens, he said.

"We want the court to tell us what the right course of action is and we're happy to execute it," he said. "We want to do the right thing."

Opponents of the planned development will file a motion to intervene in the developer's complaint "just in case the consolidation doesn't happen," Ertz said.

If the court does agree with development opponents and the petition is filed, they will have 180 days to collect the estimated 40,000 signatures it will take to prompt a special election.

Although getting the initial petition filed is only the beginning of the process, "We're hopeful and optimistic we'll be able to push (the petition) through that process," said Stephanie Rael, a farm hand who is leading the effort.

Breeders tout new cereal lines in Aberdeen trials

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

ABERDEEN, Idaho — Several new wheat and barley varieties that have been outstanding performers in University of Idaho field trials should soon provide area growers with improved yields and disease resistance, as well as specialized traits addressing several critical needs.

Public and private breeding program representatives highlighted their top new cereal lines during a July 13

field day at the University of Idaho's Aberdeen Research and Extension Center.

Earlier this year, Gongshe Hu, barley breeder at USDA's Aberdeen Agricultural Research Service, released Kardia, a two-row, hulled spring barley for use in the burgeoning human food barley market. Kardia contains 13 percent of a heart-healthy fiber called beta glucan — a higher amount than other available food barley lines without sacrificing yields.

Hu said several groups in Washington and Oregon are interested in Kardia. Hu explained his program should also soon release the first of its winter food barley lines.

A spring malt barley line from Hu's program, ARS 10-65, should be ideal for craft brewing, and its low protein level may enable southeast Idaho dryland farmers to start raising malt barley. Protein levels in most barley lines generally rise above malting specifications under water stress.

"We hope we can find some varieties for dryland growers so they may be able to grow some malting barley," said Hu, who believes ARS 10-65 could fill the niche, if the industry accepts it.

Hu explained he presented some of his elite lines with desirable craft brewing characteristics for evaluation by the American Malting Barley Association, and ARS 10-65 has emerged as the top option.

Frank Curtis, of Limagrain Cereal Seeds, believes a European two-row spring barley he's introduced in the U.S., called LCS Odyssey, will solve a challenge for southeast Idaho barley growers,



John O'Connell/Capital Press

University of Idaho wheat breeder Jianli Chen discusses her top new varieties during a July 13 field day at UI's Aberdeen Research and Extension Center.

who struggle with cereal cyst nematodes. Odyssey, a craft variety that's commonly used in whiskey production abroad, provides the only strong resistance to the nematode, Curtis said.

The Limagrain hard red winter wheat, LCS Jet, was the top yielding variety in its class in the Aberdeen trials. Curtis said the variety was distributed in Washington and Oregon in 2016, and its first Idaho distribution will be this fall.

"I think it's got potential to become a market leader," Curtis said.

Curtis believes UI Magic, a new Clearfield Plus soft white wheat developed in a partnership between UI and Limagrain, is widely adapted for the Northwest, has strong disease resistance and good yields. It was conventionally bred to resist the active ingredient in Beyond herbicide.

Trenton Stanger, of West-

Bred, said a new soft white winter wheat, WB 1783, had the top yield in its class in last year's Aberdeen trials, as well as excellent stripe rust resistance, and should be commercially available to Idaho growers in the fall of 2018.

UI wheat breeder Jianli Chen said seed of her new soft white winter wheat, UI Sparrow, is now being expanded and should be available commercially in the fall of 2018. It's high yielding, ideal for dryland, resists stripe rust and is among the few soft white winter wheats with dwarf bunt resistance.

Chen plans to release two soft white spring wheats in 2018 — IDO 1405, which has head blight resistance, and IDO 1403, which is less susceptible to low falling number, referring to a test measuring increased activity of an enzyme that breaks down starch and reduces grain quality.

Teton County 4-H student efforts benefiting needy

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

DRIGGS, Idaho — Teton County 4-H students are using their agricultural projects to help feed local people in need.

Jennifer Werlin, University of Idaho's Teton County Extension educator, said the county's 4-H program received a \$2,500 grant in the spring from the Community Foundation of Teton Valley to start a gardening and beekeeping club.

In mid-May, the program built a pair of 8-by-4-foot raised garden beds on the grounds of the UI Teton County Extension office. The grant also funded the purchase of two beehives, housed at a local organic produce farm, and beekeeping equipment.

A local nonprofit that works with other county service organizations, called the Community Resource Center

of Teton County, will identify recipients of honey and produce raised by the 11 students participating in the club.

"Hunger and food security is a big issue in our community," said Werlin, who's position has a focus on community food systems. "While we have a lot of wealthy people, there's a huge disparity between the haves and the have-nots, and I think healthy, locally grown food should be accessible to all."

Werlin said vegetable starts planted in the garden were raised under a grow-light in the extension office.

4-H students involved in animal projects will also support locals in need this summer. Werlin said 4-H received a \$550 grant through the Community Foundation of Teton Valley Youth Philanthropy Grant program to buy one student's pig project to donate to the local senior citizens' center.

Students enrolled in a Teton High School government class selected the grant recipient.

Winning bidders of 4-H animal projects usually pay well above market value to support the youths who raise the livestock. Tammy Sachse, office manager of the Teton County Extension office, said the grant will cover the market value of the chosen pig, and the program will seek a buyer willing to pay a premium above the market rate and return the pig.

The grant will also cover costs of slaughtering and processing the pig, which should yield about 280 pounds of pork.

Sachse's eighth-grade son, Tyler, is raising three 4-H pigs, as well as sheep, and devotes about seven hours per week to his 4-H projects.

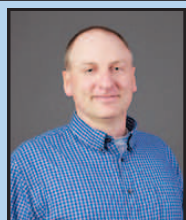
"Some of the (seniors) probably don't get very much money, and some of them might need a little help," Tyler said.



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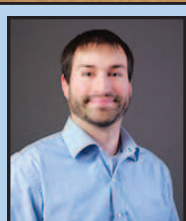
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