

Women in Ag conference scheduled for Feb. 21

Women in Agriculture conference happens Feb. 21 in Salem and LaGrande, with a registration fee is \$30, but there is a \$25 early bird special until Feb. 13.

The CSH Foundation is providing partial scholarships for aspiring farmers, college ag students and 4-H and FFA members. Visit the “Scholarship” link on the web page: www.womeninag.wsu.edu or contact Margaret at viebrock@wsu.edu for an application.

The 4th Annual Women in Agriculture Confer-

ence offers women in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska a unique opportunity to gather in 28 locations for a one-day event featuring knowledgeable speakers, inspiring stories, practical advice for improving farm management skills and networking with other women producers.

This conference is designed for women who have been farming for years, as well as for new and aspiring farmers. To learn more or to register, visit www.womeninag.wsu.edu.

SPATZ

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have to keep things out in front of people on a continuing basis.”

Spatz said, “Investment in education is the most important contribution society makes in its own future. The Hood River County Education Foundation is a key part of that investment, serving students through college scholarships, teacher grants and school district initiatives. I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to pursue this vital mission. I look forward to working closely with the community and foundation board in bringing that mission forward.”

HRCEF Board President Chuck Bugge said, “Dan Spatz is very well-qualified to lead the Hood River County Education Foundation because of his extensive experience with education foundations in both Hood River and Wasco counties, and his management experience. He recognizes the critical role that public schools and colleges play in the economic health of our area. The Board is looking forward to discussing the ideas that he shared with us during the interview process, and expanding and improving the Foundation’s mission.”

Two new HRCEF Board

members were also named at the meeting where Spatz was selected. Brent Emmons, Principal of Hood River Middle School, and Paul Lindberg of Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital, will join the Foundation Board.

The Hood River County Education Foundation (HRCEF) was founded in 1991 and manages over \$1,000,000 in dedicated funds. Annually, HRCEF awards over \$50,000 in college scholarships to graduates of Hood River Valley High School and to county residents who are sophomores, junior and seniors in college. Special donations to the Foundation have provided a classroom set of iPads, available for checkout by all schools. A 2015 Foundation grant to Hood River Reads provides copies of the selected books so that students can participate in the community-wide reading event.

In addition, HRCEF provides \$18,000 annually in Teacher Grants to Hood River County School District teachers and staff for innovative teaching ideas that cannot be funded within the regular school budgets. Applications for 2015 have been received and are currently being scored and evaluated.

Information about HRCEF college scholarships and how to donate are on the webpage www.hrcef.org.

WATER

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last year, the News reported that Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Resort had received 134 inches in the first three weeks of the month — 47 inches of which fell within three days. That accumulation pushed a snowpack that was less than half of normal going into February up to 93 percent by Feb. 21.

However, Camarata said FID has already taken steps to mitigate impacts from the lackluster snowpack. FID uses Kingsley Reservoir to supply water to the upper part of the district, and just like last year, FID closed the valves on Jan. 21 to increase the level of the reservoir. Camarata explained that usually, FID will close the valves later in the season when there is a larger snowpack, so as to not to retain too much water in the reservoir and risk compromising the 1930s-era earthen dams.

While the snow has been an issue, rain has been less of one. According to data from NRCS, the Mid-Columbia Basin is near average for precipitation this water year, which started Oct. 1, although the U.S. Drought Monitor shows the majority of Hood River County is currently experiencing what is

classified as a “moderate drought.” The problem, the NRCS reported at the beginning of January, was “unusually warm” temperatures, noting that “western and central Oregon received more rain than snow in many areas.” The phenomenon only worsened throughout the rest of the month, with temperatures rising above 60 degrees on Mt. Hood one weekend.

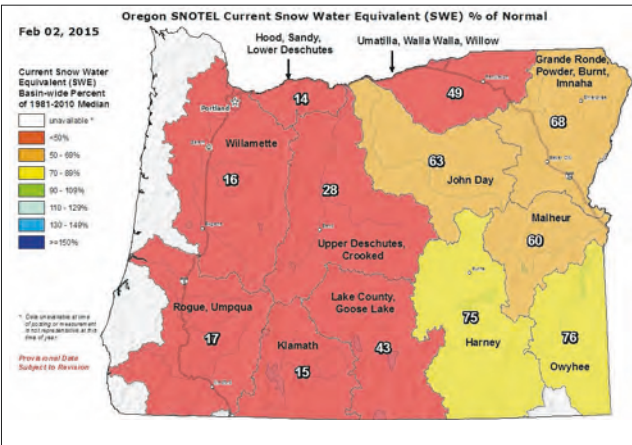
Rain is of course helpful for filling reservoirs, but the benefit of a substantial snowpack means reliable meltwater later on.

“We really do depend on the snowpack well into late spring,” Camarata said. “It’s extremely helpful.”

At the East Fork Irrigation District — which irrigates 9,494 acres and serves 936 customers in east side communities like Pine Grove and Odell — the snowpack is even more important, said John Buckley, district manager.

“Our biggest problem with this district is we don’t have a reservoir,” he explained. “This irrigation district is very dependent on that mountain.”

Buckley said if the snowpack doesn’t improve, the irrigation district will end up asking “patrons to at least try and conserve (water) as best they can,” so as not to exacerbate a potential drought situation during the



Graphic from NRCS

THIS MAP shows the status of snowpack levels around the state, none of which are at normal levels. The Sandy, Hood, and lower Deschutes basin is the lowest in the state, with a snowpack that is 14 percent of normal. At the Mt. Hood test site on the south side of mountain, the snowpack is at 32 percent of normal.

summer months.

Like Camarata, Buckley pointed to last year’s February and March as evidence that there’s still time to build up the snowpack ... provided that the mountain gets snow.

“I’m definitely concerned, but I’m definitely optimistic too,” he said.

As of press time, Mt. Hood Meadows was seeing a strange sight — snow — and had received an inch of the white stuff as of 9:30 a.m., with another inch to 4 inches expected to fall by the end of the day. Unfortunately, Meadows’ forecast calls for heavy rain and temperatures in the 40s on Thursday. The National Weather Service’s 6-10 day outlook issued Feb. 2 calls for above-average precipitation, but above-average temperatures as well.

However, the good news is Punxsutawney Phil did see his shadow on Groundhog’s Day this Monday, meaning another six weeks of winter, although the rodent did not specify the amount of snow accumulation that would be in store for the Pacific Northwest.



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