

Project would restore configuration of Union creeks

By DICK MASON
EO Media Group

UNION — A pair of Union County creeks may someday twist like they did when buffalo herds drank from their waters and salmon runs in the streams were thick.

Under a proposal from the Union Soil and Water Conservation District, segments of Catherine Creek and Little Creek, on the eastern edge of the city of Union, would be restored so they would again meander as they did before their channels were straightened many decades ago for agricultural reasons. The project would be part of the Buffalo Flats Restoration Project and involve a 1.5-mile portion of Catherine Creek and a 1.4-mile segment of Little Creek. The stream segments are on land owned by Buffalo Peak Land and Livestock, which is collaborating with the conservation district on the project.

The owners of Buffalo Peak Land and Livestock — appropriately named because there is confirmed evidence that centuries ago bison roamed what is today Union — want to help restore Chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout habitat while continuing to have



Oregon Department of Transportation Photo
Ice jams like this on in 2014 on Catherine Creek east of Union put the city at risk of flooding. A project to restore meanders to the creek would reduce large ice jams.

a viable ranching operation, said James Webster, conservation district manager. Chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout are all listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

“(The owners) have been very good to work with,” Webster said

He said Buffalo Peak Land and Livestock approached the conservation district about the Buffalo Flats project, and the district is developing a plan. If Buffalo Peak Land and Liv-

estock approves the plan, the district will seek funding for it from the Bonneville Power Administration and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board with the help of the Grande Ronde Model Watershed.

In addition to improving fish habitat, another major intent of the project is to reduce flooding and erosion. Winter flooding has been an issue for years in Union because ice jams sometimes develop in both streams, especially in Cath-

erine Creek, where they can extend for at least 120 yards. When the jams break, the release of water behind them causes Catherine Creek and its tributary Little Creek to swell and jump their banks, resulting in flood damage.

The project would widen portions of Catherine and Little creeks to reduce the chance of ice jams, Webster said, and reconfigure a portion of Medical Springs Highway that runs along the Catherine Creek, which would expand what is now

a narrow portion of the steam’s channel.

“The highway now acts like a levy,” Webster said, and changing the location of the road would create breathing room for the creek. Large chunks of floating river ice would flow to the wider area, reducing pressure in the creek.

“(The pieces of river ice) would be spread out. They would be detained before coming into town,” Webster said.

He also said the Buffalo Flats project would reduce flooding even when no ice jams are present because it would widen channels and create floodplains for excess water to spill onto. If flooding occurs after the project is completed, the water would flow into areas where there are no structures.

The project would add boulders and trees to the creek channels to prevent erosion. The trees would be at least 12 feet long and imbedded in the banks with large root wads exposed in the water. The trees would provide permanent stability to the creek banks.

The trees and boulders also would improve fish habitat by providing more hiding cover and creating pools, Webster added, and would reduce the likelihood

of ice jams because they draw solar energy that prevents the formation of large sheets of ice.

The plan also calls for planting an extensive amount of vegetation along the banks of the portions of Catherine Creek and Little Creek to provide additional stability and buffer the impact of flooding. Vegetation also provide shade, which will cool the water. Cool water is a critical part of habitat for salmon, steelhead and bull trout, Webster said.

There will be more opportunities for additional vegetation to take hold along the portions of Catherine and Little creeks because of the curvature that will be added. Restoring the meander will slow down the water flow and result in shallower channels, which will help trees and plants in the area of the creeks because the water tables will be on levels that reach nearby vegetation.

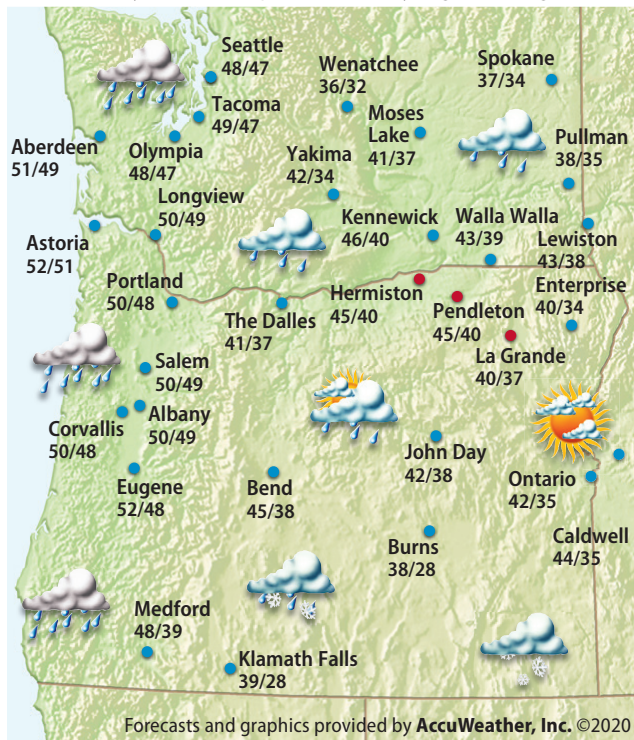
Webster said the Union Soil and Water Conservation District is receiving funding and technical assistance from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to develop the Buffalo Flats plan, which will take about two years. Whatever plan the district drafts, he said, will not have an effect on water rights.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
A few showers this afternoon	Cloudy and not as cool	Mostly cloudy and mild	A shower in the morning; cloudy	Rain and drizzle
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
45° 40°	53° 44°	56° 41°	50° 42°	48° 39°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
45° 40°	50° 42°	58° 41°	51° 43°	53° 39°

OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



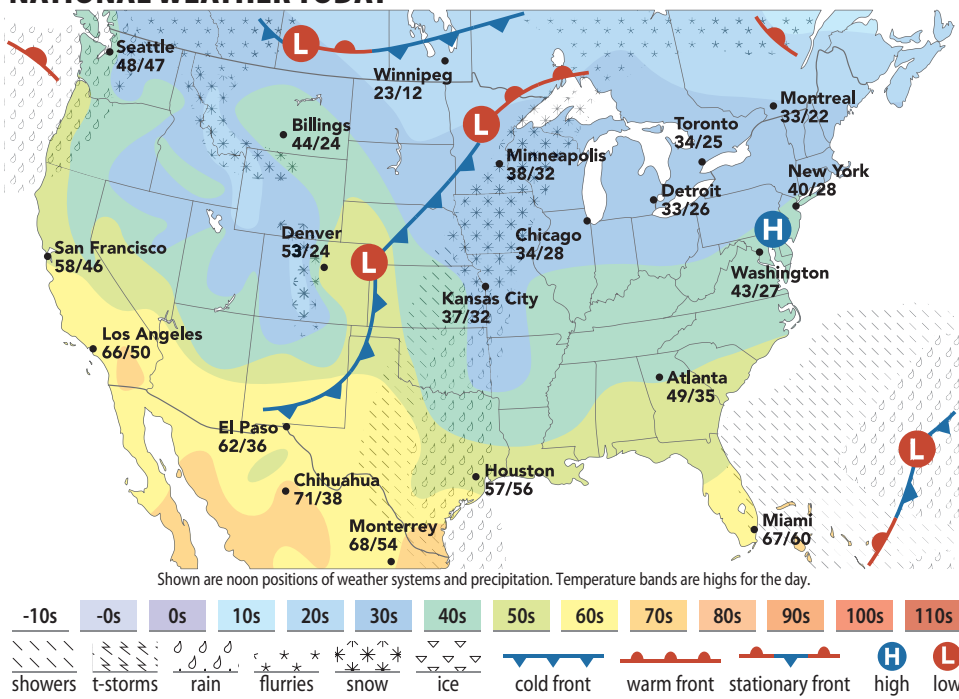
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	45°	27°
Normals	42°	28°
Records	62° (1909)	-26° (1930)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.04"	
Month to date	0.90"	
Normal month to date	1.03"	
Year to date	0.90"	
Last year to date	1.45"	
Normal year to date	1.03"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	45°	28°
Normals	42°	29°
Records	62° (1972)	-35° (1930)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace	
Month to date	0.13"	
Normal month to date	0.88"	
Year to date	0.13"	
Last year to date	1.14"	
Normal year to date	0.88"	
WINDS (in mph)		
	Today	Thu.
Boardman	SSE 4-8	SSW 4-8
Pendleton	SSE 7-14	S 7-14
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	7:28 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	4:46 p.m.	
Moonrise today	5:55 a.m.	
Moonset today	2:45 p.m.	

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 69° in El Centro, Calif. Low -28° in Ely, Minn.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Series of storms over one week bolsters snowpack

Several sites have more than doubled their snowpack this month

By JAYSON JACOBY
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — Northeastern Oregon's snowpack went from plucky to plentiful.

And the transformation took just a week or so.

A series of snowstorms that started Jan. 10 has more than doubled the water content in the snow at several measuring sites around the region.

Water content, not snow depth, is the key statistic in snowpack because a foot of heavy snow can hold more

water than 18 inches of powder.

The mountain snowpack is a major source of water during the spring and summer, when melting snow keeps streams flowing and refills reservoirs.

After a major storm at Thanksgiving, snow was scarce during most of December and the first week of January, leaving the snowpack at a little more than half of average.

In December, for the first time since early April 2019, the U.S. Drought Monitor rated Northeastern Oregon as “abnormally dry,” the category preliminary to drought.

But then the jet stream started propelling Pacific storms directly into North-

eastern Oregon.

A sampling of the dramatic changes these snowy systems made:

- Schneider Meadows, in the Wallowa Mountains north of Halfway, went from 8.4 inches of water content on Jan. 1 (68% of average) to 16.4 inches now, which is exactly average for this time of the winter.

- Bourne, north of Sumpter, more than doubled the water content, from 4.3 inches on Jan. 1 (63% of average) to 9.1 inches now, 95% of average.

- Moss Springs, in the Wallowas above Cove, went from a water content of 8.6 inches on Jan. 1 (84% of average) to 14.9 inches, which is 8% above average.

BRIEFLY

Small plane crash-lands at Sunriver Airport

SUNRIVER — A small airplane crashed Monday at the Sunriver Airport, but the pilot and passenger, both from Bend, were uninjured and walked away from the crash.

The pilot was a student with Leading Edge Flight Academy, said Brandon Wright, the Sunriver Airport manager. He said he did not know whether the passenger was also a student.

“He tried to land here and had some issues,” Wright said.

Wright said he did not know the name of the pilot.

A report of the crash came in at about 12:40 p.m. The plane, a Cessna 172, could be seen upside-down next to the icy runway at the airport. Sunriver Police Department said the crash occurred as the plane was landing.

The airport closed shortly after the incident, but reopened around 3 p.m.

Only a small fuel leak was reported,

but was contained shortly after the crash, Wright said.

Hood River residents told to boil water over bacteria fears

HOOD RIVER — A boil water advisory is in effect for water customers in Hood River after “potentially harmful bacteria” was found in the supply on Sunday evening.

KOIN reported that a loss of water pressure in the distribution system caused the potential for bacteria to infiltrate the supply and could cause sickness for those with weakened immune systems.

City officials said customers should boil their water for at least 1 minute, and then let it cool before bottling it. The boiled water should be used for drinking, brushing teeth, preparing food and baby formula, washing fruit and vegetables, making ice and cleaning surfaces in contact with food.

Hood River officials expect to resolve the issue within 48 hours.

—EO Media Group and Associated Press

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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