

NOAA: Northwest's 'normal' temps rising

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The climate for the Northwest and most of the contiguous U.S. has become slightly warmer in the past decade, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported Tuesday.

The warming was widespread, according to NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information, though Montana and the Dakotas bucked the trend and slightly cooled.

"There are some areas that actually have cooler

temperature normals, especially in the spring in the north-central U.S.," said Michael Palecki, manager of NOAA's climate normals.

NOAA updates every 10 years what's considered "normal" weather. Statisticians analyzed temperature and precipitation readings from thousands of weather stations between 1991 and 2020.

NOAA will release the new normals May 4. Palecki and other NOAA officials held a conference call with reporters to hit some highlights.

Because two decades

overlap, the new climatic normals aren't that much different. Still, the new norms likely mean fewer seasons, months and days with temperatures "above normal."

Annual mean temperatures in Washington generally increased by up to 0.5 degree Fahrenheit, though some places warmed slightly more and some did not change.

Oregon, Idaho and Northern California had a similar pattern, though patches of Southern Idaho warmed by more than 1 degree.

The warming was not uniform throughout the sea-

sons. Normal high temperatures in April and October in much of Washington, Oregon and Idaho will now be slightly cooler than previously.

"Not every month in every location in the U.S. is always warming despite the fact that we generally are warming in our climate," Palecki said.

Warming shows up more clearly by comparing 1991-2020 temperatures to early 20th century normals, he said. The annual mean temperature has increased in every state since 1901-1930.

"There's a huge differ-

ence in temperatures over time as we go from cooler climates in the early part of the 20th century," Palecki said. "We're really seeing the fingerprints of climate change in the new normals."

Roughly speaking, the eastern half the U.S. is getting wetter, while the western half is getting drier, though there are exceptions.

Western Washington and the Idaho Panhandle became wetter in the past decade, as did Montana and the Dakotas.

Much of Eastern Oregon joined California and the

Southwest to form a large region that became drier.

The World Meteorological Organization on Monday released its annual global climate report.

Global mean temperatures in 2020 were approximately 2.16 degrees Fahrenheit above baseline temperatures from 1850 to 1900, according to the report.

Northern Eurasia was especially hot, but some areas were cooler than average, including Western Canada, parts of Brazil, northern India and southeastern Australia.



EO Media Group/Bend Bulletin

Oregon State Capitol in Salem

Oregon water rights enforcement bill gains traction

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

SALEM — A bill that would alter the process for enforcing Oregon water rights has gained traction after supporters scaled back changes that adversely affected junior irrigators.

The original version of House Bill 2244 would have partially eliminated the "automatic stay" provision of Oregon water law, under which junior irrigators can file lawsuits to prevent water shut-offs.

A revised version of the bill would retain the "automatic stay" provision but accelerate the legal process to avoid prolonged uncertainty about water rights enforcement.

"We know if we don't handle these quickly, either the fish die or the crops die," said Rep. Marty Wilde, D-Eugene.

A vote on HB 2244 is scheduled for the House floor on April 20 after the House Water Committee approved the bill 5-3 with a "do pass" recommendation.

The automatic stay provision has come under criticism in recent years by the Klamath Tribes, who've argued it's effectively been used to thwart the enforcement of their "time immemorial" water rights.

Litigation takes longer than the irrigation season, allowing junior users to continue diverting water despite the tribes' "water call" for enforcement action, according to critics.

The farm industry has defended the automatic stay as protecting due process for junior irrigators who disagree with the Oregon Water Resources Department's findings that they've infringed on senior water rights.

For example, the automatic stay provision was invoked when groundwater irrigators disagreed with OWRD's claims that wells were interfering with surface water flows.

Proposals to eliminate or curtail the automatic stay were debated during the 2019 and 2020 legislative sessions but died in committee upon adjournment.

The amended version of HB 2244 that's headed for a House vote creates a special procedure for disputes related to in-stream water rights held by tribes and state agencies.

The automatic stay only becomes effective once the junior irrigator actually files a "proof of service" that OWRD was served with a lawsuit. The agency must

notify affected tribes within five days.

The OWRD may also override the automatic stay if it causes "substantial public harm" but the junior irrigator can challenge this denial in court within 21 days.

"That does put a little more burden on the junior who is petitioning but not an inappropriate one or a difficult one to meet," Wilde said of the proposed procedure. "We're not changing anyone's substantive rights. It's just about speeding up the process so that everyone gets a quicker answer."

Changes coming to Washington farmworker housing rules

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Washington state regulators say they plan to loosen COVID-related rules for housing farmworkers, eliminating twice-daily checks on infected farmworkers by a health-care professional.

The house calls, not required for the elderly in long-term care facilities, are among the emergency rules set by the Health Department and Labor and Industries in May.

The Washington Farm Bureau and H-2A guest-worker provider Wafila are suing the agencies, claiming the emergency rules have overstayed their usefulness, reduced housing capacity and made unreasonable demands on farms.

A Yakima County Superior Court judge was scheduled to hear the claims Tuesday. The state agencies say special COVID-safety rules are still necessary, but concede in court filings that they will be changed.

"We call it a win," Farm Bureau CEO John Stuhlmiller said Monday. "We're just hoping the agencies will use science and match up the



Capital Press File

Breder Creek migrant farmworker housing in Cashmere, Wash., shortly before it opened in 2015. State agencies say they will revise COVID-related housing rules.

regulations with reality and see what needs to remain, if anything."

The agencies imposed the rules last spring as the state moved to regulate business and personal affairs. The rules required that workers in bunk-bed housing must be isolated in groups no larger than 15 people.

The agencies say they will have new rules by May 8 that recognize workers are being vaccinated.

The agencies have not made public any proposal, but a draft rule drops the twice-a-day house calls in favor of a daily phone call

to patients, according to the Health Department's chief science officer, Dr. Scott Lindquist.

In a court declaration, Lindquist acknowledged a shortage of medical professionals in rural areas.

The draft rule also removes the requirement that infected workers be kept within 20 minutes of advanced life-support emergency medical services, according to Lindquist.

Stuhlmiller said he hoped the agencies will repeal the emergency rules entirely, leaving in place pre-pandemic rules meant to pre-

vent sicknesses from spreading in farmworker housing.

The state agencies contend in court documents that emergency rules are still needed, though modified as health experts learn more about the virus.

"Farmworkers living in congregate settings are especially vulnerable to COVID," Lindquist declared.

Lindquist cited a surge in coronavirus cases between Dec. 8 and Jan. 6 in Yakima, Chelan and Douglas counties, which have a high number of farmworkers.

Wafila CEO Dan Fazio said the winter surge occurred when seasonal farmworker housing was vacant.

"He's talking about flare ups in the community due to Christmas. It's absolutely irrelevant to the discussion," Fazio said. "There's no scientific basis for (Lindquist's) statement."

A Health Department spokeswoman said outbreaks last spring and the spread of the virus in close quarters led the state to conclude farmworkers in congregate housing were vulnerable.

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