



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Water shoots from a sprinkler in southwest Washington on the first day of summer. The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center says the odds favor a warm growing season followed by a warm winter in the Northwest as the ocean warms into an El Nino.

Forecasters: Prospects grow for warm Northwest winter

Hot, dry summer predicted

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Chances are rising that next winter will be warmer than usual in the Pacific Northwest, the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center reports.

The outlook is largely based on the likelihood that the Pacific Ocean will heat up to El Nino conditions by fall, according to forecasters.

"Odds for above-normal temperatures continue to increase during the winter 2018-19 from the Pacific Northwest east to the Northern Great

Plains and Upper Mississippi Valley," according to center's new seasonal forecast.

An El Nino generally brings warmer weather to the Northwest, though the effect on summer water supplies has varied. A weak El Nino prevailed during Washington's "snowpack drought" of 2014-15. There was a strong El Nino the following winter, but the state's snowpacks were normal.

Some forecasting models show sea-surface temperatures along the equator peaking at 1 degree Celsius above normal between November and February, according to the prediction center. That would put the El Nino just into the "moderate" category.

A La Nina — lower-than-normal sea temperatures — prevailed last winter. The ocean has warmed to neutral conditions and likely will stay that way through the summer, according to the center.

The outlook for July, August and September favors above-average temperatures across most of the country. The odds are especially high for a warm summer in the Pacific Northwest and the Great Basin, including Idaho.

Below-average precipitation is favored for summer for Oregon, Washington and the Idaho Panhandle. Northern California and the southern half of Idaho have equal chances of being wet, dry or average, according to the center.

Energy regulators to consider new solar rules

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council will be considering new rules to determine whether multiple solar power projects should be regulated as a single facility.

The seven-member council decides whether to approve the location of large power-generating facilities, including solar projects bigger than 100 acres of farmland or 320 acres of other land.

On June 29, the council is expected to appoint a "rulemaking advisory committee" to consider whether several smaller solar projects can "functionally aggregate" to become a facility that would otherwise come under its regulatory jurisdiction.

For example: a developer with two separate projects, each encompassing 60 acres, on a 120-acre plot. Could that be considered one project subject to regulation?

If so, the committee would recommend criteria to determine whether multiple solar projects have crossed this threshold and whether specific rules are necessary for such situations.

Projects under the EFSC's jurisdiction are reviewed for their impact on fish and wildlife, potential for noise, and effects on soil, among other factors. They're also subject to bonding and insurance requirements to ensure money is available for their



Capital Press File

New regulations may be considered for multiple solar projects in Oregon that "functionally aggregate" to operate as one facility.

eventual decommissioning.

The "rulemaking project" is getting underway at a time of increasing scrutiny of solar projects on farmland in Oregon, with new proposals encountering opposition and county governments enacting restrictions on siting.

Some of the controversy has centered on solar projects outside the Energy Facility Siting Council's jurisdiction, such as a 70-acre project that's being appealed in Clackamas County and an 80-acre project that was blocked in Jackson County.

Two standalone solar projects currently under consideration by EFSC are substantially larger: one would top 5,000 acres while the other would be as large as 7,000 acres. Both are in Lake County in south-central Oregon.

It's currently an "open question" whether an additional regulatory structure is needed for multiple facilities that aggregate into a larger project, with members of

the rules advisory committee likely having differing opinions on the issue, said Todd Cornett, Oregon Department of Energy's assistant director for siting.

A similar question arose in the past regarding wind energy projects, but the issue never led to a formal rulemaking process, Cornett said.

Instead, wind projects are evaluated based on 15 questions that probe proximity, ownership and other factors, with ODE offering an opinion on whether they would come under EFSC jurisdiction, he said.

It's not uncommon for developers to adjust projects so they're subject to regulatory processes that are seen as more advantageous, said Jim Johnson, land use specialist with the Oregon Department of Agriculture who's involved in the solar issue.

"Some people would argue historically that's happened with a lot of land uses, not just solar," he said.

FDA wants a re-do on 'added sugars' guidance

Agency heeds honey, maple syrup farmers

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A rush of negative comments has the Food and Drug Administration rethinking how to explain what it means by asserting that pure honey and maple syrup have "added sugars."

The agency issued a statement Tuesday promising to "swiftly formulate a revised approach" to informing consumers that naturally sweet honey and maple syrup add sugar to diets — though no sugar is added to the products.

The FDA said it was a complex issue.

"The agency looks forward to working with stakeholders to devise a sensible solution," according to the statement.

Beginning in 2020, pure honey and maple syrup nutrition labels must have the word "added" in front of "sugar." Farms and trade groups complain that customers will naturally think another sweetener is added to the natural sugars in honey and maple syrup.

In what the FDA now describes as a "preliminary attempt" to the clarify the rule, the agency suggested footnotes on labels stating that the "added sugars" are natural.

Honey and maple syrup farmers and trade groups said that would only add to the confusion. The FDA received more than 3,000 comments on the footnote suggestion. Almost all comments were sharply critical of the FDA and many were filed just before the comment period ended June 15.

"The feedback that FDA



Capital Press

Maple syrup producers complain that a Food and Drug Administration labeling requirement will mislead consumers into thinking sugar is added to their product. The FDA said June 19 that it will work on trying not to confuse the public.

has received is that the approach laid out in the draft guidance does not provide the clarity that the FDA intended," the agency said.

Margaret Lombard, chief executive officer of the National Honey Board, said June 21 that she was thrilled by FDA's decision to try again.

The honey board submitted surveys to the FDA that suggested consumers think "added sugars" means honey has been sweetened with something else.

"People are very confused," Lombard said. "We certainly don't want to label honey as having 'added sugar.'"

FDA overhauled the rules for nutrition labels in 2016. The rules were originally scheduled to take effect in July, but FDA pushed the date back. Foodmakers with sales of more than \$10 million are expected to have new nutrition labels by Jan. 1, 2020. Smaller foodmakers are expected to comply one year later.

The FDA singled out honey and maple sugar for the "added sugars" rule. According to USDA dietary guidelines some natural sugars,

such as in fruit, are not "added sugars" because those calories contribute essential nutrients to diets.

The FDA will require cranberry juice and dried sweet cranberries to list "added sugars." The cranberry industry complained that the label would mislead consumers into thinking cranberry products have more sugar than competitors such as apple and grape juices that are naturally sugary.

Ocean Spray Cranberries supported FDA's suggestion to explain in a footnote that sugar is added to sweeten tart cranberries. An Ocean Spray spokeswoman said Thursday that the farmers cooperative looks forward to working with the FDA.

FDA gave no indication it intended to eliminate the requirement that honey, maple syrup and cranberry products inform consumers about the sugar the products add to diets.

"It is important to FDA that consumers are able to effectively use the new Nutrition Facts label to make informed, healthy dietary choices," according to the agency.

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