



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

The Boise River flows through Garden City, Idaho, on Sept. 29. Near-record snowpack in the Boise River basin last winter provided southwestern Idaho irrigators with a large supply of reservoir storage water that can be carried over to the 2018 growing season.

Treasure Valley irrigators wind down one of best water years ever

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

NAMPA, Idaho — Farmers who get their water from the largest irrigation district in Idaho’s Treasure Valley will end the season with an abundant supply of carryover water for the 2018 growing season.

Near-record snowpack in the Boise River basin provided an abundant supply of water this year to irrigators who depend on the Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District, which supplies water to 69,000 acres of irrigated land in southwestern Idaho.

“In my lifetime, it was the No. 1 water year,” said Clinton Pline, a farmer and member of NMID’s board of directors.

The snowpack provided the second-highest amount of runoff in the basin on record, according to U.S. Bureau of Reclamation data.

Total runoff was 3.145 million acre-feet this year, second only to 3.195 million acre-feet in 1943.

Because Boise River flows remained high all season, that allowed NMID to get the majority of its water from natural flows in the river and the district had to use very little of the water it has stored in the Boise River system’s three major reservoirs.

“The (flow) of the river right now is still up quite a bit from what it normally is this time of year,” said NMID Water Superintendent Greg Curtis.

NMID, as well as other irrigation districts that get their water from the Boise River system, will have a large supply of carryover water stored in the reservoirs that they can use in 2018.

On Sept. 1, the reservoirs had a combined total of 663,000 acre-feet of storage water, according to the Bureau. That’s well above the 30-year average of 473,000 acre-feet on that date for the reservoir system, which has a total capacity of just under 1 million acre-feet.

The exact amount of carryover water NMID will have hasn’t been determined but “it’s substantial,” Curtis said. “We should have very good carryover going into next year.”

Water was released from the reservoirs at a record rate this spring and summer to prevent major flooding in the valley and the Bureau and Army Corps of Engineers did a great job of balancing the need to release large amounts of water while ensuring the reservoirs still filled to capacity, said Will Patterson, chairman of the NMID board of directors.

“There are always a lot of folks that want to second-guess them but they did a nice job and they need to be commended,” he said.

NMID will stop flows to its 500 miles of canals on Oct. 11.

After the canal system has dried, the district will launch several large construction projects, including the lining of some canals with concrete.

Washington eyes 6 more weeds for control

State board to hold hearing

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A state board may add six plants to Washington’s noxious-weed list, including one that would be targeted for eradication before it creeps over the landscape.

The small-flowered jewelweed, native to parts of Asia but now thriving throughout Eastern and Western Europe, has been found growing in two places in King County. The Noxious Weed Control Board will consider designating it a Class A weed, meaning all such plants must be destroyed.

“It just kind of showed up,” said Alison Halpern, the weed board’s executive secretary. “We have only two patches, and if we can get it eradicated, it won’t gain a foothold and spread.”

The board annually adds — and in rare cases subtracts — plants to the state’s noxious weed list. The list currently includes 148 plants, including 36 Class A weeds. County weed boards maintain their own lists, too.

The state board also will consider adding two weeds to the Class B list. Landowners are required to prevent Class B weeds from propagating. Three more weeds are candidates for the Class C list. Property owners are encouraged but not required to control Class C weeds.

The USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service estimates the small-flowered jewelweed could take root in 84 percent of the U.S., though not in the driest parts of Central Washington.

Hundreds of the plants were found growing in 2013 in a wooded ravine in Portland. In 2016, more than 1,000 plants were found growing along a rural road in northeast King County, according to a report by the state weed control board. Previously, a patch was found along a service road near the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle.

The state surveyed about 400



Courtesy of the Noxious Weed Control Board

Washington’s Noxious Weed Control Board is considering adding six weeds, including the small-flowered jewelweed, to its list of noxious weeds.

Washington nurseries, and none reported selling small-flowered jewelweed, Halpern said.

Other candidates for the noxious-weed list are:

- European coltsfoot as a Class B weed. The plant is a problem for Scandinavian farmers, according to the weed board. Small infestations have been found in King and Snohomish counties, and in Mount Rainier National Park. The order to control the weed wouldn’t apply to Grant, Lincoln, Adams, Benton and Franklin counties because the chances the plant will take hold in those places are slight.

- Malta starthistle as a Class B weed. The plant was recently found on Cypress Island in Skagit County. The listing would match the restrictions put on the yellow starthistle. Control would be mandatory in the state, but not in some Eastern Washington counties, where the yellow starthistle is already widespread.

- Cheatgrass as a Class C weed. The highly invasive annual grass fuels wildfires. Halpern said putting cheatgrass on the state list should make private and public landowners more aware of the problem.

- Spotted jewelweed as a Class C weed. The wetland species is native to the Eastern U.S., but appears to be rapidly establishing itself in Western Washington, according to the weed control board.

- Eurasian watermilfoil as a Class C weed. The plant is a cross between an invasive and a native species. The result is an aggressive plant resistant to herbicide.

The board also will consider reclassifying several weeds, including spurge flax. The plant is a Class A weed, but it’s become too widespread in Okanogan County to make eradication a reasonable requirement, according to the weed board staff. The board may reclassify the plant as a Class B weed.

The board will take written comments until Oct. 30. Comments may be mailed to P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, or sent by email to noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov.

The board will have a public hearing 1 to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 31, at the Wenatchee Convention Center, 201 N. Wenatchee Ave.

The board is scheduled to meet the next day at the convention center to vote on the proposal.



House members seek extension of DACA renewal deadline

Eight Pacific Northwest members of Congress are asking the Department of Homeland Security to extend a renewal deadline for DACA recipients from Oct. 5 to Jan. 15.

Thousands of people on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival program could be in legal limbo if they missed the Oct. 5 deadline, Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., said.

The Sept. 26 letter to Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke was signed by 85 Democratic House members and seven Republicans.

Beside Newhouse, those from the Northwest were: fellow Washington Republican Dave Reichert and Washington Democrats Pramila Jayapal, Derek Kilmer, Denny Heck and Rick Larsen. Also signing were Oregon Democrats Peter DeFazio and Suzanne Bonamici.

Seventeen Democrats and two Republicans from California also signed the letter.

The Trump administration has rescinded an executive order authorizing DACA, beginning in March. Members of Congress are working on congressional authorization of the program that defers deportation of people who came to the U.S. illegally as children.

About 154,000 people have DACA authorization that expires between Sept. 5 and March 5. They had until Oct. 5 to apply for renewal, which is “unworkable and impractical,” the congressional letter said.

Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association

Media Release—October 2, 2017

Killing Idaho Fish

Inept Management Encouraged by Endangered Species Act Litigation

In an evidentiary hearing motion brought before U.S. Federal District (Oregon) Judge Michael Simon, the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association (CSRIA) presented unassailable evidence that fish managers’ 2015 decisions decimated about 65% of the wild, spring chinook returns to Idaho (2017 adult fish returns). Other hatchery fish suffered as well, and the final numbers for returning Idaho steelhead will document further losses.

The records confirm that the Columbia River fish managers allowed Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed salmon and steelhead migrations to remain in the Lower Snake River, during extremely poor in-river conditions, rather than rely on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ juvenile fish transportation program. The fish were exposed to adverse river conditions that proved fatal, as documented by the fish managers’ recently released evaluation (Comparative Survival Study, 2017).

The evidence clearly shows that the fish managers ignored the legally required, ESA (Biological Opinion) “spread the risk” policy, in the spring 2015, when they transported only 13% of juvenile salmon/steelhead during low flow and high temperature conditions—when young fish are the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of remaining in-river. This was the lowest percent transported since records were first kept in 1993.

NOAA Fisheries’ scientists attempted to obtain an early spring, 2015 start date for transportation--to get the juvenile fish out of the river during poor survival conditions--but other state agency fish managers defiantly blocked this crucial action.

CSRIA representative Darryll Olsen characterized the 2015 fish kill, “as defying every manner of sound judgement, and the sad product of 25-years of irrational ESA litigation in the Oregon District Court. The Federal Administration, faced with fish managers’ stark incompetence, must invoke a formal ESA Committee (God Squad) Review action, as required by the ESA statutes.”

Additional Information Attached and Contact: 509-783-1623