

Winter storms boost Oregon snowpack

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
EO Media Group

Oregon's snowpack is getting a much-needed boost statewide, thanks to a recent wave of winter storms that since the beginning of February have dumped several feet of new snow in the Cascade Range, including 3 feet on Mount Hood and 2 feet near Crater Lake National Park.

The entire state has seen a 20 to 30 percent bump in snowpack and 2 to 3 times the normal precipitation since Feb. 1, said Julie Koeberle, a hydrologist with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

That is contrary to the long-term weather forecast, which called for warmer and drier conditions across the Pacific Northwest.

"I'm not sure we saw this increase coming," Koeberle said. "It was really a pleasant surprise."

As of Feb. 15, Oregon's total snowpack was 93 percent of average, compared with 73 percent at the end of January and a paltry 40 percent at this time last year.

Snowpack is critical to the state's farmers and ranchers, many of whom rely on summer snowmelt to replenish the rivers, streams and groundwater that feed the state's irrigation systems.

Eastern Oregon is well ahead of the curve, with basins ranging between 114 and 132 percent of snow-water equivalent — that



The Register-Guard via AP/Andy Nelson, File

In this Feb. 13, 2019, file photo, a snowboarder carves a turn while skiing at Willamette Pass Ski Area about 30 miles east of Oakridge.

is, the amount of water in snow available to replenish streams and reservoirs.

Despite more snow falling in the Cascades, Western Oregon still has some catching up to do, especially in the Hood, Sandy and Lower Deschutes basins, at 77 percent of average, and in the Willamette Basin, at 83 percent of average snowpack.

The Rogue and Umpqua basins

have climbed to 91 percent of average, and 96 percent in the Klamath Basin.

"We'd like to see these storms continue," Koeberle said. "If that does not happen, the best-case scenario would be to preserve the snowpack we just gained."

The good news is that more snow and rain is expected through the weekend across Oregon, even with the arrival of a weak El Nino

climate pattern that typically indicates warm and dry weather in the region.

Mike Halpert, deputy director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center, said there is a 55 percent chance El Nino conditions will continue through spring.

However, he added that the pattern is expected to be weak, "meaning we do not expect signif-

icant global impacts through the remainder of winter and into the spring."

Even in El Nino, David Bishop, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Portland, said that does not necessarily exclude more winter weather.

"Just because we are in a weak El Nino does not mean that we cannot get snow, or cannot get (low) temperatures," Bishop said.

Koeberle, with the NRCS, said Oregon usually reaches peak snow season in late March or early April, depending on the elevation. Last year, unseasonably warm weather caused snow to melt earlier than usual, exacerbating the summer drought.

"If we do end up losing our snow early, then we could hope for spring rainfall to help offset those impacts," Koeberle said.

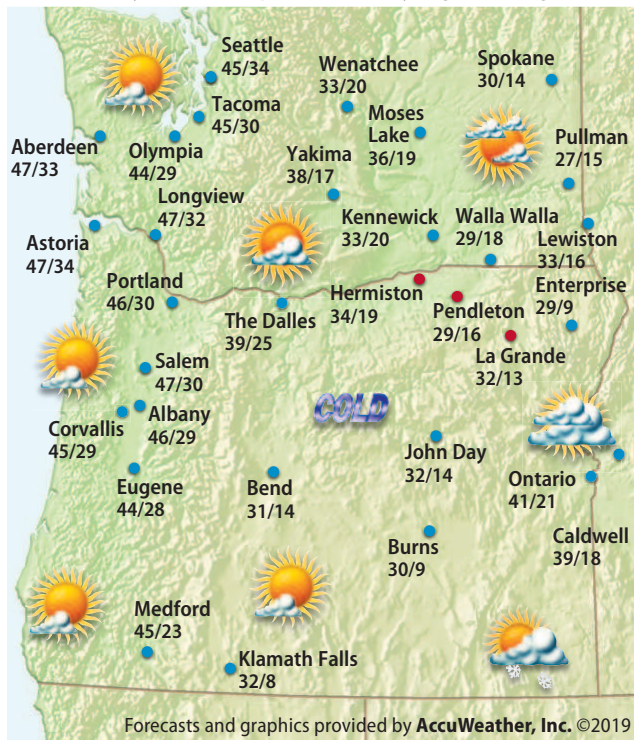
As long as the snow continues to fly, Koeberle said water supplies should look improved for summer 2019. The most recent Oregon Basin Outlook Report, released on Feb. 1, predicted stream flows from 70 to 90 percent of normal statewide, and reservoirs storing between 63 and 93 percent of average. The NRCS will issue its next report on March 1.

"We do have another month and a half before the typical peak of our snow season," Koeberle said. "At least right now, the trend is going up and hopefully that will continue."

Forecast for Pendleton Area

| TODAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY | MONDAY |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | | | |
| Very cold with clouds and sun | A passing afternoon shower | Cloudy with snow showers | Cold with a little snow at times | Cold with sunny intervals |
| PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST | | | | |
| 29° 16° | 39° 29° | 39° 28° | 32° 19° | 26° 14° |
| HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST | | | | |
| 34° 19° | 41° 31° | 41° 27° | 36° 20° | 30° 18° |

OREGON FORECAST



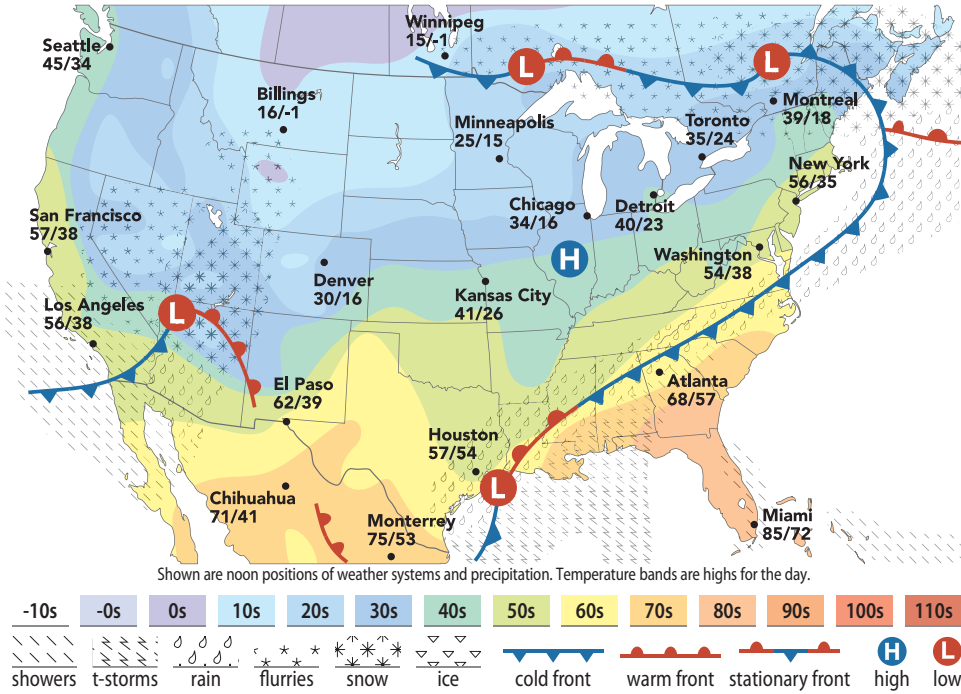
ALMANAC

| PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest. | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------|--------|
| TEMP. | HIGH | LOW | |
| Yesterday | 37° | 25° | |
| Normals | 48° | 30° | |
| Records | 69° (1982) | 7° (1957) | |
| PRECIPITATION | 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | | |
| Month to date | 1.72" | | |
| Normal month to date | 0.82" | | |
| Year to date | 3.79" | | |
| Last year to date | 2.20" | | |
| Normal year to date | 2.20" | | |
| HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest. | | | |
| TEMP. | HIGH | LOW | |
| Yesterday | 38° | 29° | |
| Normals | 50° | 29° | |
| Records | 67° (1982) | 15° (2018) | |
| PRECIPITATION | 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | | |
| Month to date | 1.47" | | |
| Normal month to date | 0.69" | | |
| Year to date | 3.00" | | |
| Last year to date | 1.61" | | |
| Normal year to date | 1.97" | | |
| WINDS (in mph) | | | |
| | Today | Fri. | |
| Boardman | N 4-8 | SW 7-14 | |
| Pendleton | WNW 6-12 | SSW 7-14 | |
| SUN AND MOON | | | |
| Sunrise today | 6:48 a.m. | | |
| Sunset tonight | 5:30 p.m. | | |
| Moonrise today | 8:26 p.m. | | |
| Moonset today | 8:17 a.m. | | |
| Moon Phases | | | |
| Last | New | First | Full |
| | | | |
| Feb 26 | Mar 6 | Mar 14 | Mar 20 |

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 89° in Winter Haven, Fla. Low -29° in Malta, Mont.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Dairies deal with \$4 million cattle losses after blizzard

By **DAN WHEAT**
EO Media Group

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — Most of the carcasses of 1,810 dairy cows that died in a Feb. 9 blizzard have been dealt with but owners will be coping with financial losses for months to come.

"It will take some guys months to recover because some of them were already operating at break-even," said Steve George, Yakima area issues manager for the Washington State Dairy Federation. He said he hasn't heard of any going out of business, yet.

An initial estimate was 1,677 dead cows but the final tally is 1,810 with probably several hundred others being sold for beef because of frozen udders and extremities, George said. Effects from that can take up to a month

to be known, he said. At \$2,000 per head, total loss will be around \$4 million, and that doesn't count lost milk production.

George said he doesn't know of anyone tallying lost milk production. He said it will be months before some of the dairies are able to afford replacement cows since all operate with loans and didn't have this type of event budgeted.

Some 13 to 15 dairies near Sunnyside lost cows, with the most at one dairy being about 600, he said.

Seven of the dairies gave notice of loss to the USDA Farm Service Agency office in Yakima as of Feb. 15 and the rest are expected to soon, said Gerri Richter, FSA program specialist in Spokane.

Producers must give such notice within 30 days of loss to prepare to apply for FSA

Livestock Indemnity Program payments at 75 percent of market value. There is no cap on the amount of money a single producer can receive, Richter said.

The blizzard is a qualifying event and the Yakima County FSA Committee is documenting it, she said.

Five inches of snow were forecast, but the storm dumped 18 to 24 inches and brought daylong winds of 30 to 50 mph with gusts up to 80 mph. The dairies, most of which were on a ridge north of town, tried to protect cows by stacking hay bales and moving cows into milking parlors.

Cows became too cold and huddled in corners of pens. Most died from injuries and some from cold exposure, said Gerald Baron, executive director of Save Family Farming.

BRIEFLY

Oregon man with medical marijuana gets 12 years in Mississippi prison

CANTON, Miss. (AP) — An Oregon man has been sentenced to 12 years in prison in Mississippi for possessing medical marijuana.

The *Clarion Ledger* reports Patrick Beadle, 46, was originally convicted of drug trafficking and sentenced to eight years in prison without parole.

Beadle's attorney, Cynthia Stewart, said Tuesday that a judge vacated the trafficking conviction and has let Beadle instead plead guilty to drug possession. The new 12-year sentence comes with the possibility of parole after three years.

Beadle says the marijuana was for his chronic knee pain. Prosecutors have said the only evidence that could point to drug trafficking was the amount of marijuana, which totaled nearly three pounds.

The drugs were discovered when a Mississippi deputy pulled Beadle over in 2017

for drifting over a highway line, which Beadle disputes.

Woman sentenced to 12 years for death of cyclist

BEND (AP) — An Oregon woman was sentenced to more than 12 years in prison for hitting and killing a cyclist while driving under the influence.

KTVZ-TV reports Deschutes County Circuit Judge Michael Adler sentenced Shantel Witt, 42, on Tuesday, telling the court that it was the "most extreme reckless endangerment case" he had ever seen.

Witt was convicted earlier this month of first-degree manslaughter and other charges for the death of Marika Stone, 38.

The Bend dentist was riding with two friends east of the city when Witt slammed into her in December 2017.

Prosecutors say Witt was on nearly a dozen prescription drugs, including her dog's anxiety pills, at the time of the crash.

Witt apologized in court, telling Stone's family that she hopes they can forgive her.

CORRECTIONS: The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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