

OWRD to hold groundwater workshops

Staff will address regulation of permitted wells

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

The Oregon Water Resources Department will offer three open houses in Klamath County for landowners interested in learning about local groundwater management ahead of a looming summer drought.

Gov. Kate Brown declared a drought emergency for the county on March 13. Stream flows in the Klamath Basin are expected to range between 24 and 58 percent of normal through September, according to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In certain situations, pumping wells can also diminish stream flows in the basin due to the hydrological connection between surface water and groundwater. That, in turn, reduces the amount of surface water available to senior water rights holders, prompting OWRD to regulate junior wells until the senior rights are satisfied.

Since 2015, OWRD has regulated groundwater in accordance with "Division 25 rules," negotiated as part of the Upper Klamath Basin Comprehensive Agreement. However, in December 2017, the Secretary of the Interior terminated the agreement, transitioning to a separate set of regulations known as "Division 9 rules."

Because of the transition, OWRD expects to mail more regulation notices in 2018 compared to previous years. Approximately 140 permitted wells are subject to regulation under Division 9 rules, compared to about 40 wells under Division 25 rules. Division 9 rules do not affect exempt groundwater uses, including domestic use and livestock watering.

OWRD staff will be on hand to explain the new rules and answer questions during each of the three open houses. The first meeting is Monday, April 30, at 4-8 p.m. at the Sprague River Community Center in Sprague River, Ore. Two more sessions will be Tuesday, May 1, with the first from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Chiloquin Community Center in Chiloquin, Ore., and the second at 3-6 p.m. at the Klamath County Fairgrounds in Klamath Falls.

For more information, visit www.oregon.gov/owrd.



EO Media Group File
A cargo vessel calls at the Port of Astoria, Ore. Representatives of several Oregon port districts met with members of Congress last week seeking funds to maintain channels and jetties.

Northwest ports seek federal funding for maintenance

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Representatives of several Northwest ports asked members of Congress last week to continue funding for maintaining waterways used to transport goods in and out of the region.

Members of the Grays Harbor, Bandon and Coos Bay port districts and the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association participated April 20 in a roundtable hosted by Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., in Coos Bay, Ore. DeFazio is ranking member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

The port representatives said continued funding in the next Water Resources Development Act is necessary to ensure navigation channels are dredged and jetties maintained.

A congressional user fee for coastal ports and harbors, the harbor maintenance tax, is designed to provide 100 percent of operations and maintenance costs to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for deep draft and coastal waterways. But since 2003, according to the association, tax collections have far exceeded funds appropriated for harbor maintenance. The surplus of collections over expenditures has grown to more than \$9 billion.

"Rather than being used for their intended purpose, harbor maintenance tax revenues have been used to help balance the federal budget," according to the association.

"That's a problem when you have deteriorating jetties and navigation channels not being maintained to their depth and width that we need to move cargo," Kristin Meira, executive director of the waterways association, told the Capital Press.

Members of Congress at the roundtable had a positive response to the presentations, Meira said.

"This is the difference between U.S. cargo being able to be moved efficiently to our ports, loaded on vessels that are able to load fully and make it out overseas," she said. "It's the part of cargo transport that folks just don't think about when they think about whether or not U.S.-grown and manufactured products are competitive in overseas markets."

Northwest industry representatives hope for a return to a two-year cycle for renewing the Water Resources Development Act, Meira said.

Meira hopes the House and Senate will introduce versions of the bill by this summer. The House and Senate would reconcile the two versions into one bill to be signed by President Donald Trump.

"We think it looks really good," Meira said. "This is a bill that typically gets a lot of support because no matter where you are in the United States, chances are you're pretty close to a Corps of Engineers project. Most members of Congress see the value in what the agency does."

Mill 95 hop processor thrives after first-season challenges

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Expectations-beating success during its first season operating in the heart of Idaho hop country wasn't good enough for Mill 95 leaders.

They are working on in-house improvements on two fronts. One is obtaining an international quality certification for food safety. The other is an internal mapping and detailing of all inputs and processes.

"We continue to strive for quality and service. Those are at the forefront of everything we are doing in the offseason," said Jamie Scott, manager and sole owner. "We are going to come into year two smarter, stronger and better-prepared. We keep getting better."

The business on U.S. 95 between Wilder and Parma, Idaho, offers hop cold storage, cone-to-pellet processing and logistics services. It considers itself an alternative to facilities hundreds of miles away, such as in central Washington or western Oregon.

Unique challenges materialized in Mill 95's first season. Operations Manager D.J. Tolmie said startup went fairly well but took more effort than envisioned. Historically heavy snow accumulation as 2017 began tightened labor availability, backlogged various projects in the strong construction market and ultimately pressed the new hops facility as harvest loomed.

"We had hop traffic and construction traffic," he said. "You can't delay hop harvest."

Mill 95 formed in 2016 and commenced construction last April on part of its 20-acre site. The cold-storage building of 40,000 square feet was finished enough in late August to receive just-harvested hops. The pelletizing operation that



Brad Carlson/Capital Press
Jamie Scott, left, and Meagen Anderson view hop product from Mill 95's cone-to-pellet processing facility.

anchors a 10,000-square-foot building began operating in November.

The expanded team that helped get Mill 95 running included the crew, the building team led by Boise-area builder Engineered Structures Inc. and vendors, Scott said.

"It ended up taking all hands on deck," she said. It's amazing what people will do under the gun, and we delivered. There was no way we weren't going to."

The business employs eight full-time, not including founder and owner Scott, plus 15 to 20 during the hop harvest and production season from late August through February, said Amaya Aguirre-Landa, marketing and sales associate.

Before Mill 95 opened, many southwest Idaho hop growers shipped 200-pound bales of the cone-like flower bunches to storage and processing plants in Washington and Oregon.

Sales Manager Meagen Anderson said Mill 95 can help growers greatly reduce shipping expense, limit their crop's exposure to quality-lessening heat and other conditions

during transport, and even increase the Idaho hop industry's exposure to brewers. Hop pellets are easier for brewers to buy in bulk and store in a way that helps them last longer while retaining quality, she said.

"It's a tremendous opportunity, particularly in craft brewing and smaller brewers," Anderson said.

Mill 95 can store or pelletize hops for growers, or buy them for processing and packaging under an in-house brand. The business does not grow hops.

Tolmie said Mill 95 handled about 2.8 million pounds of hops harvested in 2017, either cold-storing or pelletizing them. That exceeded expectations, though the facility probably could handle 3.5 million pounds, he said.

"That said, I would like to pelletize every hop in Idaho, and we would expand to do so," Scott said.

"It is a great thing, and we will be using them in the future," Brock Obendorf, who co-owns and manages Obendorf Hop near Parma, said of Mill 95. He is president of the Idaho Hops Commission.

His family's hop farm now

hauls its yield to a broker's receiving station nearby. While the broker bears the cost of shipping the hops to its own pelletizing plant, reducing that cost would be beneficial, he said.

"Their whole plan is really good for the area," Obendorf said, "getting Idaho's quality of hops out there."

Tolmie said Mill 95 by early July expects to receive its International Standards Organization 9001 best-practices quality certification for food safety. Concurrently, Mill 95 is integrating an enterprise resource planning system designed to optimize processes from receiving to processing and delivery.

NOAA sees warm months ahead for Northwest

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The Northwest's late spring, summer and fall likely will be hotter and drier than usual as the Pacific Ocean warms up, leading toward a possible El Nino next winter, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported Thursday.

Sea-surface temperatures along the equator are slowly rising from below normal to average, according to NOAA. By fall, climatologists anticipate temperatures will be above normal, a heating of the ocean associated with warm winters and low snowpacks in the Cascades.

"Right now, I'd have to forecast a less than average snowpack. I reserve the right to change my forecast," Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond said.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center foresees above-average temperatures and below-normal precipitation for May, June and July in Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Northern California.

Bond said he had more confidence in the temperature forecast.

"I would say that with the (forecasting) models there is a pretty strong consensus that it will be on the warm side," he said. "I would be loath to put too much stock in the precipitation forecast."

NOAA's outlook relies heavily on the Pacific Ocean transitioning from La Nina, a cooling of sea temperatures,

to El Nino, a warming. La Nina has prevailed since last fall, but chances are good that sea temperatures will be normal by May, according to NOAA.

La Nina generally means the colder and wetter winters in the northern U.S. and the opposite in the southern U.S.

Although never strong, this La Nina has delivered for Washington irrigators.

Snowpacks in 11 basins monitored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service were all well above average Thursday. Northern Idaho snowpacks also are well above normal, and some Northern Oregon snowpacks have rallied to above or near normal after a slow start.

To the south, snowpacks in the rest of Oregon and Northern California are below normal. A drought in Eastern Washington that covers al-

most one-third of the state is expected to persist for at least the next several months, the U.S. Drought Monitor reported Thursday.

Ocean temperatures may gradually increase over the summer. By October, the odds begin to favor a weak El Nino.

NOAA cautioned, however, that climatologists have been fooled before. "Though we appear headed a toward a cold-season El Nino, there have been several false starts in recent years where promising El Ninos simply faded away," NOAA stated.

If NOAA's forecast holds true, sea-surface temperatures will be much as they were the winter of 2014-15, the year of Washington's "snowpack drought." That winter, however, El Nino was combined with an unusually warm mass of water off Washington's coast.

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