

Snowpack

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“We are seeing an active storm track in the North Pacific the last few weeks and this is expected to continue through January,” said Larry O’Neill, associate professor for Oregon State University’s College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences.

Significant snow and rain won’t have immediate impacts on this area’s reservoirs, however, due to Central Oregon’s porous volcanic soil, which makes refilling of reservoirs a slower process compared to other areas in the state.

Instead of entering streams and creeks, much of the rain-fall over Central Oregon seeps into the soil and enters underground aquifers, which takes longer to recharge reservoirs. So while large snowpack accumulations this winter can’t do much for the reservoirs in 2021, it would help to fill them in 2022.

Wickiup Reservoir, the largest reservoir in Central Oregon, was 34% full as of Monday, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. On average, Wickiup is around 73% full at this time of year.

“Wickiup Reservoir is on track to start the 2021 irrigation season at a record low level, which I am fairly confident will happen no matter what the next three months bring in the way of precipitation,” said Kyle Gorman, re-

gion manager for the Oregon Water Resources Department.

Wickiup finished the irrigation season bone dry this year, the third year in a row that the reservoir was at or near empty when the irrigation districts stopped diverting water into their canals.

The lower water levels are affecting natural lakes, too. Crescent Lake, a natural lake with storage capacity allocated to Tumalo Irrigation District, is just 26% full, down from 87% of average at the start of the 2019 irrigation season. This does not bode well for the district, which relies on water storage from Crescent Lake as its supplemental supply to Tumalo Creek.

For junior water-right holders, the low reservoir levels likely mean a fourth year in a row of water rations.

This past growing season patrons of North Unit Irrigation District, a junior water-rights holder, were allotted a foot and a quarter of water per acre for the season, compared to two-feet per acre during a normal growing season. Less water results in fewer acres planted and as a result, lost revenue.

“A foot and a quarter was miserable,” said Fine, who in addition to his farming duties also serves as a board member of North Unit. “It just took all the fun out of farming.”

In addition to lower yields, the lack of planted acres also resulted in horrific dust storms in late summer, turning parts of Jefferson County into a Dust Bowl.

“It was just ugly,” said Fine.

Marty Richards, North Unit’s chairman, said farmers are hopeful the snows will

come, but they remain realistic about their situation.

“In North Unit there are farmers who are in financial trouble, but we are all hopeful that between conservation and good winter snowpacks we will get through these challenges and be better for them,” said Richards.

Fine said farmers who are in financial distress due to the water shortages don’t have many options available to them.

“You can go bankrupt, like any other business, or you can

sell your farm,” said Fine. “But we have a lot of equity in the farms and equipment, and if we are not getting water, the value of the farm goes down. So far we haven’t seen that, but it’s just a matter of time if this continues on.”

Fine said diversification is key to navigating these unpredictable times. He and his wife also run a flower delivery business in Portland, which helps offset losses on the farm.

“Every farm situation is different,” said Fine. “Some guys can

weather it better than others.”

While the farming community struggles to deal with the water shortages, Fine remains confident that the current state of affairs is temporary — just a long-term weather pattern that will eventually cycle back to colder weather and more snow.

“We are the eternal optimists,” said Fine. “We are bound to come out of it sooner or later. It’s just a matter of hanging on long enough.”

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Redmond

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Three transportation corridors are also expected to see upgrades in 2021. The most expensive project will be an overhaul of NE Hemlock Avenue, from U.S. Highway 97 to NE Ninth Street.

The barebones, two-lane street is a major thoroughfare for a quickly-growing industrial part of Redmond. The city plans to spend \$1 million to upgrade the pavement and build sidewalks, storm drainage and bike lanes, Caccavano said.

“It was just never built to city standard,” he said of NE Hemlock.

The city will also spend \$200,000 building five blocks of sidewalk on the west side of NW 10th Street from NW Quince Avenue, providing a safe walkway for students to two nearby schools. And \$300,000 will go towards filling in sidewalk gaps on the south side of state Highway 126 between SW 35th and SW 27th streets.

City staff are designing an improvement for the four-way-stop intersection of NW Ninth Street and NW Maple Avenue this year as well. That project will cost \$600,000, and it is unclear whether a roundabout or traffic signal will be installed.

The Dry Canyon Park will receive a sixth staircase at the east side of the NW Maple Avenue Bridge, connecting the trail to the recently-finished Paul Hathaway Memorial Park. The city had tried for a decade to get this \$300,000 staircase built, Caccavano said.

“People have been scrambling down that hill for years,” he said. “This will be a whole lot safer.”

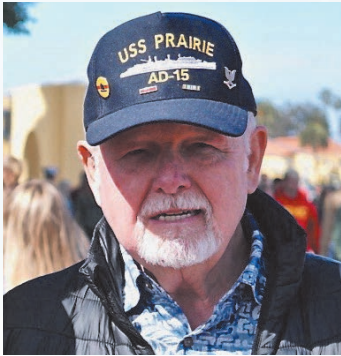
South-central Redmond will also receive a new park in 2021, right at the southern tip of the Dry Canyon off SW Quartz Avenue. Construction on the \$700,000 park is expected to begin in spring or summer.

Annie McVay, manager of the city’s parks division, said the Quartz Avenue park will help the city reach its goal of having a park within a half mile of every resident. It will also serve as a gateway to the Dry Canyon, with more family-friendly activities like a playground and bike trails, she said.

Finally, city crews will build a new parking lot at the corner of SW Fourth Street and SW Evergreen Avenue, transforming an empty space into 34 parking spots next to downtown.

This will be the second new downtown-adjacent parking lot built recently, following the demolition of Redmond’s old city hall off SW Seventh Street last year.

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Thomas Harold Ratcliffe Bradler

Thomas Harold Ratcliffe Bradler (aka “Dirt Road Tom”) passed away on December 20, 2020 at St. Charles Medical Center in Bend, Oregon at the age of 78. Born in Hanford, California on May 18, 1942, Tom spent much of his youth living throughout the West Coast in California, Oregon and Washington. Graduating from Beaverton High School in Oregon (Class of 1960), he found friends and a place that he would return to later in life. After high school, Tom joined the U.S. Navy and served aboard the U.S.S. Prairie that was deployed throughout the Pacific. He was proud of his military service and spoke about it often to his family and was happy to see his son Chad and grandson Jared follow in his footsteps and join the military.

He graduated from San Jose State University in 1970 with a degree in Geography and was a die-hard Spartan alumni, especially when it came to Spartan football; he lived long enough for the Spartans to go undefeated and win their first Mountain West title this year.

Tom continued to live in San Jose after graduating and worked for the U.S. Postal Service while he started a family with his first wife, Betty, and they had two sons together. In the ‘80s he met Gloria Westoff, who would become his second wife and with whom he would spend the next 25 years - they finally married in 1994.

Retiring in the late ‘90s, he spent the last 20 years of his life living in La Pine, Oregon, where he was popularly known around town as “Dirt Road Tom.” Dirt Road Tom was extremely active in the community and held positions as President and Board member of both the Deschutes County Citizen’s Action Group and the La Pine Senior Center. For 10 years, he was also a SMART reader volunteer at Rosland Elementary School and a “Senior Greeter” at La Pine High School.

He hosted a weekly local radio show on KITC 106.5FM where he featured music from local musicians across central Oregon. Dirt Road Tom was a fixture in the local music scene and could be found out most weekends enjoying the music of bands he had befriended or discovering new groups to feature on his show. He was a tireless advocate and fan of local music, and Central Oregon has lost one of its most active supporters of local musicians. While listening to live music, Dirt Road Tom was also fond of showing off his swing dance steps that he had perfected in the ‘80s at the Saddle Rack in San Jose, California, and he could twist and turn his dance partner with his signature dance move, “The Pretzel,” whenever the feeling struck him.

He is survived by his half-sister, Becky Heflin of Placerville, California; two sons, Christopher Bradler of San Tan Valley, Arizona and Chad Bradler of Irvine, Kentucky; and six grandchildren: Bryant, Spencer, Jared, Mackenzie, Marah and Rylee.

A visitation for Dirt Road Tom will be held at Baird Memorial Chapel in La Pine on Friday, January 8th from 4 to 6 p.m. He will be laid to rest at Willamette National Cemetery the following week. The family asks that in lieu of flowers that memorial contributions be made to any of the following organizations: KITC 106.5 FM, St. Charles Foundation, Spartan Athletics Fund, SJSU Geography Research Program.



passed away on December 24, 2020 at the Veterans Pioneer Home in Palmer, Alaska, he was 90 years old. Bill was born on August 18, 1930 to Alice May Roseberry Walker and Clarence Edward Walker in Nampa Idaho.

Bill was the eldest of eleven children and often took the role of being the eldest very seriously. Other times, he enjoyed teasing and playing with his younger brothers and sisters. Although he had many siblings, he was very close to an uncle, that was only few years older. Jack Roseberry and Bill were partners in crime as

boys; until Jack left this world in 1945 during the sinking of the USS Indianapolis in the Pacific. In his later years, Bill told stories of him and the adventures he had with “Uncle” Jack.

Bill was born in the depression era, and because of growing up and helping to provide for his large family, he always liked to have a “spare” for the just in case situations. This included everything from nuts and bolts to engine parts or pieces and old equipment. If you ever needed anything, Bill probably had a least one he would make you a deal on. These deals usually included at least one beer. Many times, a can of warm Hamms or Rainier was offered up and choked down. On other occasions, you could be offered a warm O’le Milwaukee Best or a “short one” of Canadian Mist or another blended whiskey.

He spent many of his younger years working closely with his father. During this time, they would often trap wild horses to sell to the Army at Camp Abbot, currently known as Sunriver.

Bill served in the US Army during the Korean Conflict, from 1951 to 1954. He was a heavy equipment engineer in the notorious 291st Engineers. He was assigned the order of cleaning up areas in Germany that had been devastated by the bombing from WW II. He achieved the rank of Corporal during his tenure.

Bill worked in the construction industry before and after his enlistment. First for Deschutes County starting at the age of 16 and for many years after the Army, for RL Coats Construction, until Bill retired in 1996. He was known to be one of the best heavy equipment operators around. He spent many years and ate lots of dust operating asphalt plants, rock crushers and running equipment. For many reasons, his reputation preceded him in this industry.

He married Joanne Marie Myers on March 26, 1960 and had three children; they raised their family within the Central Oregon area. They retired east of Bend in Brothers, OR where they had a small ranch with cattle, horses and hay. He was always a farmer and cowboy at heart, and he loved working the cattle and caring for the horses. He always had a soft spot for horses; and in his 70’s he adopted a wild horse from BLM and broke it to ride. He was also instrumental in establishing and operating the Brothers-Hampton Rangeland Fire Protection Association (RFPA) which is still in effect today. He loved hunting, fishing, rock hounding and generally anything outside

He went to live with his son, Clay, and daughter-in-law, Tammie, in Wasilla, Alaska. He enjoyed salmon and halibut fishing and getting to know his great grandchildren. Playing Bingo and socializing at the Senior Center was part of his daily routine as well.

Bill was preceded in death by his wife, Joanne Marie Myers Walker, his Mother, Father, two sisters: Jean Mowery and Thelma Franek, one brother, Karron Walker, one granddaughter, Brandie Marie Evans and several nieces and nephews.

He is survived by two brothers, Bob and Jerry Walker, and five sisters: Georgie Mize, Nancy Johnston, Linda Lee, Susan Vogel, Mary Ann Cavliglia. He is also survived by five children. From a previous marriage he had two children: Shannon Walker of La Pine, OR and Martin Walker of Hermiston, Or. Bill and Joanne had three children: Clayton & Tammie Walker of Wasilla, Alaska, Laurie & Rick Cordis of Bend, OR and Wendy & John Wingerd of Grants Pass, OR.

He was blessed with 8 grandchildren: Warren Walker, of CA, Josh Smith of Brothers, OR, Cristina Bencini-Elshoff of La Pine, OR, William Walker of Wasilla, Alaska, Jacqueline White of Grants Pass, OR, Tanner Walker of Umatilla, OR, James Wingerd of Grants Pass, OR and Jordon Wingerd of Grants Pass, OR. He is also survived by 14 great grandchildren, 2 great-great grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made to the American Parkinson Disease Association. Donations can be made online through their website at www.apdaparkinson.org.

A graveside service with Military Funeral Honors will be held on January 12th, 2021 at 11:00 at the Pilot Butte Cemetery. He will be buried next to his wife, Joanne of 55 years.

Niswonger- Reynolds funeral Home is charge of arraignments.