

Columbia River Treaty

Keystone of Northwest agricultural economy

Agriculture, navigation, power, the environment — all are factors in the negotiations

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

As they meet this summer to update the Columbia River Treaty, U.S. and Canadian negotiators hold Northwest farmers' futures in their hands.

The treaty was adopted in 1964 for the cooperative development and management of the Columbia River, the 1,243-mile-long river that winds through British Columbia, Canada, and Washington state and whose tributaries are as far-flung as Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Oregon.

Some provisions of the treaty are set to expire in 2024, and U.S. and Canadian negotiators met in Washington D.C., in May to begin talks on how to update them. The next round of negotiations will take place Aug. 15-16 in British Columbia.



Clark Kagele

"The Columbia River Treaty is a huge deal for farmers," said Clark Kagele, a farmer in Odessa, Wash., and secretary of the Columbia Basin Development League. "It's basically going to have control of all future water supplies."

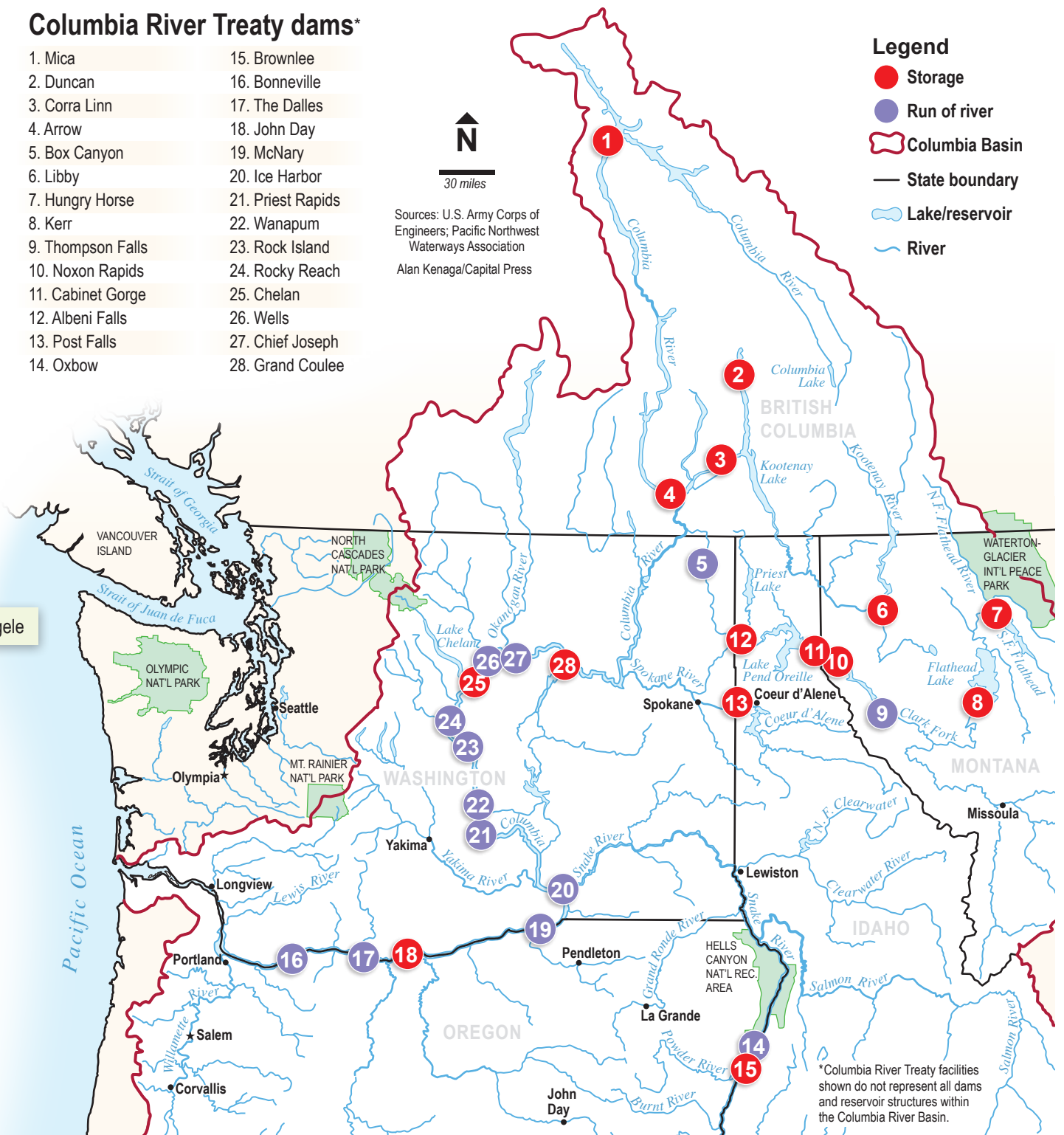
For farmers such as Kagele, who depend on the Odessa aquifer, having access to Columbia River water is crucial. He estimates he has less than 15 years of water left in the five wells that he uses to irrigate his wheat, alfalfa, timothy hay, potatoes, sunflowers and canola. He hopes to receive Columbia River water to replace his wells within the next 10 years.

If not, his choices are limited. He could switch to dryland farming, but that would mean a wheat yield of 30 to 32 bushels per acre compared to the 100 bushels per acre he averages under irrigation.

Turn to **TREATY**, Page 9

Columbia River Treaty dams*

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Mica | 15. Brownlee |
| 2. Duncan | 16. Bonneville |
| 3. Corra Linn | 17. The Dalles |
| 4. Arrow | 18. John Day |
| 5. Box Canyon | 19. McNary |
| 6. Libby | 20. Ice Harbor |
| 7. Hungry Horse | 21. Priest Rapids |
| 8. Kerr | 22. Wanapum |
| 9. Thompson Falls | 23. Rock Island |
| 10. Noxon Rapids | 24. Rocky Reach |
| 11. Cabinet Gorge | 25. Chelan |
| 12. Albeni Falls | 26. Wells |
| 13. Post Falls | 27. Chief Joseph |
| 14. Oxbow | 28. Grand Coulee |



“If we ever want to get a little more water out to the farmers and shut the rest of these wells off ... the treaty has to make room for that.”

Clark Kagele, Odessa, Wash., farmer

Klamath Project gets long-awaited 2018 operations plan

Tribal lawsuit remains a wild card

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

It may be several months late, but farmers and ranchers in the Klamath Project finally know just how much water is available for the 2018 irrigation season — pending an injunction requested by the Klamath Tribes to protect endangered sucker fish in Upper Klamath Lake.

The Bureau of Reclamation released its annual operations and

drought plans on June 18 for the Klamath Project serving 230,000 irrigated acres in Southern Oregon and Northern California.

Regulators calculate the water supply based on factors such as stream flows, reservoir storage and existing legal obligations for fish. According to the 2018 plans, irrigators can use 233,911 acre-feet of water from Upper Klamath Lake and the Klamath River, which is 40 percent less than the historical full demand.

As of June 18, the bureau had already diverted 38,000 acre-feet for irrigation, leaving roughly 196,000 acre-feet still in the pipeline.

Jeff Nettleton, area manager for the Bureau of Reclamation office in Klamath Falls, Ore., said this year has been challenging on all fronts, from the lack of usual snowfall to a court order requiring more water in the Klamath River to protect salmon from disease.

"I appreciate the willingness of the entire community to work together to seek solutions to meet these challenges," Nettleton said. "Careful management of irrigation and continued water conservation efforts will help to minimize negative impacts of the reduced water supply as we proceed through the season."

The Klamath Basin, like much of Southern Oregon, had a drier-than-usual winter, with snowpack at 55 percent of normal by April 1, 46 percent of normal by May 1 and completely melted by June 1.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service anticipates stream flows will be as low as 26 percent of normal in parts of the basin through September, and the bureau warns that most agricultural producers will not have enough water "to meet the requirements of good irrigation practices for the acres served by the Project."

A federal judge in San Francisco

also upheld a ruling earlier this year that requires more water from Upper Klamath Lake be kept in-river to flush away a deadly salmon-killing parasite known as *C. shasta*. The bureau released 38,425 acre-feet of water from April 6-15 and another 50,000 acre-feet from May 7-28 to comply with the order, which was secured by the Yurok and Hoopa Valley tribes in 2017.

That leaves the Klamath Project short its usual water allocation, though irrigators can expect a near full supply of water from Clear Lake and Gerber reservoirs.

Turn to **KLAMATH**, Page 9



An aircraft drops fire retardant along Bakeoven Road on June 22 to reinforce defense lines at the Boxcar fire near Maupin, Ore.

Central Oregon wildfires keep ranchers on their toes

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

It has been a wild week for rancher Joe Pechanec.

Pechanec, cow boss for R2 Ranch, runs about 1,400 head of cattle on public and private rangeland in arid central Oregon, where a pair of massive, wind-whipped wildfires have torched more than 100,000 acres and passed mere yards away from his front door.

"Last night, I finally got seven hours of sleep,"

Pechanec said Monday. "It's been a really brutal battle, but I think we're getting headway."

The ordeal began early Thursday, June 21, when lightning touched off the Boxcar fire one mile southeast of Maupin along the Deschutes River corridor. Lightning also sparked the Jack Knife fire just 30 miles away near Grass Valley, and together the blazes have combined to burn 114,272 acres of heavy grass, sage and juniper.

Turn to **WILDFIRES**, Page 9

DON'T MISS OUT!

Subscribe to the Capital Press E-mail Newsletters and stay informed on the topics that matter most to you.

Visit www.CapitalPress.com/Newsletters and sign up today!



Capital Press
The West's **Ag** Weekly



7 29467 70125 0