



PIPE DREAM



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Alice Parker, longtime advocate for new Columbia Basin Project water delivery to farmers, in the new EL47.5 pumping station outside Warden, Wash.

Alice Parker a cornerstone of the Columbia Basin Project expansion

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Alice Parker holds a family photo of herself with her husband, Ike, on their porch in Royal City in 1968.

WARDEN, Wash. — Alice Parker waited a long time to see more water from the Columbia River delivered to farmers in Eastern Washington.

On a recent June afternoon, she finally saw her dream transformed into reality.

Parker toured the immense waterworks at the new EL 47.5 pump station near Warden, Wash. It's a modern engineering marvel, pushing water through nearly 9 miles of pipeline from the East Low Canal to irrigate more than 8,500 acres of farmland to the east. The water comes from the Columbia River at the Grand Coulee Dam, over 60 miles away.

Equally impressive is the diminutive, 88-year-old Parker.

"I think I'm five-two. They say I'm not," she laughed. "They say I keep shrinking."

She's how every grandmother should be, constantly ready with a hug and a hearty laugh or a bit of wisdom.

She's also an example of a farmer's patience. And persistence. Farmers and others say her efforts are the main reason the new pump station, which is critical for farmers in the region, exists.

For decades, area farmers relied on water from the aquifer below, until it got so low their wells became unreliable or ran dry. The only way they could raise high-value crops profitably in the region, which gets about 13

See Parker, Page 9

ALICE PARKER

Member, Columbia Basin Development League Executive Board

Age: 88

Hometown: Karval, Colo.

Current location: Royal City, Wash.

Education: High school; Hugo, Colo.

Survey shows Oregon Christmas tree supplies down, prices up

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

PORTLAND—A survey of Oregon Christmas tree growers shows the industry continues to find its footing after years of oversupply that flooded the market with cheap trees, forcing

hundreds of farms to go out of business or switch to less labor-intensive crops.

Growers cut and sold 3.44 million trees in 2020, down 27% compared to 2015, according to the survey conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The number of farms growing Christmas trees also fell from 690 to 490, and total acreage was reduced from 41,223 to 31,124 during the same period.

Lower supplies, in turn, have allowed prices to rebound significantly for growers. The average price

per tree has almost doubled, from \$17.90 in 2015 to \$31.06 in 2020. The total value of sales increased 26% from \$84.5 million to \$106.9 million.

In short, growers are cutting fewer trees but making more money, said Casey Grogan of Silver Bells Tree

Farm in Silverton, Ore.

"There's not as many (trees) as there used to be," Grogan said. "That's what's increasing the price of them."

Silver Bells Tree Farm is a wholesale producer of Christmas trees, with about 400 acres of Noble

and Nordmann firs. Grogan also serves on the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Christmas Tree Licensing Committee, and is a past president of the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Growers Association.

See Survey, Page 9

Oregon makes big water investments in 2021

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

A devastating drought helped compel Oregon lawmakers to spend big on water legislation in 2021, investing in long-range planning as well as specific projects.

Natural resource organizations have applauded the Legislature's focus on resolving water quantity and quality problems but

warn that it can't rest on its laurels, since these challenges won't be solved in a year.

"There's still a lot of work that needs to happen," said April Snell, executive director of the Oregon Water Resources Congress, which represents irrigation districts.

The Legislature allocated more than \$538 million for water investments during this year's session. That included \$275 mil-

lion in federal coronavirus relief funding for infrastructure projects, which was largely directed toward municipal improvements.

Agriculture-related projects also received money — including \$14 million to upgrade Wallowa Dam and \$10 million for piping water canals in the Deschutes basin.

A fund for water supply

See Water, Page 9



Matueusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Lawmakers made major investments in Oregon water projects and planning this year.

Founded in 1945
by Farmers and Ranchers.
Who saw a need for Rural Lending.



SHERMAN & WASCO COUNTIES
Amy is Experienced, with a Focus on
AGRICULTURAL and COMMERCIAL LOANS
and **OPERATING LINES OF CREDIT.**

IONE, OR
Russell Seewald

BOARDMAN / IRRIGON, OR
Shane Lazinka

HEPPNER / CONDON, OR
Amber Schlaich

MORO, OR
Amy McNamee
541-565-3712

