

## Is Vernonia's Weather Changing?

*Temperature and rainfall trends, along with personal observations, point to increasing changes. But what does the data really show?*

By Scott Laird

When I first moved to Oregon in 1993, the standing rule was that the spring rains didn't stop, and summer didn't start, until the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. That rule proved to be mostly true for the first 20 or so years that I've been here, and has held up here in Vernonia as well. But it has seemed that spring rainfall patterns and summer temperatures have been changing over the last few years, at least based on anecdotal evidence and unscientific observations.

But during the last several years that anecdotal evidence is being confirmed by data and other observed incidents – western red cedar trees in the region have begun mysteriously dying; wildfire seasons have grown progressively longer, and more intense and dangerous; and the garden growing season has extended. A few weeks ago the State of Oregon announced that about 80% of the state was currently experiencing drought conditions, caused by a lack of spring rainfall over the last several years. And, as the month of April came to an end, the National Weather Service was reporting that Portland, Hillsboro, and numerous other recording sites around Northwest Oregon had experienced some of the lowest amounts of monthly rainfall ever recorded during that month.

All of those incidents and observable changes tell both individual stories, but also paint a broad picture of change that impacts all of us in one way or another. But are they related? Is this a trend towards drier and hotter weather conditions that we all need to adjust to, or are they just blips on a graph – normal fluctuations in the ever changing weather patterns that are just a normal part of life in the Pacific Northwest?

To see if I could find more details about our local weather patterns, I reached out to Jim Buxton who has been charting and reporting weather conditions at his residence about 6 miles outside of Vernonia on Keasey Road

since the 1960s. Buxton reports the weather from his station, known as OR-CB-10, to Co-CoRaHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network), a grassroots volunteer network of backyard weather observers who measure and map precipitation in their local communities. Buxton turned out to be a wealth of information, and provided me with numerous graphs, charts, and statistics – enough to actually make finding the answers to my questions fairly complex.

Buxton's data differs from the City of Vernonia's data - precipitation, high and low temperatures – which you may have noticed has been published here in the Voice since mid 2015; that data is faithfully provided monthly by Jeff Burch, foreman of the Vernonia Public Works Department and recorded at the Public Works shop near State Avenue in town. At his station Buxton typically records rainfall that is about 20% more than the City. For example, in March this year Buxton recorded 3.78 inches while the City of Vernonia recorded 2.93 inches. That confirmed that Vernonia's regional weather consistently varies across its landscapes. Buxton's data also shows that the weather in this region changes significantly from year to year. For documentation purposes, the rain year runs from October to the following September.

At Buxton's station, his data shows a 30-year average of 59.84 inches of annual rainfall. Over the last 10 years Buxton's records indicate that most years the rainfall is close to that average although they can fluctuate significantly – in rain year 2014-15 he recorded 43.39 inches and in 2016-17 he recorded 73.54 inches. His records also indicate that a specific month can receive drastically differing amounts from year to year. For example in 2019-20 we received:

1.74 inches in November  
7.69 inches in December  
15.92 inches in January  
4.9 inches in February,  
while the previous year in 2018-19 we received:  
4.08 inches in November  
10.53 inches in December  
4.95 inches in January  
7.35 inches in February.

And those kinds of fluctuations go back  
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## Logger Stadium Campaign Passes \$100,000 Goal

*Momentum is growing for the school sports complex project which would build a concession stand/restroom, covered seating, and team rooms*

By Scott Laird

The campaign to raise funds to build a covered seating area for Vernonia Logger football, and track and field fans is starting to take shape and just passed its first landmark goal.



*Members of the Logger Stadium Steering Committee stand near the current bleachers at the football field and track. The group has initiated a campaign to raise over \$1 million in funds to build a covered seating area along with a concession stand/restroom facility at the school campus.*

The Logger Stadium Steering Committee was excited to announce they have raised over \$100,000 towards the construction of a covered seating area and concession stand at the Vernonia Schools Campus. The project was organized this past October and is quickly gaining traction.

A very generous donation of \$35,000 from a local alumni, received in April, along with continued donations from businesses, citizens, and other alumni, has pushed the total fundraising effort to \$103,190 and helped energize the campaign.

"Thus far, donations have ranged from \$25 to \$35,000 from 130 donors, with 75% of our donated funds coming from the Vernonia community," said alumni Jim Eckland, who, along with his wife Kathy have been instrumental in organizing and promoting the effort to complete the school's sports complex. The Ecklands, who live in Keizer, Oregon but still have a close attachment to Vernonia, were part of the Vernonia Education Foundation's efforts to raise funds to build the school, and the softball and baseball fields, by rallying alumni from across the country to get involved; the Alumni Field softball field is named

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## Witt Accused of Sexual Harassment

*Brad Witt steps down as Committee Chair after Republican Vikki Breese Iverson files complaint*

Democratic State Representative Brad Witt, who represents Columbia County in the Oregon Legislature, has temporarily stepped down as the Chair of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee after one of the Vice Chairs on the committee, Vikki Breese Iverson (R-Prineville), accused him of sexual harassment.

Breese Iverson said in a letter she sent to House Speaker Tina Kotek, a Democrat, on April 19, that she was subjected to sexual harassment and pressured to engage in a "quid-pro-quo" arrangement in a text message sent by

Witt. Breese Iverson asked that Witt be removed temporarily from three committees that she and Witt work together on.

"The fact Representative Witt chose to sexually harass me leaves us no room for any future ability to have real discussions regarding committee business or other House Floor business," Breese Iverson wrote. "The quid-pro-quo he texted me is an inexcusable abuse of his power. Experiencing this sexual harassment is something I should not have to be exposed to or accept as a course of business, especially in today's Capitol culture."

The contents of the text or texts Breese Iverson referred to have not been disclosed.

Witt has said he believes "101% that it will be found that there

was no ill intent on my part whatsoever, but rather an attempt to further the committee interests."

The House Conduct Committee, evenly split between Republicans and Democrats, heard the complaint, but declined to recommend Witt's forced removal as committee chair, while issuing a no-contact order between Witt and Breese Iverson as an interim safety measure. Witt voluntarily stepped down as Committee Chair until the matter is resolved.

An independent investigator, private attorney Sarah Ryan, will handle an investigation, which she said should be concluded by the end of April. The matter would then go before the House Conduct Committee to consider whether Witt violated legislative rules, and determine any consequences.