

# Oregon's \$10 million water fund rules approved

Developers are expected to soon begin applying for funds

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Aspiring developers of Oregon water projects will soon be able to request financial assistance from the state government's \$10 million water supply fund.

The Oregon Water Resources Commission has approved final rules for the fund's operation, which means water regulators expect to begin accepting proposals this summer from developers who hope to win project funding in the spring of 2016.

"I think we have a really good start here," said April Snell, executive director of the Oregon Water Resources Commission, during the June 19 commission meeting.

The rules aren't perfect as they required compromises from a multitude of stakeholders, and will probably

require "tweaks" as the water supply development fund becomes functional, she said.

"In particular, it's the storage piece we will have to have more discussions about," Snell said.

Storage projects are more controversial than water conservation but are necessary in light of the state's dire water situation, she said.

The \$10 million fund was created by Oregon lawmakers in 2013 but the grants and loans could not be dispensed until task forces representing diverse interests agreed on underlying concepts for its operation.

The process was further delayed because former Gov. John Kitzhaber missed a deadline for appointing the task forces, which did not begin negotiations until last summer.

After a deal was hammered out earlier this year, the concepts were incorporated into proposed rules by the Oregon Water Resources Department, which offered them up for public comment before submitting them to the commission for final approval.

One of the most contentious aspects of the fund's

operation was the determination of "seasonally varying flows," or how much water can be withdrawn from streams during periods of heavy flow.

Storage projects that win grants must also release 25 percent of their water for in-stream environmental benefits.

It was ultimately decided that projects will be subject to a "matrix," under which those with the largest environmental impact and least amount of stream data would be subject to the most scrutiny.

Under the rules recently adopted by the commission, the Oregon Water Resources Department can conduct the "seasonally varying flow" analysis on projects that are approved for funding.

However, project developers with sufficient information can complete this step before they even apply for funding, said Tracy Loudon, senior policy coordinator for the agency.

Proposed projects will be ranked by a technical review team based on their economic, environmental and social benefits, but the Oregon Water Resources Commission

## Dry soils will impede drought recovery Water must first saturate soil before filling reservoirs

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

The ongoing drought has highlighted the need for increased water supplies in Oregon, but low soil moisture poses a major impediment to water storage, experts say.

Even if Oregon experiences healthy precipitation and snowfall in the future, it will take years to refill some reservoirs because water will first be absorbed by the thirsty soil, experts say.

"That's the first place it's going to go," said Margaret Matter, water resource specialist with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. "Once you get the soils re-saturated, there's nowhere for water to go but down the channel."

Soils dried rapidly in June, leading to an extremely low

level of moisture before summer even began, said Scott Oviatt, state snow survey supervisor for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"We're seeing conditions that are typical of July or August," he said during a recent meeting of the Oregon Water Resources Commission.

Snow at the mid-elevation level, which is critical for stream flows, melted early in the year, he said. "What snow did accumulate was mostly at the higher elevations."

The current "El Niño" cycle of warm temperatures in the Pacific Ocean is likely to persist through the coming winter, which bodes for more mild weather in the Northwest, said David Rupp, research associate at Oregon State University's Oregon Climate Change Research Institute.

The situation would be aggravated if the "blob" of warm temperatures in the north Pacific — which deflected storms from the region — does not dissipate, he said.

There's no evidence that El Niño cycles are more frequent due to increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, Rupp said.

However, it stands to reason that El Niño's effects would be more pronounced if temperatures get higher, he said.

In some years, natural variability may counteract the overall warming trend, but in the long-term it's unlikely the region will be getting more snow, Rupp said.

"The year we're seeing this year, which is not normal, will be normal by 2050," he said.

will make the final call about which ones will receive money, he said.

The department expects to have applications ready in August, but it has not yet set a

deadline for submissions that aim to win funding in 2016, Loudon said.

# Washington confines gypsy moth search to westside

Agency focuses on ports, population centers

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

The state Department of Agriculture will limit its annual summer hunt for gypsy moths to Western Washington, opting to focus on catching plant-eating pests that arrived on ships or with new residents moving to the more populous half of the state, an agency official said Tuesday.

WSDA plans to hang 16,000 cardboard gypsy moth traps by the end of June, about 3,000 fewer traps than last year. The agency shares costs with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which cut its contribution,

WSDA Pest Program manager Jim Marra said.

With fewer resources, WSDA will forgo placing the traps in Eastern Washington, though the agency probably will next year, Marra said.

Washington State Tree Fruit Association President Jon Devaney said the one-year absence of traps is not an immediate concern, but the association hopes WSDA will periodically check to keep the moths from becoming established on the eastside.

European gypsy moths, indiscriminate leaf eaters, have defied decades of eradication efforts in the Eastern U.S. and Great Lakes region. Gypsy moths in 2014 defoliated 214,972 acres in Pennsylvania, according to that state's Bureau of Forestry.

Washington and other states have adopted a no-tolerance policy to keep gypsy moths from advancing West.

WSDA last spring sprayed 220 acres in rural Clark County in southwest Washington, where 16 European gypsy moths were caught last summer. It was WSDA's 93rd insecticide application since 1979 to kill the pests as they hatch. All but two of the applications were west of the Cascades.

Gypsy moths attach their eggs to outdoor surfaces. When attached to a motor vehicle or train, the eggs are easily transported cross-country. Over the years, most outbreaks have occurred in King and Pierce counties, the state's two most populous counties.

Marra said WSDA also will concentrate traps at coastal ports to detect Asian gypsy moths, which have a greater potential to rapidly spread because the females can fly, unlike their European relatives. WSDA last sprayed for Asian gypsy moths in 2000.



D'Ann Florek of the Washington State Department of Agriculture nails an Asian gypsy moth trap to a tree June 23 at the Port of Kalama on the Columbia River. WSDA will focus its gypsy moth trapping in Western Washington, forging hanging traps in Eastern Washington this summer because of funding cuts.

DON JENKINS — Capital Press

WSDA also will do intensive trapping in rural Clark County to see whether the aerial spraying of *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Btk) worked.

Another focus will be Seattle's densely populated Capitol Hill, where last summer five moths were trapped within a block. WSDA decided not to spray because a search found no evidence of a reproducing population.

"We're going to take a good, hard look at Capitol Hill. It is an area of concern," Marra said.

WSDA will again this summer staff highway weigh stations to check moving vans traveling from the 19 states with

gypsy moth infestations. Federal law requires movers to show papers certifying that they inspected goods for gypsy moth eggs.

Enforcement actions have not been taken against movers

without the papers, but USDA sends a warning letter to the moving company, Marra said.

"The moving vans, we are finding, have a very high rate of non-compliance," he said.

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