

Ample February snowfall boosts Oregon stream forecasts

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
EO Media Group

What a difference a month makes.

Oregon snowpack was averaging just 73 percent of normal at the beginning of February, setting the stage for low spring and summer stream flows, particularly west of the Cascade Range.

The story is much different heading into March, after weeks of record-breaking snowfall and precipitation from Crater Lake to Baker City. Every basin in the state is now measuring above normal for snow, except for the Hood, Sandy and Lower Deschutes basins, which were at 93 percent as of March 11.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has released its latest monthly Oregon Water Supply Report, which calls for vastly improved conditions based on the sudden surge of winter weather.

“A remarkable and unexpected recovery in snowpack occurred during the shortest month of the year, dramatically improving the water supply outlook across Oregon,” the report states. “February storm cycles more than doubled the amount of snow on the ground in most locations, breaking many records along the way.”

According to the NRCS, seven of Oregon’s long-term snow monitoring sites broke records for highest snowpack on March 1, with data going back 35 years. Between Feb.



A truck crosses Willamette Pass in the Oregon Cascades as heavy snow falls on Feb. 13. Storms during February boosted the snowpack across much of the state.

20-26, almost every snow measurement site from Crater Lake to Mount Jefferson set records with 2 to 3 feet of fresh powder.

As a result, most basins went from a snowpack deficit to a surplus, including:

- Willamette Basin, 51 percent of normal to 109 percent.
- Rogue and Umpqua basins, 60 percent to 115 percent.
- Klamath Basin, 69 percent to 119 percent.

- Upper Deschutes and Crooked basins, 66 percent to 112 percent.

Eastern Oregon is also piling up the snow, with the Umatilla, Walla Walla, Willow, John Day, Malheur and Goose Lake basins all topping 150 percent of normal. Precipitation at lower elevations also set records in places like Heppner, Baker City and Malheur County.

“All of the state just dramatically improved for snowpack,” said Julie Koeberle, a hydrologist

with the NRCS Oregon Snow Survey team.

More snow is, of course, good news for farms and fish. Koeberle said forecasts are looking especially promising in northeast Oregon, with stream flows predicted to be 140 percent of normal from April through September in the Umatilla, Walla Walla and Willow basins.

A few areas, including the Deschutes River basin and Mount

Hood, are still lagging behind at 80 to 95 percent of normal stream flows. But based on the current trajectory, Koeberle said most of the state is going to have normal to above normal stream flows heading into spring.

The one caveat, Koeberle said, is avoiding sustained periods of warm weather that can melt snow too quickly — as it did last May, diminishing what was an already sparse snowpack and leading to water shortages and drought statewide.

The U.S. Drought Monitor still shows more than 60 percent of Oregon in moderate to severe drought.

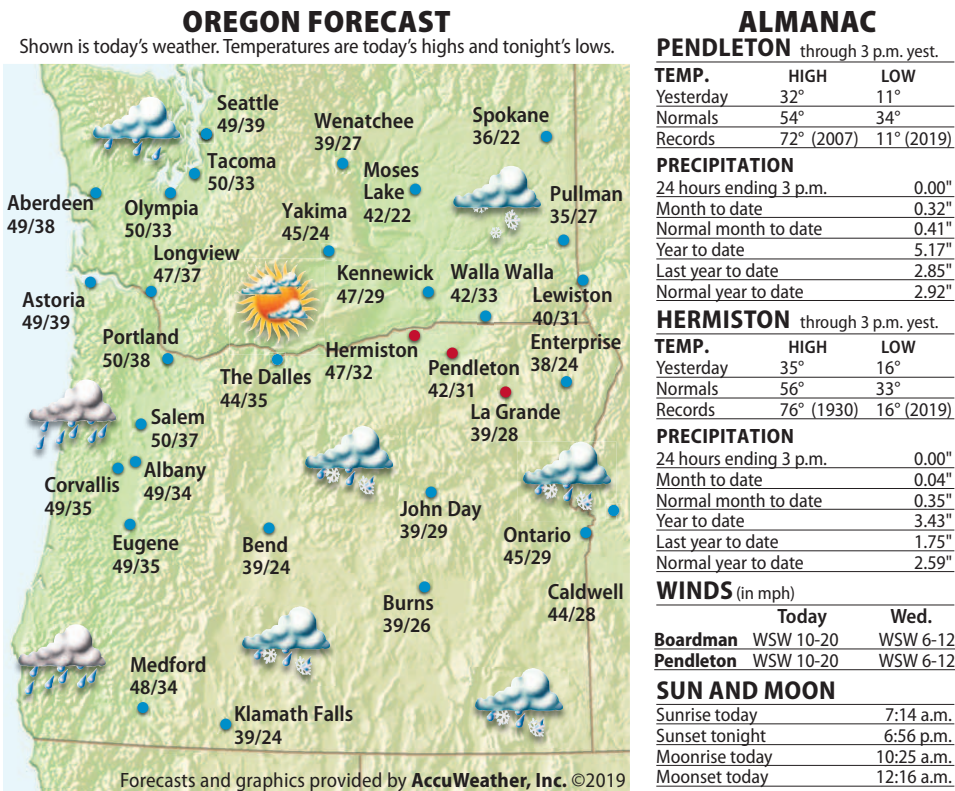
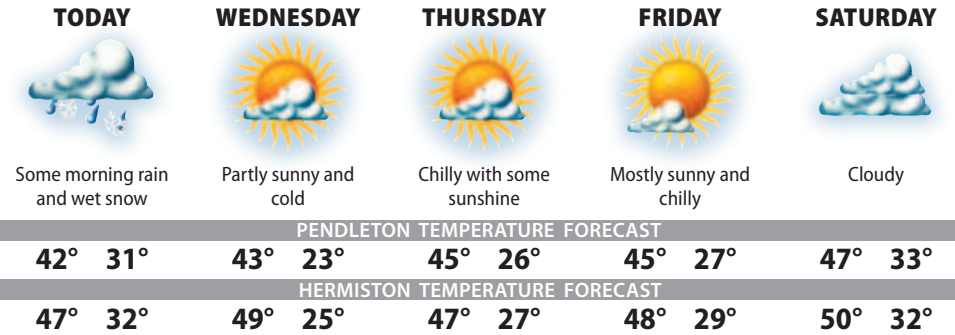
“You can’t really get rid of drought with just one good wet month. It takes a little more than that,” Koeberle said.

The federal Climate Prediction Center, meanwhile, continues to call for a better chance of higher temperatures over the next three months, and a roughly equal chance of dry or wet weather. If warmer weather does melt away snow quickly again, Koeberle said the impacts could be mitigated if Mother Nature comes through with enough spring rain.

“It’s really just kind of a wait and see,” she said.

Reservoir levels are a bit more hit and miss across the state, storing anywhere from 65 percent to 97 percent of capacity, though most can expect significant inflows in the coming months as snow begins to melt.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

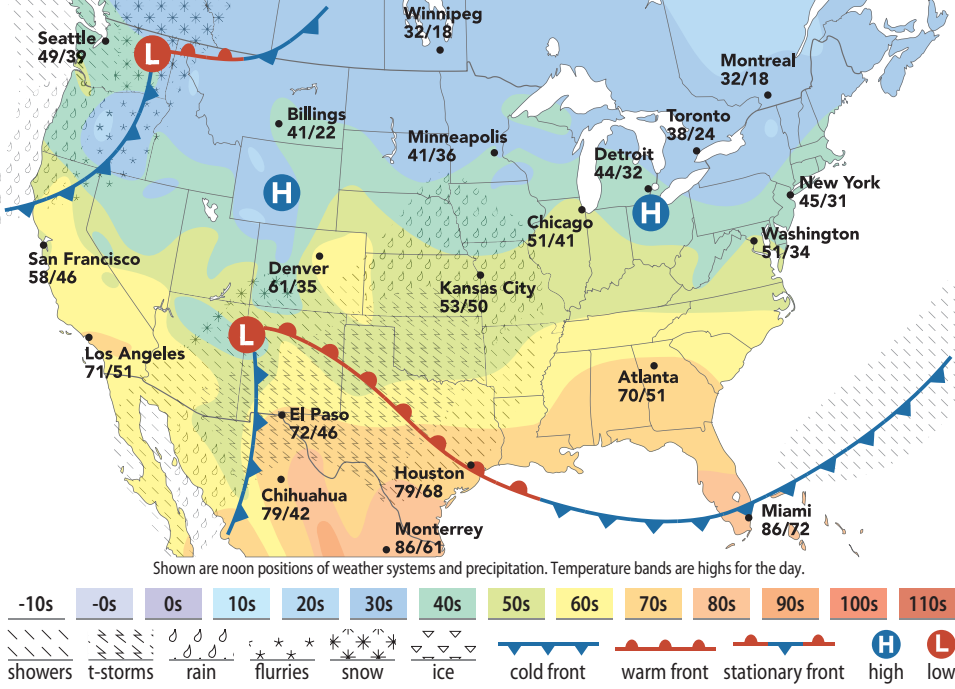


NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 92° in McAllen, Texas Low -27° in West Yellowstone, Mont.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



BRIEFLY

Homeowners want racist covenant off property deeds

SPOKANE (AP) — Language that once prevented people of color from buying homes in Spokane remains in property deeds and county officials say they don’t have authority to remove it, despite homeowner requests.

Spokane County Auditor Vicky Dalton said she is prohibited from removing racist provisions included in deeds, *The Spokesman-Review* reported.

“Those clauses are absolutely offensive, but the reality is they are our history and they need to remain part of the public record,” Dalton said. “That is what happened. People were hurt. People were damaged. People were restrained from where they had to live. And people really had to fight to nullify those clauses.”

Two homeowners disagree and have asked a local judge to rule that Dalton and the county are wrong in their interpretation of the law. Alex and Sasha May want their deed stripped of language that barred anyone who was not white from buying or living in the home.

Federal and state laws have long made the provision unenforceable but similar covenants remain part of the legal paperwork for thousands of Spokane homes.

“I’m not trying to erase the history of it,” Alex May said. “That’s not my motivation. But if you’re buying a house and that language is there — ‘Oh yeah, that’s just in there don’t worry about it’ — that doesn’t really square with me. If it’s a document we’re using currently, we should remove it.”

The U.S. Supreme Court in 1948 ruled that the racist covenants could not be enforced. Congress in 1968 passed the Fair Housing Act, which outlawed housing discrimination based on “race, color, religion, or national origin.” In 1969, Washington state passed a version of the law.

Kurtis Robinson, president of the Spokane chapter of the NAACP, said racist covenants should stay part of the historical record.

Remembering and explaining injustices is an important part of the “moving forward process,” he said. Stripping home deeds of their “historical truth” buries and ignores the racism of America, Robinson said.

Leaving the covenants in the record and having a community discussion about them will help the country move beyond the injustices people of color have experienced since the country’s founding, Robinson said.

More people regain power in Central Oregon following storm

EUGENE (AP) — Power has been restored in Elkton, a rural west-central Oregon community that had experienced outages since a late February snowstorm.

But the *Register-Guard* reports more than 1,750 Douglas Electric Cooperative customers Monday were still without electricity.

After last month’s storm knocked out the utility’s entire system in Doug-

las County — about 9,600 customers in all — getting below the 2,000-customers-out mark was something to celebrate.

Douglas Electric’s Todd Munsen said he expected the customers still without electricity Monday to have power again in two to three days. The utility restored power to Elkton late last week, but the outskirts of town still don’t have electricity.

Pfizer settles Oregon probe over false advertising

SALEM (AP) — Pfizer has agreed to shell out \$975,000 after Oregon’s Department of Justice found the pharmaceutical giant misled consumers with deceptive coupons. Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum announced details of the settlement Monday, saying the pharmaceutical giant was “taking advantage of Oregonians.”

“Pfizer enticed consumers with these coupons for one reason only —to sell its brand-name drugs instead of a cheaper generic,” she said in a statement. “These coupons were simply not a good deal for consumers, who were misled by Pfizer into thinking they were.”

The coupons promised that consumers would “pay no more than” \$15, \$20 or \$25 as copayment for certain brand name drugs, but customers wound up paying much more. A four-month investigation from the Oregon Department of Justice found that 371 people paid \$40,000 more than the amount promised by the coupons.

CORRECTIONS:

The March 9 article “Chamber sets sights to build on Highway 395” incorrectly described the location of the property. It is the southeast corner of the intersection of Evelyn Avenue and Highway 395, not southwest.

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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