

EPA

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was to ensure that people were safe—and to find out where the fumes are coming from, what they are, and how much is present,” Smith said of the EPA response.

Smith said the labwork so far indicates that volatile organic compounds, known as VOCs, are venting up through the ground. She said VOCs are a class of chemicals that can be found in a wide range of household and industrial products.

Smith said they are not uncommon in small amounts in buildings. However, she said, VOCs can pose a health hazard when in concentrations above 5,000 parts per billion.

She said toxicology tests showed 27 homes that had some VOCs present, and about a dozen exceeded the 5,000 rate. Residents throughout the area were advised to ventilate their basements, crawl spaces and living spaces thoroughly. An EPA tip list cites ventilation as the most important measure. For the homes with higher readings, the agency also recommends filling cracks in concrete floors, using vapor barriers like black plastic in crawl spaces, and limiting the time spent in any room where there’s an unusual odor.

“We’ve been finding that those measures have been effective,” Smith said.

The crew returned to the neighborhood to check some homes that were closed up over the Memorial Day weekend, and also to resample the air in some homes that had high readings.

Smith said the agency also is bringing in geo probes to take subsurface samples from the water table this week.

“We do believe it’s coming from the ground water,” she said.

However, the initial source—where it enters the ground—has not been identified.

Tests by a private consultant earlier this month found substances that did not appear to be petroleum-based, but Smith said the EPA is still running tests.

“We’re not ruling anything out at this point,” she said.

The EPA reiterated city officials’ advice to residents about ventilation, and Smith added it’s important to continue to ventilate as long as the situation remains unresolved.

Residents who notice any unusual odor should call John Day Dispatch, 541-575-0030, and their information will be shared with the EPA. For concerns about health issues, call the Grant County Health Department, 541-575-0429. Homeowners may also want to contact their insurance providers to discuss any concerns.

SENIOR PROM COURT



Contributed photo/Tanni Wenger Photography Studios

The Grant Union 2015 prom court is: front row, Lucrezia Nosedo, left, Charli Bowden, Sydney Stearns and Lucinda Harper; back row, Mitch Moulton, Justin Gravley, Matthew Broemeling and Colton Madden.

RAIN

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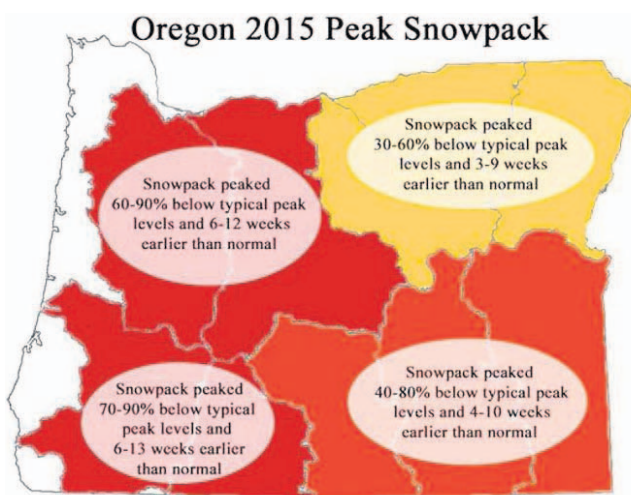
Only one of the 15 measuring sites listed for the John Day Basin region—the Anthony Lake Snow Course—had snow on May 1, and the rest were bare.

Across the basin, the forecasts for summer streamflows range from 10 percent to 52 percent of the average for the May-September period.

Scientists say the snowpack not only was less than normal, but it peaked five to eight weeks earlier than normal. Five SNOTEL sites had their earliest snowpack peak on record.

“Water managers in the basin should expect significant water shortages this summer,” according to the May 1 report from NRCS.

While most of the state is pegged for moderate to severe drought, the forecast in Eastern Oregon is for extreme drought, according to



the national Drought Monitor.

Koberle said that means water shortages are likely, and especially for areas that depend on streamflows without reservoirs—like Grant County.

“The John Day Basin relies on snowmelt runoff to sustain stream flows through the summer months in most years,” said Scott Oviatt, an NRCS hydrologist.

Sporadic precipitation

won’t counter the effects of record-low snowpack and warm temperatures on streamflows for long, he said. “While welcome, this is most likely a brief break from the regionwide drought conditions that are impacting water supply—and thus agricultural and forestry concerns in the region,” he said.

Once the area starts to dry out—soon—the creeks and rivers will be back to below average levels, he said.

Oviatt said one benefit of

the recent rains may be to temporarily dampen soils and low-tier fire fuels, but only for the short term.

Rob Pentzer, the Oregon Department of Forestry’s John Day Unit forester, sees a hot time ahead for fire crews.

“I’m afraid we’re receiving our June rains in May,” he said last week. “Everything is a month earlier as expected.”

While there might be a little reprieve now from the drought, he said, “It will turn hot and dry before we know it, and with the added growth to our grasses we will potentially have another busy fire season.”

Meanwhile, the NRCS has announced that \$21 million in funding will be available to help agricultural landowners in eight states, including Oregon, mitigate the effects of drought on their lands. Plans will roll out soon for how that will look in Oregon. For information, visit the NRCS website or contact the local office in John Day.

Worship in The Park
The Ministerial Association presents
The Joint Heirs
for an all denominational Gospel Concert in Canyon City Park.
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Guide

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GRANT SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2015 ANNUAL MEETING

Please join us for the 2015 Grant Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Meeting. Event is free and open to the public.

WHEN: Thursday, May 28, 2015 at 6:00 PM
LOCATION: Grant County Regional Airport Meeting Room
FEATURED PRESENTATION:
Cramer Fish Sciences – Adequacy of Grazing Move Triggers For Protecting Steelhead Habitat

Steve Cramer will be sharing information regarding the relationships between livestock grazing and stream habitats. Steve will also present the findings from his recent analysis report undertaken to determine if monitoring data of federal grazing allotments would substantiate that current grazing use indicators are predictive of habitat effects potentially harmful to steelhead populations.