

# WATER: Saylor has farmed off and on along Butter Creek for 46 years

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tures across the state in April, which nearly doubled the rate of snowmelt at a number of monitoring sites. Some sites lost 4 feet of snow in just one month, and two-thirds were completely dry by May — including Arbuckle Mountain and Madison Butte in Morrow County.

Butter Creek has no artificial storage or reservoirs, which compounds the challenge for growers. The creek routinely runs dry by the middle of summer, which means farms must irrigate in spring when the flows are high. The area was also declared a critical groundwater area in 1986, which prevents digging any new wells.

Saylor's farm is one of the last along Butter Creek before it drains into the Umatilla River near Hermiston. Though he has a senior water right, Saylor prefers to use flood irrigation on his alfalfa. In order to build up the volume he needs for flood irrigation, he chooses to accumulate his water allocation through the local Watermaster's Office, using a greater amount of water over a shorter period of time.

This year, he said Butter Creek simply ran too low, too fast.

"It just kept dropping," he said. "Everything looked really good until you get into March, and then April was much warmer than normal and much drier than normal."

Curtis Cooley, assistant watermaster for Umatilla County, is in charge of monitoring flows on Butter Creek for approximately 20 different users. Once the demand for water exceeds supply, he switches over to an accumulation rotation for farms located below where the creek intersects Highway 207. Accumulation ends after the creek drops below 10 cubic feet per second for more than three consecutive days, and whatever's left gets used up until it's gone.

"It really varies based on the water year we've had," Cooley said.

Since there was more rain and snow to fill Butter Creek early in the year, Cooley said they didn't have to start the accumulation rotation until April 5. Compare that to early February a year ago, as severe drought began to take hold of much of Eastern Oregon.

But the water has disappeared much more quickly out of Butter Creek in 2016, with accumulation ending on May 11. The rotation didn't end until June 1 in 2015, and not until July 25 during the

more plentiful water year of 2012.

"I would say it was a little better than last year, though flow has dropped dramatically over the last month," Cooley said.

Saylor, who has farmed off and on along Butter Creek for 46 years and serves on the Umatilla Basin Watershed Council, said he's noticed a recent change in weather patterns, with milder winters and earlier snowmelt compared to the 30-year averages. As for now, he said he's counting on late season rains to save his wheat crop.

"Water is the magic ingredient that makes everything work," he said.

Cooley isn't certain whether the change constitutes a new normal along Butter Creek, but said the Water Resources Department encourages growers to irrigate early when they can, before they switch over to accumulation.

"With the creek dropping off as quick as it did (this year), the flows just weren't there," he said. "When the water shows up earlier in the year, we recommend they use that."

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# DRONES: 450,000 hobbyists have registered at least one drone

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drone makers, Amazon and other technology companies and retailers, and privacy advocates. The suggestions are aimed at both commercial and private drone users.

Among the many recommendations:

- Operators shouldn't fly their drones over private property without the owner's consent.

- They should alert people in the area ahead of time when it is practical and explain the purpose of the drone flight.

- Unless there is "a compelling need," operators shouldn't fly a drone where someone has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a drone should not be used to follow someone continuously.

- Don't use information gathered by drones for decisions about employment, credit or eligibility for health care.

- Don't use personal information for marketing purposes without the individual's consent.

- Information from drones shouldn't be held longer than "reasonably necessary," although exceptions can be made for legal disputes, safety reasons or with permission of the person being watched.

There are about 5,600 drones registered for commercial purposes and about 450,000 hobbyists have registered at least one drone, according to figures from the Federal Aviation Administration. Their popularity has soared over the past year or so, putting pressure on the industry and privacy advocates to agree on guidelines governing their use.

The Consumer Technology Association, a corporate group whose members include Google, Apple and Microsoft, said this week's



AP Photo/Matt Rourke, File  
In this April 14 photo, a drone captures videos and still images of an apartment building in Philadelphia.

guidelines balance innovation and privacy. The group's director of regulatory affairs, Alex Reynolds, said that more "prescriptive rules" would threaten the benefits offered by drones, from delivering disaster relief to helping agriculture and infrastructure maintenance.

The Center for Democracy and Technology, a civil liberties group, said it hoped big companies and hobbyists alike would follow the guidelines.

"We're concerned about the widespread use of drones for surveillance without any rules," said Chris Calabrese, the group's vice president of policy. He said the group got all the important protections it wanted in the guidelines, including protection against persistent surveillance even in public places and use of drone-gathered data in employment and marketing.

News outlets including The Associated Press were represented in the discussions leading up to the guidelines and won an exemption. The standards say news organizations should be able to use drones the same way they use comparable technology — such as planes and helicopters — to record data in public spaces as long as they follow their own ethics policies and federal and state laws.

Joel Roberson, an

attorney who represented the news groups, said the outcome "will ensure that news-reporting organizations have a First Amendment right to gather the news through drones in the national airspace."

There were some holdouts to the final report.

Four companies including GoPro, whose cameras are mounted on many drones, and drone maker DJI refused to sign the guidelines. Kara Calvert, a spokeswoman for the companies, said there are no such guidelines for security cameras or camera-toting people on ladders or rooftops. Drone users shouldn't face tougher rules, she said.

The American Civil Liberties Union objected to qualifiers that suggest drone operators can sometimes ignore the guidelines if they have a "compelling need" or "implied" consent of individuals.

"What does that mean?" said Jay Stanley, a privacy analyst with ACLU. "That kind of weasel language runs throughout the document."

The Federal Aviation Administration is close to issuing final rules regarding drones, but those regulations are expected to stick to safety issues, not privacy. Airline pilots have reported seeing drones flying dangerously close to their planes.

# Chinese government-backed social media users flood Web

BEIJING (AP)—China's government fabricates and posts several hundred million social media posts a year to influence public opinion about the country, according to a new paper by U.S. researchers examining one of the most opaque aspects of the Communist Party's rule.

The academic study led by Harvard political scientist Gary King claims to be one of the first in-depth looks into the inner workings of China's push to influence public opinion by flooding social media with posts portrayed as if they were coming from ordinary people.

Aside from possessing highly sophisticated censorship controls to find and delete content outright, China's government has long been known to employ a huge group of internet workers, known colloquially as the "Fifty Cent Party," to influence discourse in subtler ways. The name originates from a popular rumor — never substantiated — that such people are paid 50 cents per pro-government post.

The research project, which took advantage of a trove of government emails, spreadsheets and work reports from a propaganda office in central China leaked online in 2014, concludes that an estimated 488 million fake posts a year "enables the government to actively control opinion without having to censor as much as they might otherwise."

The researchers also reached a slightly surprising conclusion about the goal of the massive operation: to "distract the public" during



AP Photo/Ng Han Guan  
A man uses his mobile phone near a red star along a retail shop in Beijing Friday.

politically sensitive news events. That counters the widespread perception that Beijing employs internet workers to shout down its critics on online forums.

"They do not step up to defend the government, its leaders, and their policies from criticism, no matter how vitriolic; indeed, they seem to avoid controversial issues entirely," the paper's authors write. "Letting an argument die, or changing the subject, usually works much better than picking an argument and getting someone's back up."

The paper detailed an elaborate methodology used by the research team, which employed its own army of research assistants. After gaining a glimpse into how China's "Fifty Cent" operation organizes itself from leaked documents, the research group created numerous fake accounts of their own to ask large samples of suspected government workers an elaborate set of questions to confirm that the posters were indeed getting

guidance from authorities.

One of the three co-authors, Margaret Roberts from the University of California, San Diego, said in an email that examining leaked documents or interviewing former participants could offer a biased view of the operation, but "large-scale statistical analyses of online data allow us to directly observe and summarize what people within the system are doing."

The trio of political scientists, which also included Stanford University's Jennifer Pan, has been using statistical methods for years to study China's methods of information control, sometimes reaching somewhat unexpected conclusions.

In a 2014 study sifting through social media posts, they found that Chinese censors allowed netizens a significant amount of freedom to vent their frustrations with the government — until any calls for organized action that could lead to street protests appeared. Those were swiftly taken down.

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by the ball fields on Tausick Way

10am - 1pm: Interactive Exhibit Booths  
Wildlife Cartoon Drawings  
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11:30am: Chinook Salmon Release

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11am - 1pm: Wine Country Culinary Institute Food Truck  
Sockeye Salmon Tacos, Salmon Chowder, Titus Creek Burger,  
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