

'Extreme drought' hits Washington state for first time in over a decade

Conditions extreme in slice of western Oregon

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Almost one-third of Washington state is suffering an "extreme drought," the first time the state has reached those conditions in a decade, the U.S. Drought Monitor reported.

Meanwhile, a slice of western Oregon running north and south through seven coastal counties is also in extreme drought for the first time.

Low streams, parched soils and the risk of wildfires tightened the drought's grip on the West, according to the drought monitor, a partnership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The worsening of conditions was especially apparent in Washington state, where every region has seen the severity of the drought increase.

Sections of western, central and eastern Washington, making up nearly 32 percent of the state, is in extreme drought, one step above severe drought and one below



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

The Yakima River flows through Yakima Canyon between Ellensburg and Selah, Wash., in May. The river's water is in high demand this year due to drought.

exceptional drought. Portions of the state not in extreme drought are in severe drought. Only one-quarter of the state was in severe drought six weeks ago.

Warm soils, poor pasture

Washington State Assistant Climatologist Karin Bumbaco said warm soils and the poor shape of pastureland contributed to the downgrading of conditions. She said she believes the percentage of the state in extreme drought will grow. The U.S. Drought Monitor updates conditions weekly.

A warm mass of water — nicknamed "The Blob"

by State Climatologist Nick Bond — remains anchored off the coast, heating up the air moving inland and raising temperatures.

There is no evidence The Blob is related to the build up of greenhouse gases and doesn't appear to have much influence over precipitation, Bumbaco said.

There is no firm explanation for below average rainfall in the state, though the dry spell may partly be a self-reinforcing weather pattern, she said.

Worst in a decade

In 2005, Washington's last statewide drought before this year, 14 percent of state reached extreme drought sta-

tus in mid-September and stayed for approximately three months.

In 2001, until this year generally recognized as the state's worst drought since 1977, nearly 6 percent of Washington was in an extreme drought between September and November.

Idaho also saw an increase in the percentage of the state in extreme drought, jumping from 7 percent the week before to 22 percent.

California's drought status was unchanged. Some 46 percent of the state is in an exceptional drought, while another 28 percent is in an extreme drought.

The U.S. Climate Prediction Center forecasts that all of Washington has a strong chance of above average temperatures and below average rainfall through at least mid-October. The rest of the West has a better chance for normal temperatures and precipitation, according to the prediction center.

The Blob and a strong El Nino in the Pacific Ocean shortens the odds that Washington will have a warm winter, Bumbaco said.

Some 34 percent of the U.S. Geological Survey's 146 stream gauges in Washington were reporting record lows Thursday for the date.

Coast Guard has busy day of rescues

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The U.S. Coast Guard's Sector Columbia River was busy Tuesday rescuing fishermen north and south of the Columbia River.

At 11:25 a.m., the crew of the fishing vessel Marion H made a mayday call to the Coast Guard, saying the vessel was taking on water near Tillamook Head. The Coast Guard launched a helicopter from Air Station Astoria and vessels from stations Cape Disappointment and Tillamook Bay.

The helicopter flew over the boat and dropped a de-

watering pump. A 47-foot motor lifeboat from Cape Disappointment arrived on scene, assisted with dewatering and eventually took the vessel in tow back toward Cape Disappointment.

"They towed it until about 5 o'clock last night, and they were unable to keep up with the flooding on the vessel," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Katelyn Shearer, a spokeswoman for the Coast Guard's District 13 in Seattle.

The 47-footer broke the tow, she said, and the vessel sank in deep water about 10 miles southwest of the Columbia River Bar. The two

crew members were taken back to Station Cape Disappointment.

Shearer said the crew of the Marion H and the Coast Guard were unable to establish the source of the flooding.

Grays Harbor

Watch standers received a mayday call at 5:47 a.m. from the fishing vessel Tamar's crew saying they had run aground near Ocean Shores, Wash. The Coast Guard launched a helicopter from Air Station Astoria and a 47-footer from Station Grays Harbor.

The 47-footer was un-

able to respond because of the shallowness of the water. The crew from the helicopter extracted the two fishermen and transferred them to emergency medical personnel in Ocean Park, Wash.

"There has been pollution reported, and we are working with the vessel owner and Global Diving and Salvage, which has been contracted to address the situation," said Petty Officer 1st Class Kyle Owens, a marine science technician, adding incident management personnel are responding to mitigate and remove the pollution.

College board introduces new interim president

Long-term successor named by February

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop Community College's board of directors Tuesday night introduced new interim President Gerald Hamilton, the replacement for its president of five years, Lawrence Galizio, who took a job as CEO of the Community College League of California.

The board also approved a timeline that would have the college announce Galizio's long-term successor by February. The search will be conducted by Asso-

ciation of Community College Trustees, a national community college advocacy group.

The college board assigned its presidential search subcommittee to recommend members for the stakeholder committee it will assemble to help with the search.

In the timeline, the college announces the search for a new president this month and solicits nominations for a stakeholder committee. Next month, it appoints a stakeholder committee and posts a draft profile of a president for review. The trustees hold public forums on campus in October for feedback to the draft profile.

The timeline has the

college posting a final profile on its and the trustees' website by mid-October, to get applications by Jan. 4. The stakeholder committee chooses eight to 12 candidates to interview, whittling them down to five or six to recommend to the board.

The board would interview the candidates Jan. 29, selecting three to visit campus as finalists, participate in open forums and be interviewed by the college board, which could also visit the campus of the top candidate.

In the timeline, the college would announce the next president in late February.

No resting on laurels

During his 11 months at

the college, Hamilton said, he does not intend to be a president who sits on his hands. Hamilton said he will explore avenues to increase the college's enrollment and revenues in his time at the helm.

Hamilton was president of Klamath Falls Community College from 2007 to 2012 and superintendent of the Siuslaw School District from 2002 to 2007.

Hamilton was last the interim executive director of the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development from 2013 to 2014. Before leading the state community college agency, he ran Gerald Hamilton Educational Consulting.

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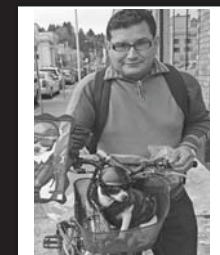
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