

# Cool, wet spring in store for much of Pacific Northwest

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

SPOKANE — Spring and summer will be cool and wet in the Pacific Northwest as the La Nina weather pattern lingers, a top meteorologist told attendees at the Spokane Ag Show.

Art Douglas, professor emeritus of atmospheric sciences at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., presented his annual weather forecast Feb. 1.

“You guys are going to be kind of the lucky folks as we go towards the spring,” Douglas told farmers. “You all have a better sense of how well your crop is established. My feeling is, you’re going to have a pretty good turnaround with that crop because of the spring forecast.”

He pointed to ocean surface temperature forecasts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration anticipating that La Nina will continue into the summer.

La Nina and El Nino are complex weather patterns that result from variations in the Pacific Ocean’s surface temperatures.

La Nina will favor a strong North Pacific high pressure system in February, Douglas said.

While the Pacific Northwest will remain cool and wet, the high pressure will effectively block the rest of the West and Midwest from Pacific moisture, he said. This will result in two consecutive dry winter months in a row, Douglas said.

The region will warm up in March, with the only coolness in western Washington and Oregon because their offshore waters are so cold, Douglas said.

He expected a slight cool down in April, then a warm-up again in May.

Most of the U.S. will trend warmer and drier than normal through the



**Art Douglas, professor of atmospheric sciences at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., delivers his annual weather forecast Feb. 1 at the Spokane Ag Show.**

spring, Douglas said. Drought will intensify in the Southwest and winter wheat areas of the Plains.

“The Pacific Northwest will trend slightly cooler and wetter than normal and this may improve wheat prospects,” he said.

The forecast suggests the drought in much of the U.S. will intensify in mid-2022, Douglas said. La Nina conditions favor a hot, dry summer throughout the midsection of the country, with the Pacific Northwest on the western edge of the drought.

Douglas predicted eastern and southern Idaho and Montana will be drier than normal.

“The Pacific Northwest kind of stays cooler than normal and a little wetter than normal,” he said. “After having had the cool, wet spring, you’re going to keep on that coolness going into the summer.”

The Plains and the Dakotas will

remain “bone dry,” Douglas said, with dryness extending into the western and central Corn Belt, impacting a large portion of U.S. cattle grazing lands with drought.

“I think we’re going to have some major problems going forward in the U.S. in terms of summer crops,” Douglas said.

Douglas said this year will most resemble the years 2000, 2011, 2012 and 2013 — “all terrible years in the midsection of the country.”

Those were all La Nina years, he said. But the next set of years that the year could most resemble all turned into El Nino by the next summer.

“We’re at a tipping point in terms of the correlation,” Douglas said. “This is telling me that probably next year it’s going to pop. We’ll keep La Nina going this year, but come 2023, we’re likely to see early El Nino develop, say about March of 2023.”

# Short-term rentals must pass Oregon’s ‘farm impacts test,’ ruling says

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

Short-term lodging rentals on farms and forest land in Oregon’s Clackamas County must be analyzed for their impacts on agriculture, according to a land use ruling.

The state’s Land Use Board of Appeals has overturned the county’s regulations for short-term rentals in farm and forest zones, ruling that the activities are subject to conditional use permits.

In effect, the ruling will impose some constraints on short-term rentals in agricultural zones, rather than prohibiting them altogether, said Andrew Mulkey, rural lands attorney with 1,000 Friends of Oregon, a non-profit that opposed the county’s regulations.

“The way it was written and implemented, it would allow hotels to operate on farm and forest land,” Mulkey said.

Rural landowners will still be able to participate in short-term rental services such as Airbnb, though they’ll likely be subject to rules for home businesses, he said.

“That fits better with how resource land should be used, not an investment for an absentee landlord,” he said.

Short-term rentals operated by landowners who live on-site are less likely to interfere with surrounding farms, Mulkey said. “I doubt farmers would put up with frat parties every weekend, and that’s the benefit of that model.”

Capital Press was unable to reach attorneys for Clackamas County for comment as of press time.

Farmers who rely on overnight tourist lodging could use some direction from state lawmakers or the Department of Land Conservation and Development, said Scotie Jones, founder of the U.S. Farm Stay Association and a

farmer in Alesia, Ore.

“The problem is the counties are all interpreting it differently,” she said. “It makes it really complicated for us as farmers if we’re trying to add a farm stay to our property.”

According to LUBA, short-term rentals must undergo a “farm impacts test” to determine that they don’t impair agricultural and forestry practices or significantly increase their cost.

In contrast, the regulations adopted by Clackamas County in 2020 allow short-term rental use “without any requirement to obtain specific authorization at all, let alone a requirement to satisfy the farm impacts test,” the ruling said.

The county’s regulations allow “overnight, transient lodging as an outright permitted use” in farm and forest zones even though it’s not allowed under statewide land use rules, according to LUBA.

According to the county, short-term rentals are a residential and not a commercial land use, so who occupies the dwelling isn’t relevant once it’s been built in a farm or forest zone.

LUBA rejected the argument, ruling that short-term rentals must be expressly allowed in farm and forest zones, so it’s not relevant that they haven’t been specifically prohibited by law.

The conditional use process for short-term rentals will ensure that neighboring farmers can weigh in on the activity, Mulkey said. “The county was trying to subvert that, and it would have created a lot more headaches.”

Beyond the disruptive effect of short-term rentals in farm zones, such businesses also create affordability problems, he said.

“It’s hard enough to buy farmland as it is,” he said. “It makes it even harder to buy a piece of farmland if it has a dwelling on it.”

# Oregon wine leads U.S. in growing direct-to-consumer sales

By **GEORGE PLAGVEN**  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Bolstered by high demand and rising prices, Oregon’s wine industry led the U.S. in accelerating its rate of growth for direct-to-consumer sales in 2021, according to an analysis of shipment data from more than 1,300 wineries nationwide.

The annual report, issued by Sovos ShipCompliant and Wines Vines Analytics, shows Oregon wineries shipped 560,702 cases of wine valued at \$285.5 million.

That represents an increase of 12.9% in volume and 18.7% in sales value over 2020, outperforming all other wine regions across the country.

Pinot noir dominated the share of Oregon direct-to-consumer sales, accounting for more than half of the state’s wine shipments and two-thirds of the total sales value. Even with a 5.1% increase in the average price per bottle — up to \$51.29 — shipments of Pinot noir still jumped 8.2%.

“This translates into an undeniable increase in

demand for Oregon wines, and Oregon Pinot noir in particular,” the report states.

Sarah Murdoch, communications director for the Oregon Wine Board, said Oregon only produces 2% of the nation’s wine, but has garnered a reputation for high quality, driving up demand among wholesalers and retailers.

“We’re still little, but we’re just getting more and more well known,” Murdoch said. “That demand is really hard to create in a crowded marketplace.”

Last year also saw a “great return to Wine Country” following pandemic closures in 2020, Murdoch said. More people were comfortable visiting tasting rooms, and wineries themselves became more savvy with online marketing.

“These things really helped people buy and have more Oregon wine shipped to them,” Murdoch said.

While Oregon wines account for only 6.8% of the value of direct-to-consumer shipments nationwide, that is more than double its share from a decade ago, the report states.

It isn’t just Willamette

Valley Pinot noir. In 2021, Chardonnay shipments from Oregon increased 28.7% in volume and 36.4% in value over 2020. That includes a 6% increase in the average price per bottle.

Sparkling wine is also gaining steam in Oregon, increasing 60.7% in value and 55.6% in volume over 2020.

Murdoch said Pinot noir has long been the bellwether winegrape variety in Oregon, though she described Chardonnay as a “sleeping giant.” Between 2016 and 2021, Chardonnay plantings increased 43% in Oregon, to 2,600 acres.

“As plantings go up, our optimism in that grape goes up, and so does the attention,” Murdoch said.

Industry-wide, direct-to-consumer wine shipments in 2021 returned to normal following pandemic-fueled turmoil of 2020, the report states.

Total sales value eclipsed \$4 billion for the first time. That was due to the largest ever year-over-year increase in the average price per bottle, up 11.8% to \$41.16.

However, the large

increase in average price per bottle comes on the heels of a 9.5% decrease in 2020, when more first-time buyers stuck at home were purchasing less expensive wines, and wineries were offering unusually large discounts.



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