



Idaho water outlook is good for irrigation

Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press File

Irrigation water in a canal near Rupert, Idaho. Members of the Idaho Water Supply Committee say this year's irrigation water supply should be adequate.

Even the Owyhee River Basin should generate adequate supply for users

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

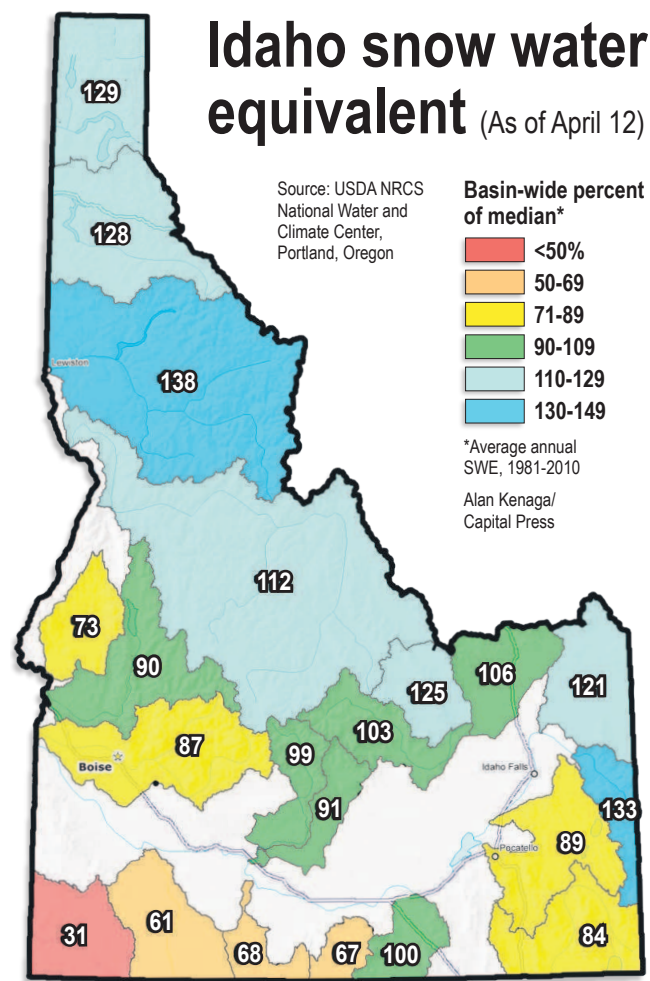
Idaho's snowpack season is ending on a positive note, providing many irrigators with adequately supplied river and reservoir systems to draw from as the growing season kicks into high gear.

Most river basins are near or above their annual average for snowpack, experts said at an April 12 Idaho Water Supply Committee meeting marking the traditional end of the snow-accumulation season.

A notable exception is the Owyhee River Basin that drains a chunk of Nevada, Oregon and Idaho. But even that system — containing just below one-third its average snowpack — should generate adequate supply for water users, thanks to ample amounts carried over in storage within Owyhee Reservoir from past years.

Strong precipitation in March boosted totals as of April 1, said Troy Lindquist, a National Weather Service senior hydrologist in Boise.

"And since April 1, we've had several storms move through the state," he said. "That has brought some really good precipitation, which



has continued to add to our high-elevation snowpack." In contrast, warm and dry weather at this point in the season would melt snowpack early and ultimately reduce streamflows later in the summer.

Basin snowpaks range from 31 percent of average in the Owyhee River Basin to well over 130 percent for the Clearwater Basin in north cen-

tral Idaho, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Water Supply Specialist Ron Abramovich said. Basins are generally in good shape thanks to snowpack near or above annual averages, and good carry-over storage in reservoirs.

Water users will have adequate supply this year, Abramovich said. "We are not facing any shortages, and

we are able to put an ample amount back into the aquifer," he said.

Irrigators can expect a full season given this year's precipitation and last year's carry-over storage, said Brian Sauer, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation water operations manager for the Snake River Area Office in Boise.

While Owyhee Reservoir won't fill completely because of this year's low snowpack — it was 81 percent full on April 12 — it will have adequate irrigation supplies for this season, he said. Water users will hope for better supply conditions next year, though the large reservoir near Adrian, Ore., is designed to store about twice as much water as a single season requires.

"In general, the irrigators are looking for an adequate water-supply year to meet their needs," said Liz Cresto, Idaho Department of Water Resources Hydrology Section supervisor and Idaho Water Supply Committee chair.

An adequate or good water year means less likelihood for conflicts among users — particularly on the Upper Snake, where above-average runoff is predicted, Cresto said. That runoff bodes well for water to be carried over to next year in reservoir storage, she said.

Reservoirs in the Boise River Basin were expected to fill to 100 percent of capacity by mid-April as the Bureau of Reclamation reduces flood-control releases.

Brown marmorated stink bug reports increase

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Brown marmorated stink bugs are on the rise, mostly in Western Washington, according to Washington State University entomologists.

"In three weeks, we received 300 emails and phone

calls, mostly from the state's west side," said Michael Bush, WSU Extension and entomologist in Yakima.

"We've never seen so much activity related to this bug and so quickly," he said.

Most of the sightings are in King, Pierce and Thurston counties and have been occurring since mid-March as stink bugs emerge from overwintering in people's homes, Bush said.

The six-legged bugs emit a smell of dirty socks when crushed. Thin white bands on their antennae distinguish them from other stink bug species.

The increase is worrisome to researchers and farmers because the bugs feed on more than 300 host plants and spreads by human movement.

"The more we learn about this stink bug species, the more amazed we are by its



USDA

Brown marmorated stink bugs are appearing in large numbers in Western Washington, entomologists say.

generalist feeding habits," said Elizabeth Beers, entomologist at the WSU Tree Fruit Research and Extension Center in Wenatchee. She's on a national team of scientists fighting it.

She urged people to keep reporting them with their name, address, date of discovery, numbers and photo of the bugs and email to: tfrec.reportbmsb@wsu.edu.

"We would love to come get your bugs for our research if you have an infestation of more than 50," Beers said.

Called "The Beast of the East," brown marmorated stink bugs were identified in Pennsylvania in 1996 and caused an estimated 30 percent loss in apple and peach crops in mid-Atlantic states in 2010. Growers there resorted to broad-spectrum synthetic pyrethroid pesticides to control the bugs at the expense of their Integrated Pest Management programs, Beers has said.

Brown marmorated stink bugs were found in Portland, Ore., in 2004 and later in the Willamette Valley, Medford, Hood River and Vancouver. They were first trapped in Yakima in 2012 and have been found in Walla Walla and Wenatchee.

Trump's farm aid idea gets thumbs down from senator, pro-trade group

Nebraska senator: Plan would 'pay farmers to lose'

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Some agriculture industry representatives say President Donald Trump's plan for a farm aid package is no substitute for a good trade policy.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that the Trump administration is developing a plan to mitigate the negative impacts of higher tariffs on U.S. farm commodities.

The administration has not yet released details of who would receive government assistance, how they might qualify, when a program would be put into place, or how long it would last, according to Farmers for Free Trade, a pro-trade coalition of agriculture groups.

"A mitigation program can't replace markets that will be lost, and long-term impacts will remain," said Farmers for Free Trade executive director Brian Kuehl in a press release. "If farmers must resort to an uncertain, unsustainable government program while our competitors lock in long-term contracts, the damage will be significant and long-lasting."

Kuehl said a government-run mitigation program would be "at best, an ineffective Band-Aid on a major self-inflicted wound."

"If we want to reverse the damage these tariffs are inflicting on farmers, the solution is simple: reverse the tariffs themselves," he said. "We need to move immediately to begin meaningful negotiations with China to end these tariff threats."

Lower commodity futures prices and increasing input costs are already taking their toll on farmers, ranchers and ag businesses, Kuehl said.

"Waiting for government bureaucrats to decide who qualifies for aid and who doesn't, and then hoping each year that the aid continues, isn't the solution," he said. "We're asking that the administration take strong, decisive action today to de-escalate a trade war that has already claimed farmers as the first casualty."

Steve Mercer, vice president of communications for U.S. Wheat Associates, declined to comment.

"There is so much about this that is speculative and no specific plan has been announced, let alone implemented," he said.

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., called the administration's proposal "Saturday-morning-cartoon central planning."

"We want more trade, not less," Sasse said in a statement. "Farmers want to feed the world and win with trade."

Now, some in Washington instead want to pay them to lose. That's a bad idea and not a real strategy to fight Chinese cheating."

House Ag Committee introduces farm bill

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

While the next farm bill is still a work in progress, the House Agricultural Committee is sending its version for mark-up next week, moving it forward to a floor vote.

There are hard decisions to make, and they won't be any easier and legislators won't be any smarter come October, Committee Chairman Rep. Mike Conaway, R-Texas, told reporters in a telephone press conference on Thursday.

"I'm driven to get it done on time," before the current farm bill expires, he said.

"Rural America deserves the certainty of knowing what the next five-year policy will look like," he said.

Aside from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program portion, the rest of the titles were negotiated in a bipartisan manner. Nevertheless, Democrats say they won't support the bill, he said.

"I think there's still a lot of misinformation, either intentional or unintentional," in the SNAP arena, he said.

No funding was taken from the program, but the bill requires work-able adults between 18 and 59 to work at least 20 hours a week or be in some sort of state training program to participate.

Three years of work resulted in a "defendable policy that helps break the cycle of poverty for folks who want to get out of it," he said.

That policy provides a funded mandate to states to set up case-management and assessment programs, as well as supervised job search and apprenticeship programs.

On the farm front, the committee had no new money to work with and had to move money around to address priorities and new challenges, he said.

One of those new challenges is the risk of foot and mouth disease, and the bill provides \$150 million in the first year to get the vaccine bank off the ground, he said.

"It's the one big-ticket new item that came out of all of our discussions with not only the livestock folks but also the security issues surrounding that piece as well," he said.

The livestock industry was asking for \$150 million a year for five years. Once the bank is established and the mechanics are worked out, it will be easier to get additional resources if needed, he said.

"We don't provide as much as the industry asks for, but we've got a really good step forward," he said.

One of the biggest concerns in farm country is crop insurance. Some money was moved around, but there are no substantial changes to the program, he said.

"It's too important a program to mess with, and we believe it's working," he said.

But there might be some threats to the program on the House floor, he said.

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NOTICE OF RYEGRASS GROWERS SEED COMMISSION BUDGET HEARING

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Tuesday, May 15, 2018, at 6:00 p.m., at the Cascade Grill Restaurant, 110 Opal St. NE, Albany, Oregon, upon a proposed budget for operation of the Ryegrass Growers Seed Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. At this hearing any producer of Oregon-grown Ryegrass seed 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 Ryegrass Growers Seed 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 request for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodations for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944.

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