

## Idaho snowpack stays near normal despite dry spell

By **BRAD CARLSON**  
Capital Press

The snowpack was near normal Feb. 1 in much of Idaho despite recent dry weather, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service reported.

A wet December and snowy first week of January pushed totals above normal, but dry conditions and temperatures slightly above normal in the mountains have prompted some concern about early runoff.

"Warmer temperatures combined with little snowfall throughout January resulted in an unusually dense snowpack for this time of year," Daniel Tappa, hydrologist and data collection officer for NRCS in Idaho, said.

He said snowpack density is closely related to the potential for snowmelt to begin. "The higher the density, the closer the snowpack is to reaching an isothermal state, which happens before widespread snowmelt can occur."

Tappa said in an interview that while snowpack this dense, this soon "is a bit alarming in terms of the health of mountain snowpack," spring weather will be the determining factor. The sun's low angle is helping it stay in place for now.

NRCS said though conditions remain favorable for a normal runoff season, normal runoff is unlikely if dry conditions persist.

Reservoir storage in the Upper Snake River system in eastern Idaho was well below normal for Feb. 1. The snowpack is 85-95% of normal.

Kevin Smith, meteorolo-

gist at the National Weather Service in Pocatello, said La Nina conditions typically place southeast Idaho on the edge of or between active storm tracks as they move over a Pacific high-pressure ridge. Storms have hit parts of Montana and western Canada, "and just not come far enough south to give us a lot of precipitation here."

Climate Prediction Center outlooks for southeast Idaho call for below-normal precipitation for the next two weeks, near normal for the next month and possibly above normal in spots for three months, he said Feb. 7.

NRCS said reservoir storage in southern Snake River basins is below normal except at Wild Horse Reservoir in the Upper Owyhee. Precipitation in January was below normal for the Owyhee and Bruneau basins but higher than usual in Salmon Falls, Goose Creek and Raft River.

Storage was 77% of normal in the Boise River system of Anderson Ranch, Arrowrock and Lucky Peak reservoirs, and 61% in the Weiser River Basin. It was 88.5% in the Payette Basin. Snowpack in west-central Idaho basins was around normal Feb. 1.

Tappa said that while reservoir storage does not change much in fall and winter unless there is an unusual occurrence like rain, it indicates how much runoff is needed to meet irrigation needs. In the central mountains, snowpack was 115% of normal Feb. 1 in the Big Wood Basin, where Magic Reservoir storage was 43% after back-to-back dry years.

## Washington Apple Education Foundation hires new executive director

By **SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN**  
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Washington Apple Education Foundation has hired a new executive director, Faviola Barbosa.

Washington Apple Education Foundation, or WAEF, is the charity arm of Washington's tree fruit industry. Founded in 1994, the organization is best known for its scholarship program, which assists hundreds of college students annually.

The majority of scholarship recipients are first-generation college students, many of whom are the children of Latino orchard workers.

WAEF's leaders say Barbosa is a natural fit for the position because of her background in farming, interest in higher education and deep roots in the Latino community.

Barbosa, who started work in her new position this week, replaces Jennifer Withersbee, who announced her retirement last October after serving as executive director of WAEF for 20 years.

Barbosa is the fourth exec-



**Faviola Barbosa**  
Executive

utive director in the foundation's history. "I am so happy to welcome Faviola as the new Executive Director of WAEF," chairman Laurie Knebusch said in a statement. "Her excitement and passion to work with students is easily conveyed when she shares what it means to be able to impact lives through access to educational opportunities. Her life story is compelling and includes deep familial ties to the fruit industry."

Knebusch led the search for a new executive director.

Barbosa has significant experience in working with college students, having served within the Washington State Community & Technical Colleges system for more than 18 years.

Barbosa migrated from Mexico to the U.S. with her family when she was 2 years old. She grew up in the farm-working industry in Orondo, Wash.

## Mountain snowpack dips across Oregon

By **GEORGE PLAIVEN**  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Mountain snowpacks shrank across Oregon at the end of January after a strong start, with most basins east of the Cascades now measuring below the 30-year median for this time of winter.

Statewide, the snow-water equivalent as of Feb. 8 was averaging 94.5% of the median from 1991 to 2020. That is down from 138% on Jan. 10, when a series of storms dumped several feet of snow at higher elevations.

Farmers and ranchers — particularly in central and eastern Oregon — depend on ample snowpack to replenish streams and reservoirs heading into the irrigation season. Multiple years of drought have diminished water supplies for agriculture, fish and wildlife.

In its monthly Oregon Basin Outlook Report, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates that more snow and lower temperatures will be necessary to begin offsetting the impacts of drought.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, roughly 95% of Oregon remains in some level of drought, including 16% in "exceptional drought," the highest category. The worst conditions are in Central Oregon, beginning in the Klamath Basin to the south and swelling north into parts of Wasco, Sherman and Gilliam counties.

While January appeared to offer



EO Media Group File

**Snowpack in Oregon declined at the end of January after a strong start to the month.**

some relief, with one storm dropping as much as 2 feet of snow in the Cascades, that was followed by rain-on-snow and drier weather at month's end, melting away a chunk of that early accumulation.

Every basin east of the Cascades has dipped below the median, except for the Umatilla, Walla Walla and Willow basins at 106%.

The Malheur and Owyhee basins in southeast Oregon are at 74% and 80%, respectively. The Klamath Basin, where farmers saw a complete shutdown of the Klamath Project last year, is at 83%, down from 118% a month earlier.

The highest snow totals are in the Hood, Sandy and Lower Deschutes basins at 136% of the median. The Willamette Basin is also above the

median at 120%, though water storage there is primarily driven by rain, not snow.

Overall precipitation in the Willamette Valley is about normal dating back to the beginning of the water year on Oct. 1.

Water managers have said it will take prolonged "significant precipitation" for Oregon's groundwater and surface water to recover from drought. "There are a lot of factors and time involved in carryover of water," said Kyle Gorman, region manager for south-central Oregon with the state's Water Resources Department, in a previous interview.

The NRCS reports that most reservoirs in Oregon are at below-median levels of storage, with some at less than 50% of volume.

## WSDA to stop certifying organic dairies

By **DON JENKINS**  
Capital Press

The Washington State Department of Agriculture will stop certifying organic dairies and other livestock operations, saying there aren't enough producers to support the service.

The department's organic program manager, Brenda Book, informed producers of the department's decision in an email Feb. 3. The department certifies 886 organic farms, but only 41 have livestock, according to Book.

Producers have until

March 15 to find another organization to certify that their operations meet USDA standards. Book recommended Oregon Tilth, based in Corvallis. Oregon Tilth did not respond to a request for comment.

Producers who have not been certified by a new agency by July 15 may lose USDA certification, according to Book.

Rochester, Wash., organic dairy farmer Eric Johnson said Monday he had no warning from the department. "We got blindsided by it," he said.

Agriculture department spokesman Hector Castro said Tuesday the department decided to end the program rather than try to fill a vacancy. The program was losing money, and Oregon Tilth was ready to provide the service, he said.

Application, inspection and renewal fees support the department's organic certification program. The department collected less than \$121,000 from organic livestock producers in 2021, according to Book.

It was, according to Book, "less than one-third

of the cost for the minimum staff needed to meet accreditation requirements."

To pay, equip and train an organic livestock inspector costs \$100,682 year, according to Book. "At a minimum, four trained livestock specialists are needed to provide ruminant certification services," she wrote.

Book said fees would have to be raised at least 100% to support the program.

"We believe that such a significant increase in fees would be cost prohibitive for the affected businesses," she wrote.



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