

Ag leaders get look at lower Snake River dam issues

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

LEWISTON, Idaho — Leaders of national and regional farm organizations rallied around efforts to protect the four lower Snake River dams June 16, taking part in a day-long briefing on the role the structures play in the Pacific Northwest economy.

Among those joining the group were Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation — the nation's largest agricultural organization — and Chandler Goule, CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers.

Farmers shouldn't let their guard down when it comes to Idaho Rep. Mike Simpson's call to breach the Snake River dams in the name of salmon recovery, Goule warned.

Simpson's \$33.5 billion concept is gaining momentum in Congress heading into the mid-term elections, Goule said.

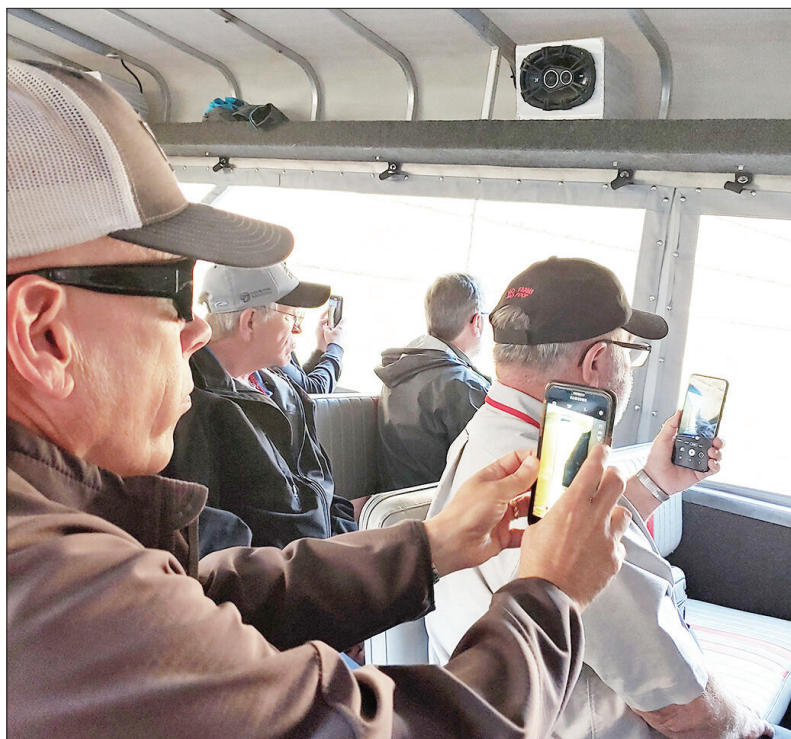
Simpson, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, has not proposed any legislation, but he will work to insert the money into an appropriations bill without instructions to breach the dams, Goule said.

"If that money gets appropriated, then that gets him a much stronger hand to come back and actually get the dams torn down," Goule said.

Simpson used a similar tactic on another issue 10 years ago, Goule said.

"He already knows politically that strategy is going to work," Goule said.

It would likely be in next year's



Contributed Photo

Glen Squires, left, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission, and Idaho wheat farmer "Potlatch Joe" Anderson, right, take photos Wednesday, June 16, 2021, of the Lower Granite Dam navigation lock on the Snake River.

appropriations, Goule said. The bill would have to go through the House and Senate, and the president would have to sign it.

Duvall, Goule and 43 others representing ag organizations, co-ops and related businesses were hosted by the Idaho Grain Producers Association and the Idaho Farm Bureau.

Tour participants took a boat through a navigation lock and toured the dam complex, seeing fish ladders and juvenile and adult fish,

and toured the Lewis-Clark Terminal, owned by CHS Primeland, the Pacific Northwest Farmers Co-op and Uniontown Co-op.

Agricultural advocates say breaching the dams isn't the "silver bullet" for salmon recovery that environmentalists claim, noting that mortality rates on the Snake River are similar for salmon elsewhere on the West Coast.

"I didn't see today the problems that (Simpson) described. ... I didn't

see the science that supported that," said Duvall, of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Duvall compared Simpson to a doctor who calls for a heart transplant when some medicine will do.

"If we think about the \$34 billion and just take a portion of it, put it in research and development of the other problems that might be facing the salmon, we can fix that problem with a little medicine rather than transplanting a heart," Duvall said.

Breaching the dams would make the lower Snake River "completely unnavigable," and require adding 38,000 more rail cars or 150,000 more trucks to replace barges, Goule said.

About 60% of Washington's and Idaho's wheat is shipped by barge, according to the Lewis-Clark Terminal. It takes 5½ hours to load one 3,600-ton barge, the equivalent of 120 truckloads of wheat.

A proposed transportation credit or subsidy under Simpson's plan also could potentially be out of compliance with World Trade Organization regulations, Goule said, adding that it could be considered trade distorting, undercutting export competition.

The dams are critical for the West Coast's export and import markets, said Jeff Van Pevnage, president and CEO of Columbia Grain International in Portland.

Some 60-65% of the wheat exported using the Columbia-Snake River system originates in the Lower Snake River region, consisting of 13 barge facilities with more than 10 owners, Van Pevnage said.

"Without the current volume, you will endanger the economic viability of at least two of the export facilities that exist in Portland," Van Pevnage said. Those facilities rely heavily on barges and don't have the ability to expand rail capacity, he said.

Barging provides transportation competition and alternatives to keep freight rates in check, Van Pevnage said. Without it, rail costs for grain shipments to Portland could potentially more than double, particularly during the fall, when corn and soybean shipments from the Midwest are also heavy.

Without barging, many regional farmers could find themselves in a "captive shipping" scenario, similar to one experienced today by Montana farmers, Van Pevnage said.

"As an example, at times today, you can ship wheat from eastern North Dakota through Montana to the West Coast for cheaper rates than you can ship from Montana to the PNW," he said. "It's very possible those types of scenarios will exist here without the competition."

If the dams are breached, "what will happen in the end is farmers will be paying more and making less at the end of the day," Van Pevnage said.

Van Pevnage recommended the industry organize similar tours for other members of the House Appropriations Committee.

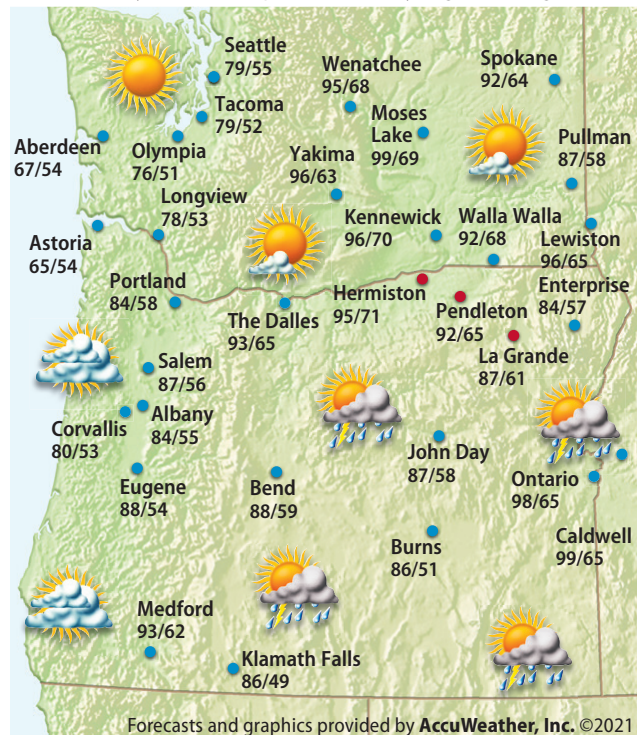
"...(T)hey could come out for themselves and see that we don't need to spend \$34 billion," he said, "that we don't have to eradicate these dams, we need to continue the work that's happening."

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			HOT	HOT
Mostly sunny, breezy and hot	Mostly sunny, breezy and hot	Mostly sunny and hot	Mostly sunny and very hot	Very hot with sunshine
92° 65°	96° 64°	93° 65°	97° 65°	102° 70°
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
95° 71°	99° 67°	98° 69°	101° 68°	106° 70°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				

OREGON FORECAST

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



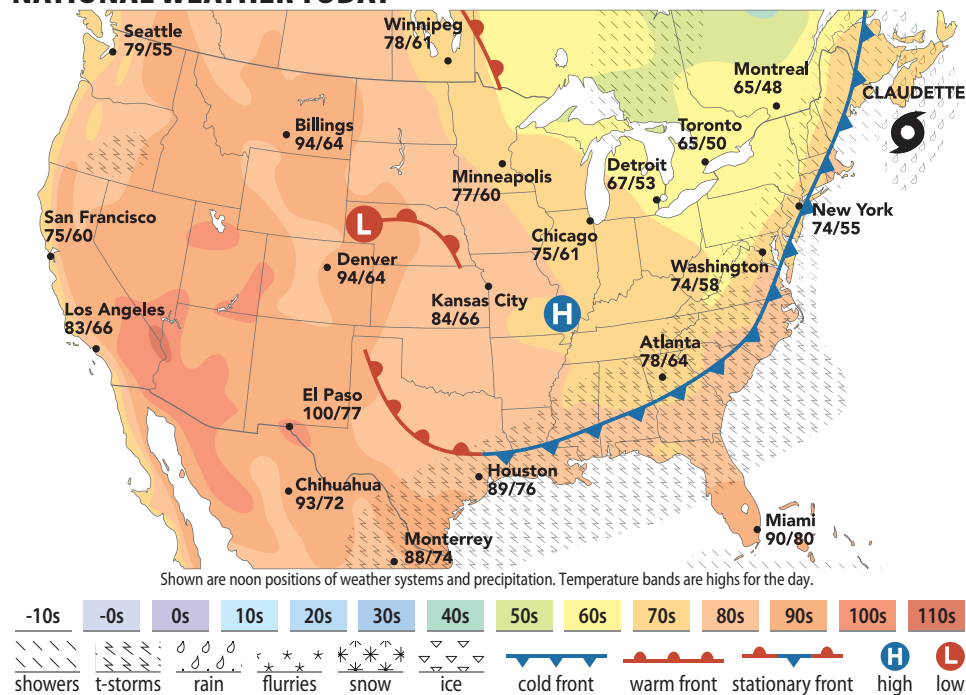
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	94°	56°
Normals	80°	53°
Records	102° (1973)	34° (1893)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.28"	
Normal month to date	0.93"	
Year to date	4.31"	
Last year to date	8.55"	
Normal year to date	7.44"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	94°	56°
Normals	81°	54°
Records	100° (1970)	41° (2014)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.23"	
Normal month to date	0.46"	
Year to date	1.93"	
Last year to date	1.61"	
Normal year to date	5.57"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	Wed.	Wed.
Boardman	WSW 10-20	WSW 10-20
Pendleton	W 10-20	W 10-20
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	5:06 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	8:48 p.m.	
Moonrise today	6:50 p.m.	
Moonset today	3:15 a.m.	

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 113° in Needles, Calif. Low 28° in West Yellowstone, Mont.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Cyclist rides mountain bike for 8 hours as tribute to late father

LA GRANDE — La Grande cyclist Elijah Romer saluted his late father at the Mount Emily Recreation Area Sunday, June 20.

Romer rode his mountain bike on MERA's trails for eight hours over a 12-hour period as a tribute to his father, Larry Romer, who died 18 years ago.

Romer, who has three children, made his Father's Day rides with fellow dads, children and others. He started his treks at 6:30 a.m. and did not complete them until about 6:30 p.m., covering 55 miles and climbing a total of 10,000 feet. He emerged from the rides energized.

"I feel awesome, a lot better than I thought I would. At the end, I almost wanted to continue. I was in a zone," said Romer, who grew up in La Grande and has two degrees from Eastern Oregon University, a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's degree in teaching.

Eighteen years ago Romer was in no condition to do what he did on Father's Day. He was at a low point in his

life after his father's death. Romer then saw something that almost made him feel like his father was speaking to him — a mountain bike his dad had left him.

Romer, then overweight, gave serious thought to taking up mountain biking and soon did so after receiving strong encouragement from his friend, Whit Hartz of La Grande.

"I decided I wanted to take control of my own life and leap onto the bike," he said.

Romer said the many long rides that followed helped him cope with the loss of his father.

"It helped me with my grieving. It put me on a path toward healing," he said.

Romer lost 40 pounds soon after becoming a serious cyclist and later became an elite amateur national class cyclist.

The rides Romer led at MERA were meant to encourage people to make their mental and physical health a priority, just as he



Romer

did after seeing his father's mountain bike.

"A healthy you helps make a healthy community," he said.

A community is filled with people helping others, Romer said, something they cannot do unless they have addressed their own needs.

"In order to take care of others, you must take care of yourself first. Change starts with you," said Romer, who spoke not only to people riding with him, but also to those at the MERA's Owsley Canyon trailhead.

The cyclist described the challenge he took as epic in nature. Romer said he wasn't sure if he was up to it. Romer said it is important for everyone to take on such challenges because it leads to self discovery.

"Once in a while it is important to do something you didn't think possible," he said. "When you push yourself to your limit and beyond you will find someone hiding within. That person is your true self."

IN BRIEF

Oregon will miss this week's original vaccine goal

SALEM — Vaccination rates in Oregon have continued to plummet, with the seven-day average number of doses dropping over 8% from Saturday, June 19 to Sunday, June 20.

Gov. Kate Brown announced earlier this month that Oregon would end mask and distancing requirements when 70% of adults had at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose. As of Friday, June 19, 68.5% of Oregon adults had received at least one dose, leaving just 51,616 people in need of vaccinations to reach the

threshold, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Oregon will be unable to meet that goal by June 21, the date Brown had originally targeted for the state to meet the metric. With the number of daily vaccine doses administered rapidly declining, Oregon may not meet that metric by the time Brown's COVID-19 emergency order expires June 28, either.

The state reported 10,006 newly administered doses, which includes 5,675 June 20 and the remainder from previous days. The seven-day average number of doses administered is now 12,724 doses per day. To date, the state has reported 4,306,340 vaccine doses administered, fully vaccinating 2,102,735 people and partially vaccinating 249,690 people.

— EO Media Group

CLARIFICATION: In the Page A1 story "Artful effort," published Thursday, June 17, did not specify that only a portion of the money Blue Mountain Community College raised was to purchase art from Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts.

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