

A drought like no other, NOAA scientist says

Drought covers almost the entire Western U.S.

By Don Jenkins
EO Media Group

The West has been so dry and so hot for so long that its current drought has no modern precedent, according to a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration meteorologist.

For the first time in 122 years of record-keeping, drought covers almost the entire Western U.S. as measured by the Palmer Drought Severity Index, said Richard Heim, a drought historian and an author of the U.S. Drought Monitor.

"It's a very simple 'yes,' in terms of this drought being unprecedented," Heim said.

The Palmer index estimates relative soil moisture based on temperature and precipitation records. Unlike the Standard Precipitation Index, which measures water supply, the Palmer index also takes into account heat-driven demand for water.

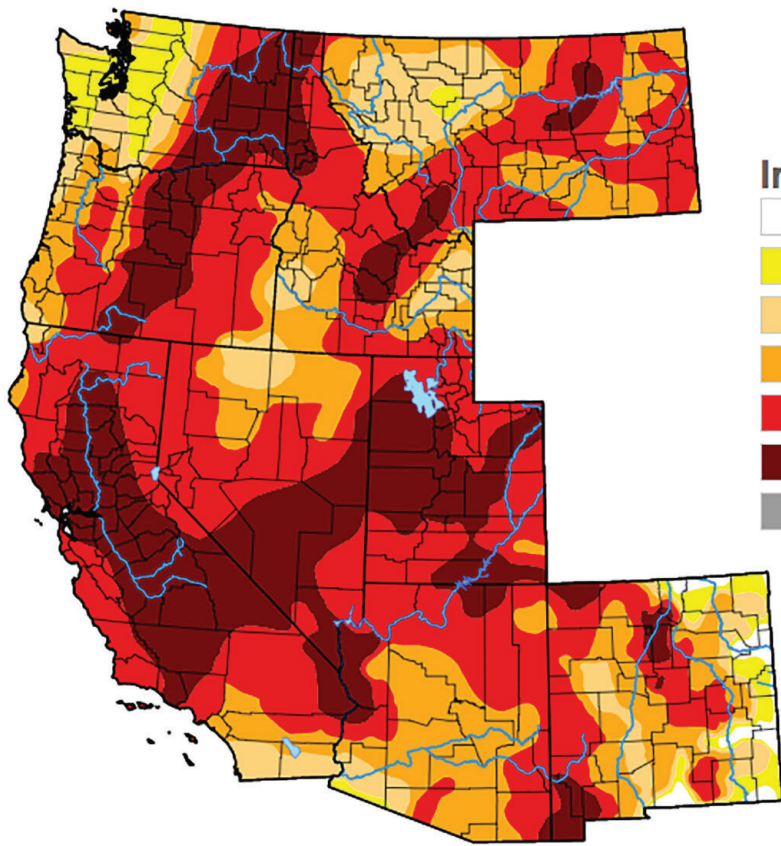
In June, about 97% of the West — Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington — was in water-deficit territory, according to the Palmer index.

Utah was never drier, while Oregon and California were at their second driest on record. Idaho and Arizona were at their third driest ever, and Nevada was at its fourth driest.

Washington was at its 10th driest, while Montana and New Mexico, where recent monsoons have brought relief, were at their 17th driest.

Oregon and Washington state climatologists gave their qualified endorsement for calling this drought "unprecedented."

"I'd be slightly cautious about calling it 'unprecedented,' but that's probably a fair description," Oregon State



Contributed image/U.S. Drought Monitor

U.S. Drought Monitor

Climatologist Larry O'Neill said. "It's borderline unprecedented, or at least among the worst."

The cumulative effects of the West's current drought, illustrated by low major reservoirs, gives credence to calling it unprecedented, Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond said.

"I don't have any real quarrel with using that term," he said.

The Drought Monitor, a partnership between NOAA and the USDA, has been mapping drought in the U.S. since 2000. The percentage of the West in "exceptional drought," the worst category, has never been higher. More

than 95% of the nine Western states is in some stage of drought.

Heim said the combination of prolonged above-average temperatures and below-normal precipitation set this drought apart from two multiyear droughts that spanned the 1930s and 1950s.

The U.S. entered another extended dry episode in 1998, he said. The drought has eased periodically, but never really went away and reasserted itself beginning last spring, he said.

A 24-month period that ended June 30 was the driest such two-year period ever in the West, according to records

dating back to 1895. The same time period was the sixth warmest.

Other two-year dry periods, such as 1976 and 1977, were not as hot, Heim said.

"I would define this (drought) as still part of a 20-plus-year drought," he said. "In the last year and a half, we have been on an intensifying trend."

The drought's depth, duration and cause varies by state, making comparisons between the current drought and past droughts imperfect.

In measuring drought, "there is no simple best way," Bond said. "There are different flavors of drought."

Washington's 1977 drought was much worse judged solely by the precipitation index. About 90% of Washington was in exceptional drought in June 1977, compared to less than 1% this June.

Idaho and Oregon also were in deeper droughts in June 1977 than this year, according to the precipitation index. California, however, is worse off this year.

Long dry spells lead to hydrological droughts, when streams and reservoirs are low and wells are dry.

Southern Oregon has fallen into a hydrological drought, and it will take a long time to recover, O'Neill said.

"Even if we get normal precipitation in the winter, we would expect to be in at least moderate hydrological drought next year," he said.

The federal Climate Prediction Center says that odds favor a La Nina forming next winter. The climate phenomenon generally means a good snowpack in Washington and a poor snowpack in Northern California.

In Oregon, La Nina often has less pronounced effects, O'Neill said. The dividing line between good and poor snowpacks in La Nina years falls about Roseburg, he said.

"I think the bottom line is we can't necessarily depend on La Nina for saving us from drought," he said.

Washington's 2015 drought started with a warm winter and low snowpack during an El Nino, which has the opposite effect from a La Nina.

The "snowpack drought" led to low stream flows. The drought this year was brought on by a dry spring. Melting snow continued to supply streams.

The 2015 drought was worse for Washington irrigators and a "better example of a climate-change drought," Bond said.

"It's going to be the kind of drought we're going to have because of climate change," he said.

Black Butte Fire grows to 13,000 acres, 0% contained

Type 2 team assumes command of both fires south of Prairie City

Blue Mountain Eagle

The Black Butte Fire south of Unity has grown to 13,143 acres as of Tuesday morning.

The lightning fire that began Aug. 3 is 0% contained with 550 personnel assigned, including one aircraft, six dozers and 12 engines, according to a release from Northwest Incident Management Team 9, which assumed control of the fire Monday morning.

On the northeast end of the Black Butte fire, crews were able to burn vegetation near completed handline to dozer line. They will continue to hold the line, burning between fire lines and fire's edge to secure the fire edge.



An aerial view of the Black Butte Fire on Aug. 8.

Contributed photo

On the eastern edge, hand crews and engines will hold and secure lines to keep the fire from Bear Creek. The fire did cross the

creek near Vale Dip, but aircraft were able to provide support for on-the-ground firefighters to contain the spot. Crews will scout

and establish new lines to minimize fire spread and scout for primary and secondary lines to tie the fire's edge into North Fork Malheur River.

Protecting private lands and structures at Flag Prairie is a priority, and firing operations will continue along the 1675 and 284 roads.

On the eastern edge of the fire, crews will scout primary and alternative lines to North Fork Malheur River.

On the southern edge of the fire, east of the river, firefighters will hold and secure the fire edge and spot fires in the east-west drainage.

To the west, crews will prep containment lines and burn out vegetation as needed. Firefighters will scout and construct line on the northwest edge where the fire went across the 1812 road.

The team is also managing the 75-acre Glacier Fire 16.6 miles

south of Prairie City. The fire is currently burning in the footprint of the 2019 Cow Fire. Steep terrain and hazard trees are safety concerns for suppression activities.

Air assets will support firefighters on the ground using water and retardant drops. Air assets include one Type 1 heavy helicopter and one medium Type 2 helicopter, along with an assigned Air Attack for aerial reconnaissance of both the Black Butte and Glacier fires.

Temperatures begin to increase through Sunday, reaching 90 degrees by the weekend.

There are updated closure orders for the Big Creek Campground on the Malheur National Forest as of Aug. 8. Visit the Forest webpage at www.fs.usda.gov/malheur for more information.

For information on this fire, visit <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7770>.

ODF secures last week's fires

Blue Mountain Eagle

Significant progress was made on mop-up and containment of fires from last week.

Containment for the Cottonwood Creek Fire has reached 95% on the 159-acre fire, according to an Oregon Department of Forestry press release. The fire transitioned to a Type 5 incident commander Saturday. One hand crew completed mop-up work, gridding for hot spots.

The 1-acre Dissel Creek Fire, reported Tuesday evening burning 5 miles southeast of John Day, was fully contained late Thursday evening.


The Cole Canyon Fire was fully contained Thursday. The fire burned 150 acres of private land and Prineville Bureau of Land Management ownership.

All of these fires will be placed in patrol status and monitored until determined to be dead out. It is possible interior smoke may be visible. These


"smokes" will be put out if they are found to have the potential to spread fire outside the fireline.

A regulated-use closure is in effect for the Central Oregon District to reduce human-caused fires. The full proclamation and restrictions are available at <https://gisapps.odf.oregon.gov/firerestrictions/PFR.html>.

For additional information on ODF's Central Oregon District, including contact information and unit offices, visit [ODF-centraloregon.com](http://centraloregon.com).



A division of Superior Livestock



Grant County Youth Livestock Auction

to be held Saturday August 14th starting at 4pm.

- There will be a buyers dinner starting at 3:30 sponsored by Northwest Farm Credit Services and prepared by the Beaver Believer's 4-H Club.
- Cocktails will be served by Spit Fire Cocktails and registered buyers get free drink tickets.
- Cold water will be provided courtesy of Iron Triangle.
- Auction will also be offered over Live Auctions TV as well. People can register to view or to bid at liveauctions.tv

Helena Agri-Enterprises Longview Ranch Parma Post & Pole Chester's Market Les Schwab Ed Staub and Sons Pioneer Feed & Farm Supply Iron Triangle Law Office of Rob Raschio, PC Ben & Chandra Holliday Juniper Ridge Acute Care Center Holliday Land and Livestock Ken and CiCi Brooks TG Mechanical Solutions, CPA Rude Logging L & L Excavating Old West Federal Credit Union Treavan Boer Goats Willow Canyon Trucking John Day True Value Clark's Disposal Triangle Ranches Triangle Oil Timbers Bistro GRANT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT/ COMMUNITY COUNSELING Len's Drug Norton Cattle Company Central Oregon Livestock Ty's Mobile Welding High Desert Engineering, LLC Oregon Telephone Corp Northwest Farm Credit Services	Sunnie Phillips Country Preferred Realtors Coast Range Forestry Duke Warner Realty. Mobile Glass Loop Ranch Gardner Enterprises Crown Cattle Co STRUX Engineering Riverside Ranch Jackie and Katie Johns Northern California Nail Company Inc Fields Grassfed Beef Bill Gander Tidewater Contractors, Inc Darren Kimball, LLC Wilson's Welding and Fab Gibco Ag and Industrial DJF Ranching LLC Benchmark Land Surveying 1871 Land & Livestock Amanda Born & Nolan Riis Bank of Eastern Oregon Bear Branch Tree Farm Campo & Poole Distributing CG Enterprises City of John Day Columbia Power Co-op Cornerstone Christian Fellowship Crown Cattle Co - Mat & Jennifer Carter Crown Ranch c/o Donna Carter Daniel & Aunt Luky First Community Credit Union Gary Rapp	Gibco Ag & Industrial Glenna Thiel Heather & Zach Bailey Helena Agri Enterprises High Desert Cattle Company Huffmans Market J & D Logging & Contracting J & D Ranch Jan O'Rorke - O'Rorke Family Trust Jewell Contracting Jim & Kim Jacobs - 45 Cattle John Day Auto Parts Judy Rankin Lance & Louanne Zweygardt Len's Drug Longhorn Lumber Company Longview Ranch Mahogany Ridge Properties Malheur Lumber Company Northwest Farm Credit Services Oregon Trail Electric Co-op Oregon Trail Livestock Supply Outlaw Meats Ray & Tanni Wenger Robert & Rhea Lanting S & C Electric - Tye Parsons Silver Spur Snaffle Bit Dinner House Southworth Brothers Tidewater Contractors Treavan Boer Goats Wade & Simmie Waddel Windwave
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John Day River Veterinary Center welcomes **Dr. Jandy Torland**. Dr. Jandy is excited to be back in Grant County after being gone for veterinary school. She loves working with all animals, but has a special interest in equine medicine and lameness.





JOHN DAY RIVER VETERINARY CENTER

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