

Ecology curtails water rights as Western Washington dries

West half of state 'abnormally dry'

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Irrigation rights have been curtailed in two Western Washington basins as the region's once-robust summer water outlook has dimmed to the possibility of drought.

The Department of Ecology has notified 93 irrigators in the Chehalis basin in southwest Washington and nine in the Nooksack basin in northwest Washington that their water rights are on hold until streams and rivers rise. Flows in the basins' rain-fed waterways were well above average in April, but dropped to between 50 percent and 75 percent of normal in May, according to Ecology calculations.

"It's definitely an example of how quickly conditions can change and how variable they can be," said Jeff Marti, Ecology's drought coordinator.

Washington's water supply was swelled by the state's third-wettest April on record. That was followed by the second-warmest and 12th-driest May on record, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration re-



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

A sprinkler waters a field in the Chehalis basin in southwest Washington. The state Department of Ecology sent curtailment notices to 93 irrigators in the basin, one sign Western Washington is rapidly drying out after a wet April.

ports that date back to 1895. The far western part of Washington had its driest May on record, according to NOAA.

Rapidly melting snow caused stream flows statewide to be 129 percent of average in May, according to Ecology. Stream flows are projected to vary widely in June, but average only 73 percent statewide. The state considers declaring droughts in basins where water supplies are projected to fall below 75 percent of normal and cause hardships.

"Streams on the west side of the mountains have been much below normal," Washington State Assistant Cli-

matologist Karin Bumbaco said. "It all turned around on a dime."

The U.S. Drought Monitor reported June 14 that the western one-half of Washington was abnormally dry, up from 27 percent the week before. The federal Climate Prediction Center said Wednesday that chances are high that all of Washington will be unusually hot and dry for the following two weeks. The center previously predicted Washington will have a warm and dry summer.

The dry conditions have not yet deepened into long-term moisture deficiencies and could be reversed as quickly

as they came on, Bumbaco said.

"I think it could go either way in the next four weeks," she said. "It is worrisome that the Climate Prediction Center expects it to be warm and dry for the rest of the summer."

Ecology's water supply committee met in April and didn't plan to meet again until October. That has changed. The committee will meet June 29 to assess whether drought conditions exist in some basins, Marti said.

A drought declaration gives Ecology additional authority to speed-up approving water-right transfers.

The curtailment notices in the Chehalis and Nooksack basins apply to irrigators with water-rights junior to minimum-stream levels set by Ecology to protect fish.

This is the fourth straight year that the junior water-right holders in the Chehalis basin have received curtailment notices. The basin, the state's second-largest watershed, relies mostly on rain, with a minor contribution from snow melting off the Olympic Mountains, according to Ecology. The Olympic snowpack on June 14 was only 28 percent of normal for the date, according to the National Resources Conservation Service.

California expects lighter pear crop

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

California is expecting a lighter fresh pear crop this year, down 16.6 percent from last year's final count.

On June 14, the California Pear Advisory Board in Sacramento forecast a 2018 crop of 2.5 million, 36-pound boxes, down from 3 million last year, said Kyle Persky, sales manager of Rivermaid Trading Co., Lodi, Calif., that packs more than half the state's fresh pears.

"We were over cropped on the (Sacramento) River last year and we had strange bloom weather this year," Persky said.

More specifically, he said, Walnut Grove and Courtland, the pear region of the Sacramento River Delta, had an abundance last year and are lighter this year due to insufficient winter chill and then a freeze and hot weather right before bloom, impeding pollination.

Fire blight, a tree-killing disease, also is more prolific again, particularly on the Starkrimson variety, he said.

Tree removal to combat fire blight held down crops in 2016 and 2015, Chris Zanobini, executive director of the advisory board, has said. This year's forecast is

for 2 million Bartlett. Mostly Bosc will make up the remaining 500,000 boxes, followed by Red Starkrimson, Red Bartlett, Seckel, Forelle, Comice, Sunsprite and Taylor's Gold.

Harvest will start July 9 in Walnut Grove with Sunsprite. Rivermaid is the only grower of Sunsprite. Bartlett and red pears will begin harvest the following week.

Picking will end with Comice in Mendocino County in mid-September, Persky said. The crop will be sold out before the end of October, he said.

FDA's advice to footnote 'added sugars' gets tart replies

Ocean Spray applauds 'nuanced approach'

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has been flooded this month with sour comments about its plan to require honey, maple syrup and cranberry products to include "added sugars" on nutrition labels.

Remarks from New England maple syrup makers have been particularly bitter. They say they don't "add" sugar to their naturally sugary product. "The only thing the producers do is evaporate water from the sap of this liquid gold," one commented.

The FDA counters that consumers should know how much "added sugar" maple syrup adds to pancakes. Judging by the flavor of the 2,900 comments submitted online, the reasoning has not been persuasive. "You have to be kidding," a woman remarked. "You think someone pouring pure 100 percent maple syrup from a jug onto a pile of pancakes doesn't know they are adding sugar to their breakfast?"

The acidic observations stem from the FDA's 2016 overhaul of nutrition labels. The rules are scheduled to take effect beginning in 2020, leaving the agency time to revise them. For now, the new rules will require the word "added" in front of "sugar" on honey and maple syrup labels because the FDA deemed those foods are not "nutrient rich," like other naturally sugary foods.

Honey and maple syrup trade associations complained that the label will mislead consumers into thinking sugarcane was added to pure honey and maple syrup.

Ocean Spray Cranberries, meanwhile, complained that the sugar added to tart cranberry products is comparable to the natural sugars in raisins, and grape and apple juice. Consumers glancing at the nutrition label on cranberry products, however, would see "added sugars" and be deceived into thinking cranberry products had more sugar, Ocean Spray argued.

In response, the FDA in March suggested footnotes on labels for honey, maple syrup and cranberry products.

The FDA advised that the



Capital Press

Ocean Spray Cranberries supports the Food and Drug Administration's pending nutritional labeling requirements, which will require cranberry products to have the word "added" in front of sugars.

honey footnote could say: "All these sugars are naturally occurring in honey."

Washington state beekeeper Tim Hiatt, a honey producer, called the labeling requirement, even qualified by a footnote, "crazy."

"It shouldn't say 'added sugars' at all," he said. "The only ingredient in honey is honey."

"The whole industry is up in arms about this," Hiatt said. "We're struggling in the industry to protect the image of honey."

The FDA's suggestion for a cranberry footnote is longer: "Sugar added to improve the palatability of naturally tart cranberries. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans state that there is room for limited amounts of Added Sugars in the diet, especially from nutrient dense food like naturally tart cranberries."

Ocean Spray spokeswoman Kellyanne Dignan said in an email Friday that the farmers' cooperative supports the footnote idea. The FDA has recognized that cranberries

are nutrient-dense and must be sweetened for consumers to receive the fruit's health benefits, she said.

In written comments submitted Friday, Ocean Spray said it "applauds FDA for its nuanced approach."

The rule, however, remains a sticking point with the North American Maple Syrup Council. In comments to the FDA, the council maintains that "added sugars," even with an explanatory footnote, will confuse consumers looking for a "natural, minimally processed, pure sweetener."

Friday was the last day to submit comments on FDA's attempt to inform consumers without scaring them away from honey, maple syrup and cranberries. As the deadline neared, opposition in maple syrup-producing states intensified. U.S. Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, said in a floor speech June 13 that the "added sugars" rule will undo efforts by maple syrup farmers to distinguish their product. "It's not funny to the industry," he said.

Ecology official to be WDFW chief

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission reached outside the department for a new director Saturday, picking a Department of Ecology official who's been at the forefront of policies to prevent farms and ranches from polluting water.

Kelly Susewind, Ecology's director of environmental policy, was chosen by the commission at a meeting in Olympia. Commission members said the department needed new leadership.

"I'm just looking at the future, of where we should be going, and having a different personality and different vision coming in, I viewed as something that is necessary at this point in time," commission Chairman Brad Smith said.

Susewind will replace Jim Unsworth, who resigned in February after three years as Fish and Wildlife director. The other candidates included interim director Joe Stohr, who had been Unsworth's deputy director.

The commission formally picked Susewind in public — but not by name. He was identified only as "candidate P."

The commission took a break while Smith called the unidentified hire. "I just went and talked to candidate P, who from this day forward shall be known as Kelly Susewind," Smith said. "He's very excited. He said he's very nervous and he said that if he wasn't nervous, he wouldn't be realizing what he was getting into."

Cattle Producers of Washington President Scott Nielsen said that he hoped Susewind will make the department more willing to release information, especially about wolf activities.

"I've found Kelly to be



Don Jenkins/Capital Press File

Washington Department of Ecology environmental policy director Kelly Susewind at a meeting Dec. 9, 2015, at Ecology headquarters in Lacey. Susewind was appointed June 16 to be the new director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

somebody that we've been able to work with through difficult issues at Ecology," Nielsen said.

"The other thing I like about it is they went and got someone from outside the department," Nielsen said. "I think a fresh set of eyes can do nothing but help."

Efforts to reach Susewind were unsuccessful.

"The public has high expectations for WDFW, and I'm excited about being in a position to deliver the results they deserve," Susewind said in a Fish and Wildlife press release.

Washington State Dairy

Federation policy director Jay Gordon said Susewind traveled the state to learn about the concerns of dairy farmers as Ecology crafted new rules for managing manure.

"He's been tough and firm and very sharp," Gordon said. "We've had very positive dealings. We don't always agree, but when we disagree he has good logic."

"Clearly, he's familiar with a large bureaucracy," Gordon. "Large bureaucracies are like battleships. They're big and they don't turn easily. ... You have to convince the team to come along. That's a learned art."

4th of July Deadlines

With the 4th of July being on Wednesday, we need to move up the following deadlines:

News Display and Legals
Friday, June 29th - 12:00 Noon

Classified Display
Tuesday, July 3rd - 10:00 AM

Classified Line Ads
Tuesday, July 3rd - 12:00 Noon

Have a Safe and Happy 4th of July!

Capital Press
The West's Ag Weekly

PO Box 2048 • Salem, OR 97308

800-882-6789

www.capitalpress.com

STUMP BLASTER
BLAST STUMPS INTO DUST

BAUMALIGHT.COM

MFG OF BRUSH MULCHERS | STUMP GRINDERS | DRAINAGE PLOWS
BOOM MOWERS | PTO GENERATORS | AUGER BITS & DRIVES
TRENCHERS | TREE SPADES | TREE SAWS | LIMB SHEARS AND MORE

ELLIS EQUIPMENT 800-949-2336

44th ANNUAL

BLACK SHEEP GATHERING
FRI • SAT • SUN
June 29 - July 1

NEW LOCATION!
Linn County Fairgrounds & Expo - Albany, Oregon

- ANIMAL SHOWS
- FLEECE SHOWS
- WORKSHOPS
- MARKETPLACE
- SHEEP-TO-SHAWL
- AND MORE!

For information, go to:
blacksheepgathering.org
or call 541-804-0014