



Brad Carlson/Capital Press
The Malad River near its confluence with the Snake River outside Bliss, Idaho.

WAIT AND SEE

Western farmers hope to bounce back from an exceptionally dry year



Brad Carlson/Capital Press
Boise River Watermaster Rex Barrie on Oct. 1 at the Star, Idaho, diversion for the Canyon County Canal.

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

STAR, Idaho — Rex Barrie viewed the Boise River as it crawled under the bridge that straddles it near Star, Idaho.

It was Oct. 1 — the first day of the new water year — and Barrie, the Boise River’s watermaster, was inspecting diversions that feed water to irrigators.

“As the season winds up, demand is less,” Barrie said. “So we can reduce flows and keep water in the reservoirs.”

Doing that will be crucial to

next year’s irrigation season. For the Boise River — and rivers like it around the West — 2022 could be a make-or-break year for irrigated agriculture. This year’s drought and high heat left most of the region’s rivers and reservoirs running low, and farmers have their fingers crossed that the winter will bring a lot of rain and a hefty snowpack in the mountains that will replenish them through next summer.

The Boise River is fed by three major reservoirs — Anderson Ranch, Arrowrock and Lucky Peak. All of them had above-average

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Boise River Dams



Capital Press graphic

Farmers skeptical of Inslee-Murray plan, oppose breaching dams



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press File
Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, says farmers oppose breaching the Snake River dams.

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Farmers hope the benefits of the Columbia-Snake river system don’t get lost as two of Washington’s top Democrats “assess” breaching four dams on the lower Snake River.

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray and Gov. Jay Inslee want a joint federal-state process to consider salmon recovery, including potentially breaching the four dams on the lower Snake River, long targeted by environmental groups.

Murray and Inslee say they will engage in “robust” outreach to communities across the region. Recommendations will be made by July 31.

Washington wheat farmers rely on the system to move their crop to customers around the world, said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

“We remain strongly opposed to any efforts to breach the lower Snake River dams, which would cause undue harm to the food supply, weaken vital agricultural exports and remove a critical clean energy source — all without necessarily moving the needle on desired salmon recovery efforts,” Hennings said.

“It is critical that wheat growers have a meaningful seat at the table,” she said.

The association plans to work directly with Murray, Inslee and the rest of the state’s congressional delegation to “ensure

our voice is heard and that removal of the dams remains off the table,” she said.

“Time and time again, federal and state efforts to evaluate the economic and environmental impacts of breaching the lower Snake River dams have come to the same conclusion: dam removal is an extreme — and unnecessary — measure that would not only destroy a critical transportation network for agricultural exports, inputs ... but would also harm the environment and impact power supply and reliability,” said Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission. “We remain committed to finding collaborative, science-based salmon recovery plans that consider the impacts on

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Hazelnut growers weather ice, heat to successful harvest

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

SALEM — Freshly harvested hazelnuts arrived by the truckload at Chapin Dehydrating LLC, where they are washed and dried for packaging.

Bruce Chapin, who runs the receiving station north of Salem, is so far pleased with what he sees. He anticipates the crop will be roughly on par with last year’s record haul of 61,000 tons, despite challenging conditions that have kept Willamette Valley growers on their toes.

“We had a very dry summer,” Chapin said. “As a result, we’re seeing smaller nuts coming in here.”



Bruce Chapin

means the industry did not receive its annual crop forecast, but hazelnut growers say they are seeing decent yields and good quality after weathering a difficult year.

“I think we were basically flush or maybe

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Courtesy of Tim Aman
Wooden totes are filled with hazelnuts recently harvested at Aman Bros. LLC in Mt. Angel, Ore.

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