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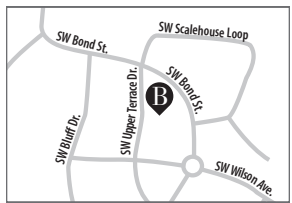
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LOCAL, STATE & NATION

Northeast Oregon

2022 STARTED WET, BUT DROUGHT CONCERNS LINGER

Dry January aggravates conditions across the region

BY KATY NESBITT

For EO Media Group
PENDLETON — December and January storms set up the winter of 2022 to be cold and wet, but several weeks without significant snow or rain are creating concerns of another drought year.

Northeast Oregon is faring better than Central and Southern Oregon, with cold temperatures preventing the early January snowfall from melting. Snow in the last few days has helped inch up snowpack and snow water equivalent levels for the Blue and Wallowa mountains.

According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service website, monthly streamflow and reservoir conditions for January in the Umatilla-Walla Walla-Willow Basin were above average. Two bodies of water in the southern region of the basin near Heppner are considerably higher than the rest of

the basin: Willow Creek is at 187% and Rhea Creek is at 142% of the 30-year median.

Farther south, the North Fork John Day River at Monument is recording 83% of its 30-year median. The basin has one stronghold for water: Camas Creek near Ukiah at 346% of the median.

Snowpack has been holding up, despite the lack of precipitation in the last five weeks.

In the Blue Mountains between La Grande and Pendleton, Emigrant Springs has 45 inches of snowpack and is 148% above average with 10% snow water equivalent. High Ridge Snotel east of Pendleton has 52 inches of snowpack, 5% below its average, but with 33% snow water equivalent.

In the Wallows, Mount Howard has 27 inches of snowpack, 25% below average with 32% snow water equivalent. On the south side of

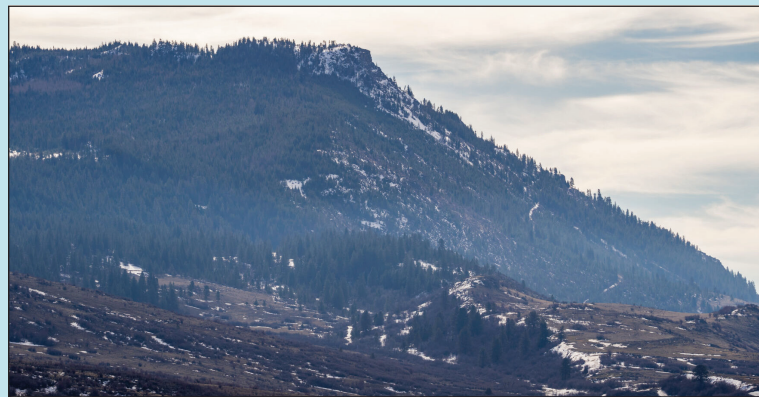
the range, Moss Springs Snotel is recording 49 inches of snowpack, which is 15% below average with a snow water equivalent of 32%.

In Central Oregon, after a burst of snowfall slammed the area in late December and early January, snowpack levels surged to 130% of average, but dry conditions since those storms have erased much of those gains. A Feb. 12 report in The Bulletin put the snowpack in the Upper Deschutes and Crooked River basin at 92% of normal, with precipitation for the water year at 89% of normal, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

While Northeast Oregon's snowpack and water levels look good now, the area is facing down the barrel of another drought year, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. According to www.drought.gov, Wallowa County was down 0.69 inches of precipitation in January. The entire county is considered to be in severe drought status, and 44.36% of the county is experiencing extreme drought conditions.

Union County is down 0.27 inches of its average precipitation. The entire county is considered to be under severe drought conditions while 4.3% is experiencing extreme drought. And Umatilla County is down 0.2 inches of precipitation from a normal January. This puts all of the county under severe drought conditions, with 33.77% considered to be under extreme drought conditions.

The extended forecast for Northeast Oregon calls for 33% to 40% below normal precipitation with a 40% to 50% chance of above normal temperatures.



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

ABOVE: A dwindling snowpack rests atop Mount Harris, near Imbler in Union County, on Friday. Several weeks without significant snow or rain are creating concerns of another drought year. | **BACKGROUND:** Weeks of subfreezing temperatures have held snow in the higher elevations of Northeast Oregon, as is evident in this February photo of the Wallowa Mountains. Despite reasonable snowpack levels in the high country, however, most of the region is still facing severe drought.



COVID-19

U.S. infections, hospitalizations continue their steady decline

BY LEAH WILLINGHAM AND JONATHAN MATTISE
Associated Press

Average daily COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are continuing to fall in the U.S., an indicator that the omicron variant's hold is weakening across the country.

Total confirmed cases reported Saturday barely exceeded 100,000, a sharp downturn from around 800,850 five weeks ago on Jan. 16, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

In New York, the number of cases went down by more than 50% over the last two weeks.

"I think what's influencing the decline, of course, is that omicron is starting to run out of people to infect," said Dr. Thomas Russo, professor and infectious disease chief at the University of Buffalo's Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

COVID-19 hospitalizations are down from a national seven-day average of 146,534 on Jan. 20 to 80,185 the week ending in Feb. 13, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID data tracker.

The drop in daily hospitalizations in Oregon amid omicron is expected to fall below 400 per day by March 20, according to a new forecast by Oregon Health & Science University.

Oregon's latest single-day report, released Friday, showed 1,635 new COVID-19 cases statewide.

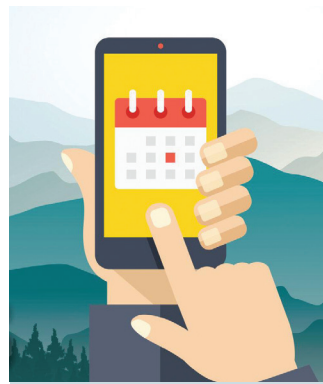
More declines ahead?

Public health experts say they are feeling hopeful that more declines are ahead and that the country is shifting from being in a pandemic to an 'endemic' that is more consistent and predictable. However, many expressed concern that vaccine uptick in the U.S. has still been below expectations, concerns that are exacerbated by the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University's School of Medicine said Sunday that the downturn in case numbers and hospitalizations is encouraging. He agreed that it likely has a lot to do with herd immunity.

"There are two sides to omicron's coin," he said. "The bad thing is that it can spread to a lot of people and make them mildly ill. The good thing is it can spread to a lot of people and make them mildly ill, because in doing so, it has created a lot of natural immunity."

However, Schaffner said it's much too early to "raise the banner of mission accomplished."



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I have been working with The Bulletin for over 3 months and they continue to impress me with their hard work, innovative ads, and amazing reels. I look forward to continuing work with The Bulletin and Makenna Cervelli in particular. In my opinion every company that's wanting to grow and take their marketing to the next level should use their amazing services.



— Sean McDonell
Owner, C4K Coffee Roasters
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