

Western water data coming to new online platform

By **SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN**
Capital Press

SALEM — Water data has historically been limited in scope and expensive to access. A new project seeks to change that pattern.

Researchers from NASA, the Desert Research Institute and the Environmental Defense Fund, with support from Google Earth Engine technology, are working to create an online platform with free, accessible, satellite-based water data open to anyone.

Farmers have expressed both excitement and concern about the prospect. Industry leaders and water experts say the project will have a profound impact on water management in the West.

“The implications are tremendous,” said Andrew McElrhone, professor and research plant physiologist at the University of California-Davis. “This will impact growing decisions, water usage, water rights and trading.”

The project, called OpenET, will launch in 2021.

OpenET’s leaders say its purpose is to improve “sustainable water management” for communities, rivers, wildlife and agriculture. It is funded by charitable foun-



Capital Press file photo

A new online system, OpenET, will help track water use across the West when it goes into operation next year, its supporters say.

dations, NASA, agricultural companies and irrigation management districts.

OpenET is so named because it measures evapotranspiration, or ET, the process by which water moves from ground to atmosphere through both evaporation from the land and transpiration from plants.

Forrest Melton, a senior research scientist with the Cooperative for Research in Earth Science and Technology at NASA Ames Research Center, said consistent infor-

mation on evapotranspiration “is probably the biggest data gap for water management.”

ET technology isn’t new. According to Maurice Hall, who leads EDF’s Western Water program, universities and other groups have used ET data for years, but the existing approach is “piecemeal at best.”



Cameron

“Given the importance of water, it’s surprising how archaic many of our tools are for actually managing water resources,” said Buzz Thompson, a natural resources law professor and faculty director for Stanford University’s Water in the West program. “OpenET could be revolutionary.”

Draw a line from North Dakota to Texas, and those 17 states to the west will be included in the initial project, according to Robyn Grimm, OpenET project manager

for EDF. The model, Grimm said, may spread to remaining states and other countries.

OpenET will not make private data public, according to Melton of NASA. Instead, OpenET will choreograph fragments of already-public information, such as weather data sets and field boundaries, into one coherent platform.

“Water management agencies and others already have access to this type of information,” said Melton. “But because in the past it’s often been limited and expensive, not everyone who needs the data has had access to it. I think having equal access to information can lead to better decisions, especially for water management.”

Some farmers are enthusiastic about greater data access.

“Right now, we use aerial imagery and infrared technology,” said Don Cameron, vice president of Terranova Ranch in Helm, California. “And we pay for it. If we had another tool, it would be really helpful.”

Don Parrish, senior director of regulatory relations at the American Farm Bureau, said he predicts OpenET will cut farmers’ costs while increasing productivity and efficiency.

“Saving water saves farmers money, so they have a

strong incentive to conserve,” said Parrish. “If a program like OpenET makes cents — as in dollars and cents — then make it available to farmers, move out of the way and they’ll adopt it.”

But other farmers told the *Capital Press* they fear the data could be used against them.

“With the data going open and public, are growers going to have environmental groups sue their pants off for perceived overuse of water?” said a Washington state viticulturist who did not wish to be identified.

The data may also be used to enforce water rights and enable water trading.

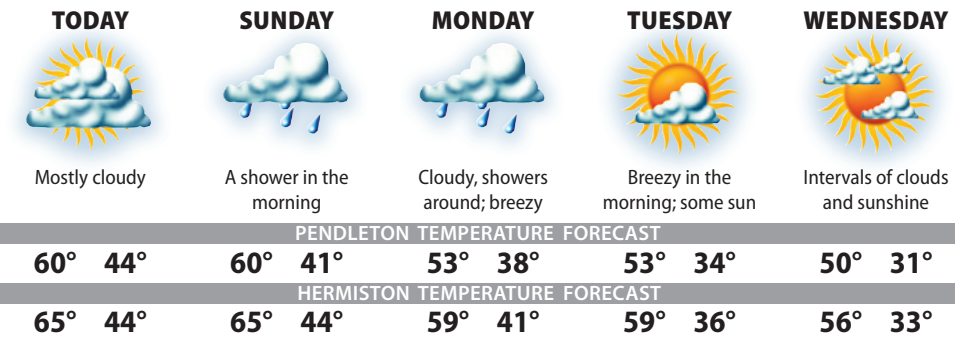
According to Thompson of Water in the West, ET data has been used for at least a decade in regulatory and legal conflicts.

“This kind of data will help police and enforce water rights,” said Thompson.

In civil cases, he said, the standard of proof is essentially “more probable than not.” So even if data accuracy is imperfect — OpenET will have a 15% margin of error, according to Melton — it can be used as case evidence.

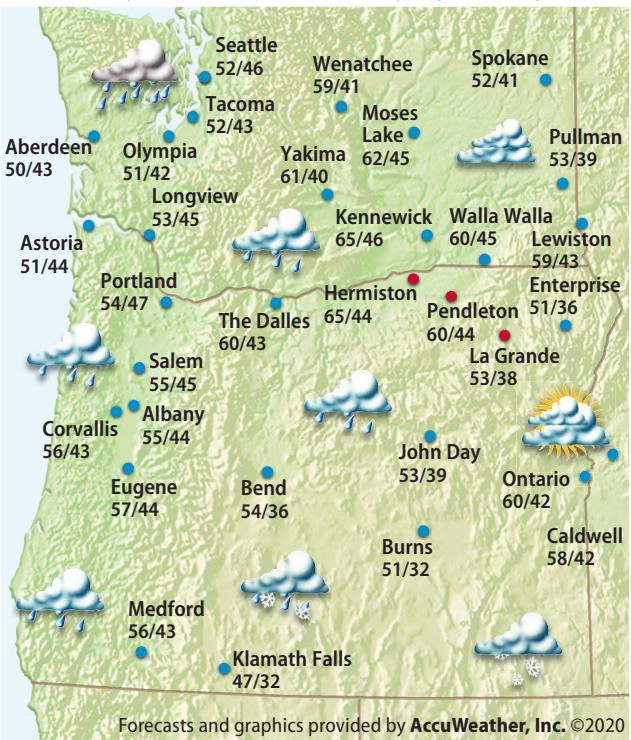
But, said Thompson, a landowner always has other options to gather more fine-tuned data, such as hiring water consultants.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



ALMANAC

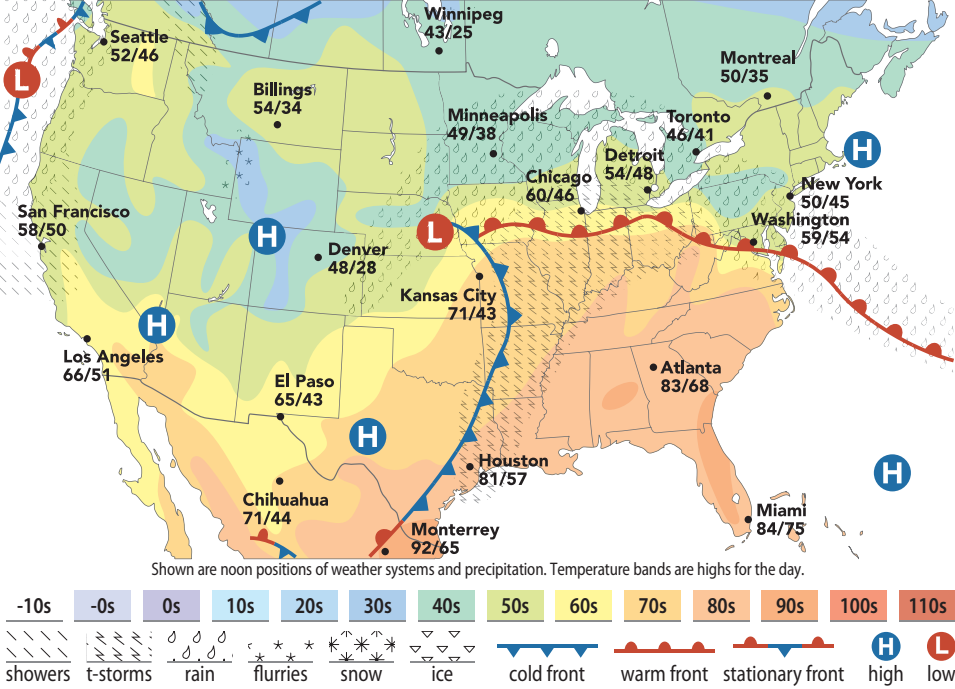
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	53°	35°	
Normals	57°	37°	
Records	76° (1952)	23° (1975)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.61"		
Normal month to date	1.24"		
Year to date	4.67"		
Last year to date	6.08"		
Normal year to date	3.79"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	56°	40°	
Normals	61°	37°	
Records	78° (2015)	15° (1944)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.12"		
Normal month to date	0.78"		
Year to date	0.48"		
Last year to date	3.59"		
Normal year to date	3.05"		
WINDS (in mph)			
	Today	Sun.	
Boardman	WSW 7-14	WSW 8-16	
Pendleton	WSW 6-12	SW 7-14	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	6:42 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	7:19 p.m.		
Moonrise today	8:55 a.m.		
Moonset today	11:49 p.m.		

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 105° in Zapata, Texas Low -14° in Lake Yellowstone, Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Oregon’s public universities will no longer ask for applicants SAT scores

By **EDER CAMPUZANO**
The Oregonian

SALEM — High-schoolers applying to Oregon’s public universities won’t need to submit their SAT or ACT scores anymore.

The state’s largest universities on Wednesday announced they’re joining a growing movement among institutions of higher education giving prospective freshmen the option of omitting standardized test scores from their applications. More than 1,000 four-year universities have already dropped the requirement, according to a news release.

“Standardized tests add very little to our ability to predict an individual student’s success at a university or college,” said Jon Boecknestedt, OSU vice provost for enrollment management.

Oregon universities in their joint announcement said research showing strong ties between family income and student performance on standardized tests like the SAT and ACT played a fac-

tor in their decision. Some university systems have long had policies that cleared in-state applicants at the top of their graduating class for automatic admission and waiving the standardized testing requirement.

Robert Schaeffer, interim director at the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, said Oregon’s move was the broadest of its kind.

“We’ve certainly been keeping our eye on Oregon State and the University of Oregon, in particular,” he said.

Still, Oregon universities’ move away from making standardized test scores compulsory in their applications doesn’t mean admissions officials will outright refuse to accept them.

“Students who believe their test scores are indicative of their ability or talent are welcome to submit any supplemental information,” University of Oregon Director of Admissions Jim Rawlins said in a release.

Southern Oregon University spokesman Neil Woolf told *The Oregonian*/OregonLive that prospective students may submit standardized test scores to determine placement in their initial English and math courses.

These are the universities included in the announcement:

- Eastern Oregon University
- Oregon Institute of Technology
- Oregon State University
- Oregon Health and Science University
- Portland State University
- Southern Oregon University
- University of Oregon
- Western Oregon University

All but the University of Oregon, Oregon State and Portland State had allowed undergraduates to apply without submitting scores from a standardized college entrance exam prior to this year. The lifting of testing requirements for admissions does not necessarily apply to graduate programs.

BRIEFLY

Man charged with assaulting teen, posting it on social media

BOW, Wash. — A man was arrested after police say he attacked a 17-year-old boy and posted the attack on social media.

Trevor McCabe, 18, was charged this week in Skagit County Superior Court with assault resulting in great bodily harm, assault with a deadly weapon, robbery and tampering with a witness, the *Skagit Valley Herald* reported.

According to court documents, the boy had messaged McCabe on social media and asked for alcohol. McCabe told the boy to come to his house in Bow and bring \$30, documents said.

When the boy arrived, documents say McCabe struck him, causing the boy to

fall and begin to seize. McCabe continued to assault him while recording the assault and posting it to social media, according to documents.

McCabe also wrote a slur on his forehead with a permanent marker, and pointed a loaded shotgun at him, according to the documents.

The boy was taken first to a local hospital, and then to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle where he remains in serious condition, Skagit County Under-sheriff Chad Clark said.

McCabe told police in an interview he was defending his property against trespassers, according to court documents.

McCabe is being held in the Skagit County Community Justice Center on \$500,000 bail.

— 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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Production Manager: Mike Jensen
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