

Drought

Washington's drought increasingly 'extreme'

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The second-driest spring on record has pushed more than one-fifth of Washington into an "extreme drought," the U.S. Drought Monitor reported Thursday.

In 127 years of record-keeping, only the spring of 1924 was drier statewide, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

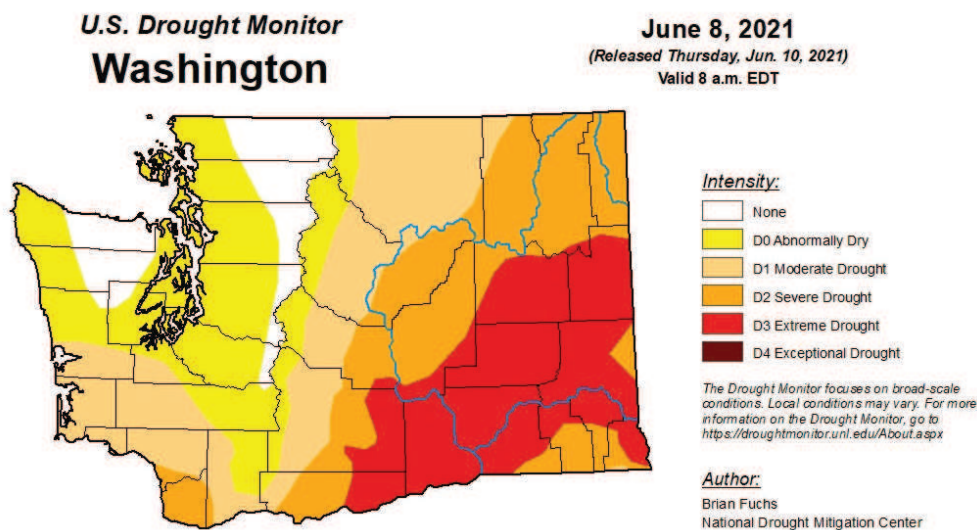
South-central and southeast Washington are especially dry. The USDA on Thursday predicted winter wheat production will decline by 28% and rated nearly half the state's pastures and rangeland "very poor."

Klickitat County rancher Keith Kreps said the conditions portended higher costs for cattlemen.

"The price of hay is going to be higher than hell," he said. "It's going to make us tighten our belt."

Washington overall received half the usual rain from March through May. South-central Washington got one-fifth its normal rainfall, according to NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information.

"In my whole life, in 60 years, I've never seen the late spring as dry. It's unreal," Kreps said. "It's pretty bleak unless it rains all summer."



Some 68% of Washington is some stage of drought — from "moderate" to "extreme." All areas untouched by drought are in Western Washington.

The percentage of the state in an extreme drought increased to 22% from 4% over the week before.

By some measurements, some parts of Eastern Washington are nearing "exceptional drought," the worst category.

The three-month period was fairly warm, but heat isn't causing drought, Assistant State Climatologist Karin Bumbaco said.

"Temperatures for the spring weren't terrible. This is really a precipitation-driven drought," she said. "We're

unlikely to see a big improvement, especially east of the Cascades at this point."

Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond said there is no clear explanation for the extended dry spell.

"I think the simplest explanation is that it's an extreme example of random variability," he said. "It's not even an early taste of climate change."

Adams, Benton and Franklin counties are in extreme drought, as are parts of Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Spokane, Whitman and Yakima counties.

Conditions may worsen. The Federal Climate Prediction Center has forecast a warm and dry summer.

How record-low water supplies on Colorado River could impact irrigators

By **SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN**
Capital Press

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation this month announced Lake Mead, a key reservoir on the Colorado River, has dipped to a record low, jeopardizing water supplies for irrigators, mainly in Arizona.

Lake Powell and Lake Mead, man-made lakes along the Colorado River that store water supplying 40 million people and vast expanses of farmland, have shrunk to historic lows, prompting the federal government's first-ever shortage declaration.

"It's very concerning," said Patti Aaron, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation spokeswoman.

If Lake Mead, America's largest reservoir, falls below 1,075 feet, it triggers an official Level 1 shortage declaration. June 9, Lake Mead fell to 1,071.56 feet — its lowest level since the lake was filled in the 1930s, which will trigger cuts to water supplies.

Officials will likely issue the declaration this August, and cuts will begin January 2022.

With farmers across the West panicking, officials say it's important for irrigators to understand whose water will get cut and whose won't.

Based on previous case law and agreements, some states and regions have larger allocations and more senior water rights than others. In the Lower Basin, farmers in Nevada don't need to worry at all; those in California don't need to worry yet; but growers in Arizona should expect major cuts next year.

Samantha Thompson, spokeswoman for the Nevada Division of Water Resources, said Nevada's share of the Colorado River is used exclusively for municipal, or city, purposes, and any water shortages "will not have an impact on non-municipal irrigators in Nevada."

In California, according to Jeanine Jones, California Department of Water Resources' interstate resources manager, the Level 1 shortage dec-

laration will not reduce California water deliveries. Even if Lake Mead falls to 1,025 feet, California will still receive its annual 4.4 million acre-feet.

If Lake Mead's elevation ever drops to a point that triggers a shortage declaration in California, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, with junior rights, would experience cuts first, said Jones.

Imperial County Irrigation District, the river's No. 1 water user, has high-priority rights.

"We're actually fortunate we have so much storage on the Colorado River," said Larry Cox, a grower at Coastline Family Farms and board member at the Imperial County Farm Bureau. "It's the reservoirs in California I'm more worried about."

In 2022, Arizona will reduce water use by 512,000 acre-feet. According to Shauna Evans, spokeswoman for Arizona Department of Water Resources, Central Arizona farmers, with lowest-priority rights, must reduce water use 65%.

According to USDA's Economic Research Service, Arizona is the nation's second-largest producer of lettuce, broccoli and cantaloupe. Central Arizona is a major producer of dairy, beef cattle, cotton, hay, corn and barley. Cuts in Arizona could impact markets for these commodities.

Arizona farm leaders say they also fear dust storms reminiscent of the 1930s Dust Bowl.

Despite dour predictions, Evans of the state's water agency said Arizona is decently prepared for the cuts because water users have been preparing for years.

Carlyle Currier, Mesa County rancher and president of the Colorado Farm Bureau, said the situation is "troubling, but unfortunately not surprising." There's an "urgent need," he said, for additional infrastructure to store Colorado River water during surplus to support farmers during drought.

Magic Reservoir irrigation deliveries end

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Magic Reservoir managers stopped irrigation deliveries June 10 as expected amid ongoing severe drought in the central Idaho mountains.

Big Wood Canal Co. and American Falls Reservoir District No. 2 said on their website April 16 that they expected between 50 and 70 days of water deliveries. Extremely low snowpack and anticipated runoff contributed to that outlook, as did demand-stimulating dry conditions.

Board members said the June 10 shutoff came after midseason suspensions — and as the high-altitude region failed to get meaningful additional precipitation or runoff timed to extend the season slightly.

The board last year stretched irrigation delivery to around Sept. 1, two to three weeks earlier than



Magic Reservoir on the Big Wood River in Idaho.

usual. Snowpack also was low in 2020, but Magic carried over more water from the previous irrigation season.

This year's delivery started May 5. Board member Ryan Telford, a farmer, said service was on for 18 days, off for nine and back on for 10 as managers and

customers weighed the needs of the moment.

The shutoff hurt alfalfa hay, pasture and small grains.

"A lot of barley put in will be chopped for silage," Telford said. "The economics don't work, but it lessens the loss."

Robin Lezamiz, a board

member who farms near Richfield, said he was hoping to fill a brewer's contract. Instead, he ended up chopping barley for silage feed, netting a value three to five times lower than what the barley contract would have paid.

On the other hand, he wasn't penalized to get out of the contract, and "at least I've got something to feed my animals," he said. Earlier, he bought corn silage from the Dietrich area, served by a different reservoir.

Lezamiz said he did one cutting of alfalfa hay instead of the targeted four. The first typically isn't the highest valued.

Magic Reservoir constituents had hoped snow at high elevation in late May and early June would give them an additional four or five days of water service, he said. Instead, they gained one day.

USDA to invest \$41.8 million for drought-related conservation

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

In response to historic drought conditions in the West, USDA is offering \$41.8 million to agricultural producers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP, to alleviate the immediate impacts of drought and other natural resources challenges.

"With all the emerging issues across the country, this (drought) is one of the big ones," Terry Crosby, Natural Resources Conservation Service chief, told Capital Press.

Of the total funding, NRCS is setting aside \$11.8 million directly for drought-related practices. A lot of that

is set aside for conservation efforts in the Klamath Basin to address drought and water conservation, he said.

The majority of the funding, \$30 million, is through a new EQIP option, Conservation Incentive Contracts, to maintain or improve existing practices and continue the great work farmers are already doing, he said.

The \$11.8 million is through the NRCS's flagship EQIP program to establish conservation practices to address drought, he said.

The funding is available to farmers and ranchers in Arizona, California, Colorado and Oregon, and the deadline for applications is July 12.

"We have a suite of practices. Some may need less water than

others," he said.

It's about finding what practices fit, whether the issue is soil erosion or water quality or quantity. Cover crops can help with erosion, water quality and water consumption and can be established pretty quickly, he said.

"We can help producers in those dry areas. We want anyone who's interested to walk through our doors and talk to our conservationists," he said.

The agency is focused on climate-smart practices with resiliency to reduce carbon emissions and soil erosion, address water quality and quantity and reduce wildfires.

"When you talk about conservation, a lot of what we do at NRCS is

about climate," he said.

There are a lot of emerging issues, such as drought in the West and flooding in the South, he said.

"We look at how we can help with emerging emergencies as they're happening," he said.

NRCS is piloting the drought-related practices and the Conservation Incentive Contracts in a small area this year and making more funding available nationwide next year, he said.

"We want to learn from this," he said.

EQIP is normally a three- to five-year program with landowners focused on reducing erosion and water resource management in

which farmers can apply for financial assistance of 75% to 90% of the cost, he said.

The incentive contracts are for five to 10 years and roll into what NRCS is already doing, he said.

NRCS will look at the cost to determine incentive payments to maintain already established practices, and that payment will vary geographically, he said.

"Costs of materials have gone up so much, sometimes we can't keep up with inflation," he said.

For more information about the Conservation Incentives Contracts, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov or contact a local Farm Service Agency office.

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2019 JEEP RENEGADE UT
VIN = ZACNJBAB6KP91304
Amount due on lien \$1415.00
Reputed owner(s) MADELINE SERENA KAY

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2015 TOYOTA RAV 4 UT
VIN = 2T3DFREV7FW321000
Amount due on lien \$1395.00
Reputed owner(s) NINA W & THOMAS J CHURCH-ADAMS
FIFTH THIRD BANK NATL ASSOC

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2015 HONDA PILOT UT
VIN = 5FN9F4H27FB040102
Amount due on lien \$1555.00
Reputed owner(s) RAMI MORNEL

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2016 HYUNDAI ELANTRA 4D
VIN = 5NPDH4AE1GH73813
Amount due on lien \$1555.00
Reputed owner(s) DONGVILLO CARLOS RODOLFO

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2015 CHEV SILVERADO PU
VIN = 1GC4K1E80FF548022
Amount due on lien \$1395.00
Reputed owner(s) CODY ALLEN MILTON
FIRST INTERSTATE BANK

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2017 TOYOTA COROLLA 4DR
VIN = 2T1BURHE7HC792313
Amount due on lien \$1415.00
Reputed owner(s) KYRA W KWOK & MATTHEW R KEITH
CAPITAL ONE AUTO FINANCE

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2019 CARRY UT
VIN = 4YMBC1427KR000722
Amount due on lien \$1395.00
Reputed owner(s) RICHEY BYRD
SHEFFIELD FINANCIAL DIV TRST BANK

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2017 GMC SIERRA PU
VIN = 1G1T2SEG8HF165724
Amount due on lien \$1875.00
Reputed owner(s) MARK F BAVARO
OREGON STATE C.U

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2015 AUDI A 4 4DR
VIN = WAUHFAL6FN007021
Amount due on lien \$1255.00
Reputed owner(s) NANCY WESSINGER KLINE

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2011 INFINITI EX35 SW
VIN = JN1A0HR8BM851188
Amount due on lien \$1255.00
Reputed owner(s) HEATHER S FISHER
OREGON COMMUNITY C.U

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2015 TOYOTA PRIUS 4DR
VIN = JTDKN3DU0F0450961
Amount due on lien \$1435.00
Reputed owner(s) TARL J & ERICKA D HOXIT
TOYOTA MOTOR CREDIT CORP

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2014 MERZ GL450 LL
VIN = 4JGDF7CE4EA351510
Amount due on lien \$1435.00
Reputed owner(s) EMMET L DOWNS & RAQUEL A LUNNERY
MECHANICS BANK