

It's no surprise; it's dry

Astoria isn't planning for a crisis, but warns not to waste water

By MCKINLEY SMITH
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Public Works Department will deliver an update on the city's water supply to the next City Council meeting Aug. 3.

"Basically, we're going to plan for it to be dry," said Public Works Director Ken Cook.

Cook said there's no water crisis, but people should be mindful not to waste water.

Astoria receives its water from Bear Creek, about 12 miles east of Astoria. The 3,700-acre watershed is then filtered and sent down miles of pipes to two in-town reservoirs. That resource is dependent on rainfall, and there hasn't been much of it.

Astoria's rainfall in June totaled only .73 inches, 1.82 inches below normal, according to preliminary data from the National Weather Service

Cook said it has been an unusually dry spring and summer. The department will have a better understanding of the unfolding weather situation in August. Depending on the outcome, the months of September and October, which are usually dry, could be difficult.

Ron Zilli, assistant district forester for the Astoria District of the Oregon Department of Forestry, said they've had a very good summer season for road improvements, like culvert and bridge work.

Usually, the department experiences a short window of fire danger in September, but dry conditions have stretched their vigilance to four months. The department is operating at a fire precaution Level 1 for the NW-1 region and Level 2 for the NW-2 on a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being the greatest danger and imposing the most limits on forest industrial operations. ODF starts every district at Level 1 when fire season begins. Zones NW-1 and NW-2 both split through Clatsop County.

An industrial fire pre-

caution fire Level 2 limits certain operations, like cable yarding and blasting, from 8 p.m. to 1 p.m.

"Being in charge of fire, it makes my nerves itch," said Dan Goody, district forester, about the dry conditions. More conversations surrounding fire danger have taken place this year, he said.

As people go outside to enjoy the nice weather, they can sometimes create fires in their wake. Goody said they have been on seven abandoned campfire runs so far this year.

Even driving can sometimes spark fires, as hot exhaust can burn dry brush.

In Oregon, 23 counties are in drought.

Washington

In Washington, severe drought conditions have spread to 98 percent of the state, and state agencies warned that hardships are expected to grow for farms, fish and communities.

In a conference call with reporters, state Department of Ecology Director Maia Bellon noted that rain in Washington is now being treated as "breaking news."

"We've never experienced a drought like this," Bellon said. "We're in an unbelievable streak of hotter and drier weather."

So far 13 Washington counties plus all the counties that border them, have been declared federal disaster areas because of the drought. And, 39 counties may eventually qualify for federal drought relief.

In fact, all of Washington, including Pacific County, with the exception of parts of Cowlitz, Clark and Skamania counties moved into the severe classification in data posted online Thursday morning.

In a departure from previous forecasts, the U.S. Climate Prediction Center said Washington had a better than even chance of drier than usual weather for the next three months. In June, the center predicted Washington had an equal chance of a drier or wetter than normal summer.

Katie Wilson contributed to this report.

Oregon Board of Forestry punts on no-logging buffers

Decision on expanding buffers around streams will come in autumn

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Board of Forestry has punted its decision whether to expand no-logging buffers around streams to prevent water temperatures from rising after harvest.

After hearing testimony from timber and conservation groups Thursday, the board formed a subcommittee that will narrow the range of possible options for consideration during a future meeting in September or October.

Supporters and opponents of expanding Oregon's no-cut buffers, currently set at 20 feet from either side of a stream, didn't seem to have appetite for compromise during the recent hearing.

Representatives of environmental and fishing groups claimed that buffers of 90-100 feet would not always be adequate for protecting fish, while small woodland owners and commercial timber operators said that increasing buffers to 70 feet would be economically devastating.

The legal implications of increasing forestry regulations were also discussed.

Under Measure 49, a ballot initiative passed by Oregon voters in 2007, state and local governments must either waive

new regulations or compensate landowners for lost land value in many circumstances.

That would not apply to expanding no-cut buffers because the rule change pertains to meeting federal water quality standards, said Richard Whitman, natural resource advisor to Gov. Kate Brown.

State regulations that are required by federal law are exempt from Measure 49, he said.

Dave Hunnicutt, executive director of the Oregonians in Action property rights group, disagreed with this assessment.

Measure 49 only exempts state regulations that are mandated by the federal government, but not those that would merely cause the state to lose some federal funding, he said.

In this case, the buffers aren't required by federal statute and they clearly reduce property values, said Hunnicutt.

"Those are the triggers for a Measure 49 claim," he said.

Hunnicutt said that enacting the buffers virtually guarantees the state will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars litigating the issue.

Sybil Ackerman, a board member and advisor to philanthropic groups, said that any regulations the board does impose must adhere as closely as possible to achieving federal water quality standards rather than meeting other objectives.



Kevin Clark/The Register Guard/AP File

In this Oct. 27, 2011, file photo, Blue Ridge Timber Company employees walk across a felled tree on a side channel to the McKenzie River in McKenzie Bridge in 2011. The state Board of Forestry is considering increasing the numbers of trees left standing along streams through private timberlands in western Oregon to shade the water and keep it cool for salmon.

Astoria tops Dallas in first round

The Daily Astorian

Astoria Ford 19, Dallas 16

MONMOUTH — In a first round game of the Junior State tournament at Western Oregon University, Astoria Ford scored two runs in the seventh to tie and five runs in the eighth to win a wild one Thursday night, 19-16 over Dallas.

The two teams racked up a combined 35 runs on 29 hits, including eight extra base hits and 12 errors.

Dallas held a 5-0 lead before Astoria Ford rallied with five runs in the top of the third inning; and Astoria grabbed a 12-10 lead in the top of the sixth before Dallas responded with four runs in

the bottom half of the inning.

Astoria managed to outscore Dallas 7-2 over the seventh and eighth innings to win.

Astoria's Fridtjof Fremstad highlighted the eighth inning with a two-run triple that scored Carter Wallace and Cade O'Brien.

Samboy Tuimato made his return to the lineup with

four RBI's on two hits, including a triple in the eighth.

Fremstad got the win in relief for Astoria Ford, allowing two runs in two innings pitched.

Kyle Strange had a double and a triple for Astoria, with Fremstad, Strange and Jackson Arnsdorf all driving in three runs apiece.

Coho salmon caught in Lower Columbia must be released

EO Media Group

OLYMPIA, Wash. — The early arrival of coho salmon in the Lower Columbia River has prompted state fishery managers to clarify a fishing regulation issued earlier this month.

A new rule issued Thursday specifically states that anglers must release any coho caught in waters open to salmon fishing from the Astoria Bridge to a point nearly 300 miles upstream on the Columbia River.

The new rule takes effect immediately and will expire Aug. 1, when the fall fishing season gets under way, said Ron Roler,

a fishery manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"We didn't expect to see coho salmon arrive in the Columbia River in July, so our initial regulations didn't specifically preclude catching them," Roler said Thursday. "The new rule issued today is consistent with Oregon's regulations, which prohibit coho retention until August."

Roler noted that the two states have worked together for nearly a century to maintain consistent fishing regulations under the Columbia River Compact.

The new fishing rule, outlining daily catch limits upriver from the Astoria Bridge, is available on WDFW's website at <http://1.usa.gov/1DBYTrR>.

Current drought conditions, which have affected fisheries throughout the state, are an un-

likely cause of the early arrival of coho salmon in the Columbia River, Roler said.

"Warm water temperatures typically slow salmon migration," he said. "Then again, this isn't a typical summer for fish management."

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