



GO WITH THE FLOW

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

Marc Thalacker advises other irrigation districts, pipe manufacturers and water managers in Oregon based on what he has learned. Here, he is visiting a new pipeline being installed in a nearby district.

Barriers to modernizing irrigation systems and how to overcome them

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

SISTERS, Ore. — When Marc Thalacker first walked into Central Oregon’s Three Sisters Irrigation District Office in 1988, he was taken aback.

The dilapidated office had no running water, a sputtering oil stove and an out-house. The office served a district with a canal system so old it had been built by mule-drag.

“It was a real wild west show,” said Thalacker.

His big laugh filled the room.

Many years, according to district records, 50% of the water in the canals and laterals was lost to seepage and evaporation, farmers received only half their allot-

ted water and the local creek was dried, stranding fish.

“I was overwhelmed with what I was looking at,” said Thalacker.

He had come to the office to volunteer. Thalacker was a new farmer — he and his now ex-wife had bought 400 acres near Sisters that year to raise cattle and grow crops. He wanted to understand more about the local water system and how to make it better.

Making it better is precisely what he did.

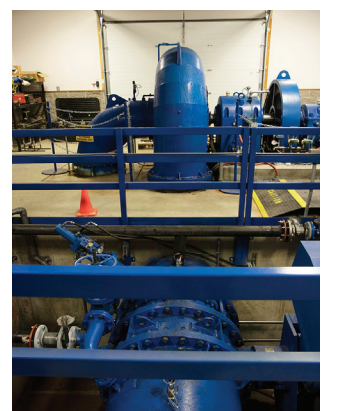
In the past 24 years since Thalacker moved into the role of district manager in 1997, Three Sisters Irrigation District, or TSID, has been transformed through modernization.

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Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

Ron Alvarado, state conservationist for USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Center, speaks to other state water experts at the site of a fish screen in Three Sisters Irrigation District. Marc Thalacker says NRCS has been a great resource for helping his district modernize.



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press
Revenue-producing hydropower generators Three Sisters Irrigation District installed in its hydroelectric plant in 2014.

Supply chain issues to hit crop inputs

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

As producers plan for the next growing season, chaos in the supply chain has them concerned about the cost and availability of crop inputs.

By and large, producers — other than fruit and vegetable growers — didn’t face the structural shifts in the supply-chain when COVID-19 hit in the spring of 2020 because they were already in the middle of produc-



Don Jenkins/Capital Press File

Most chemical ingredients for crop inputs are manufactured in China. That means the backlog in shipping between Asia and the U.S. could impact farmers.

tion, said Allan Gray, director of the Center for Food and Agribusiness at Purdue University.

He doesn’t think producers faced the supply-chain fallout this year, either, because agrochemical suppliers had inventories on hand.

“What’s happening now is there’s no adjustment left in the system; the invento-

ries are gone,” he said during the latest “Farm Country Update” podcast, presented by Farm Journal.

It’s important to realize the supply-chain problems are a confluence of several factors, not just one or two things, he said.

“The reality is it’s a very, very complicated set of

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Scope of wolf protection in the hands of judge

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The West’s tug-of-war over wolves went via Zoom to a federal judge in Oakland on Nov. 4, as environmental groups asked U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White to restore federal protection to wolves along the West Coast, and in the central Rockies and Great Lakes states.

Attorney Kristen Boyles said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was abandoning gray wolves outside the Northern Rockies.

Justice Department attorney Michael Eitel said state boundaries shouldn’t dictate how the agency carries out the Endangered Species Act.

“This is not a case where Fish and Wildlife is trying to skirt its obligations under the ESA,” he said.

The lawsuits before White challenge the Trump administration’s decision to take gray wolves throughout the Lower 48 off the federal list of endangered species.

Wolves in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and the eastern one-third of Oregon and Washington were already de-listed and are not addressed in the suits.

The Biden administration has defended



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A federal judge heard arguments Nov. 12 over the Trump administration’s decision to remove endangered species protections from gray wolves.

the Trump rule, arguing that gray wolves aren’t threatened in the U.S. because wolves are established in the Northern Rockies, as well as the western Great Lakes.

Ironically, however, the Biden administration is also reviewing the ESA status of wolves in the Northern Rockies because of wolf hunts in Idaho and Montana.

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