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Commissioners ask Brown to declare drought emergency

Weather station at Heppner is 1.18 inches below normal

By David Sykes

The Morrow County commissioners have asked Governor Kate Brown to declare a state of drought emergency in Morrow County. In a resolution passed at their April 28 meeting data shows half of the county is in a severe drought and the rest is either in moderate or abnormally dry designation.

"I don't remember any measurable rain this last month," Commission Chair Don Russell said. "Half of Morrow County is in severe drought and the rest looks similar to last year," he added. Commissioner Jim Doherty, who is a cattleman, said although "the snowpack was not a terribly bad this year, in the foothills the grazing is pretty rough," he said of the pasturelands.

The county's request for drought emergency was also backed up with data from the Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District. In a report to the commission District Manager Kevin Payne said things are not looking good in the near future with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) three-month outlook for Morrow County that calls for 33-40 percent probability that temperatures will be above normal. He also said the next three-month outlook also calls for a 50 to 60 percent chance rainfall will be below normal. Current statistics show so far this year precipitation at the NOAA weather station in Heppner is at 2.93 inches, which is 1.18 below normal. Since October of 2020 the water precipitation at Heppner has been 6.41 inches, which is 1.76 inches below normal, Payne reported.

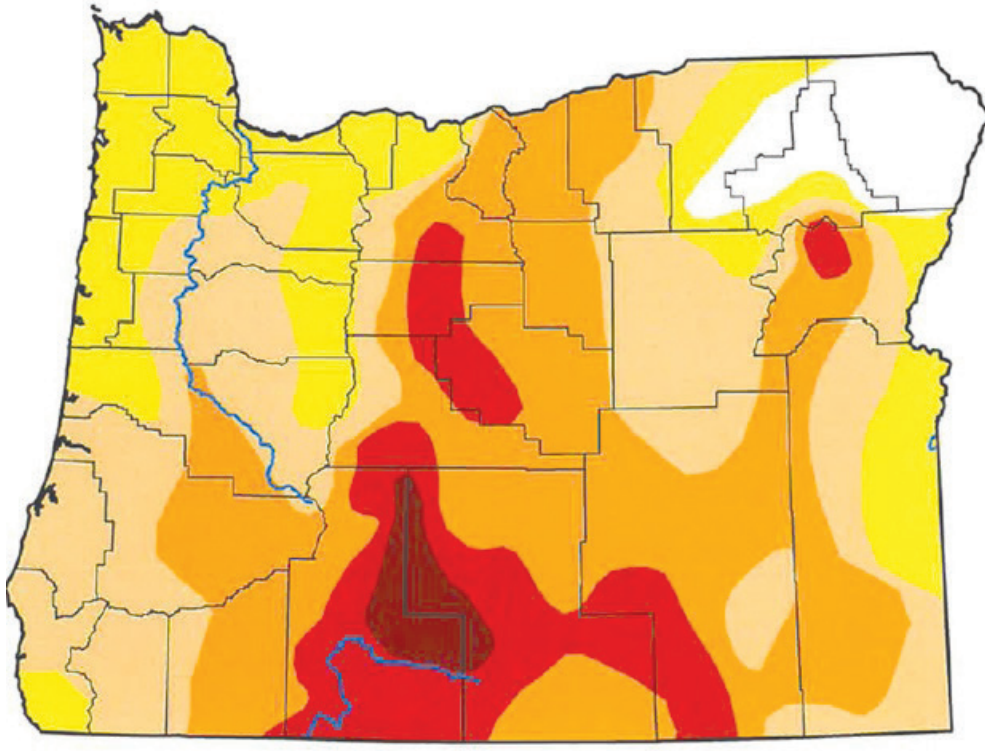
"There is the potential for Morrow County agricultural and livestock, natural resources, recreational, tourism, and related economies to experience widespread and severe damage resulting from extreme weather conditions with the County," the commissioners said in their letter to Brown.

Being granted disaster status means the county would be eligible for financial and other assistance from the state and its agencies. "This may include assistance from the Oregon Water Resources Department and other Oregon executive branch agencies," the letter stated.

As of Tuesday, the governor had not responded to the county's request to be named a drought disaster area, Commissioner Melissa Lindsay told the Gazette-Times.

COVID grants

In other action at the April 28 meeting the commissioners approved 22 COVID-19 grants to local buildings totaling \$193,192. The grant program was a joint effort between the county and Tilla-



As can be seen from the above map, the north half of Morrow County is in severe drought, while the south half is in moderate.

Intensity:



Morrow County Businesses Receiving COVID grants

Business Name	Business Type	Amount
Upper Place Concession	Mobile Food	10,800
Heppner Elks Lodge BPOE #358	Dine In - 4 Days	14,801
Macarios Mexican Restaurant LLC	Dine In - 6 Days	14,801
Irrigon Moose Lodge #2486	Dine In - 7 Days	14,801
Bozo Foods	Dine In - 7 Days	14,801
Smiley's Happy Place	Dine In - 7 Days	1,396
3's Company LLC dba Bucknubs	Dine In - 7 Days	14,801
The Sunrise at Boardman	Dine In - 7 Days	10,000
Stokes Landing Senior Center	Hospitality	14,801
Shivam Hospitality (Boardman)	Hospitality	14,801
Heppner Community Foundation	Hospitality	5,507
James R. Lankford Construction	Ind Contractor	9,801
Styles by Stefanie	Ind Contractor	6,000
Tim Hedman	Ind Contractor	9,801
Hair I Am	Ind Contractor	2,372
Blondee Salon	Ind Contractor	5,376
Equine Elegance NW	Ind Contractor	3,852
Saeskin	Home-Based	6,872
Peterson's Jewelers	Other	9,801
Neighborhood Center	Other	8,007
TOTAL		\$193,192

Irrigon sheriff contract

In other business at the April 28 meeting the commission approved a contract with the City of Irrigon to provide police services through the Sheriff's Office. The contract is identical to last year's, except for a two-percent increase up to \$96,822. The contract also stipulates that Irrigon will purchase a vehicle every

DMV to reopen office to public

It was also announced at the meeting that the Oregon Department of Transportation will open its Driver and Motor Vehicle (DMV) office to the public starting May 6 after nearly a yearlong closure due to COVID-19. Office hours will be 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and closed for lunch from 11 :30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Customers should be prepared to wear a face covering/mask and comply with social distancing restrictions when visiting a DMV office per the Oregon Health Authority," the letter said. Customers can start scheduling May appointments as early as April 28, 2021. To schedule an appointment, go to DMV2U. Oregon.gov and click on "Schedule Appointment." The online scheduling tool will help you identify the type of appointment needed, and will provide options for appointment times and

Ballot drop box sites available

Ballots for the May 18 election have gone out and are due back by 8 p.m. on election day. Ballots must be received, not post-marked, by May 18 according to Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers. Official ballot drop locations are available throughout the county. In Boardman, the drop box is located at 101 NW Boardman Ave. The Irrigon location can be found at 205 NE 3rd St. In Ione the box is located on Spring St., in front of the turn to Third St. and Lexington in the Morrow County Public Works parking lot, 365 West Hwy 74. Ballots may also be dropped in the

Stokoe seeks reelection as POM commissioner



Rick Stokoe

Richard Stokoe is seeking reelection to the Port of Morrow commissioner position, where he has served for the past six years.

"The Port of Morrow's leaders have always had big aspirations for Morrow County. They have never settled for just good enough, and their vision for the Port has added jobs, opportunity and much more for the entire county," Rick Stokoe told the Gazette.

He continued to say, "It's been my honor to serve as a Port of Morrow commissioner and help continue that story of success. As a county we have seen enormous growth, but we know there is a lot more in store." According to Stokoe, there are more family wage jobs in store, which provide the steady income that builds not only the economy but the communities. He says Morrow County is a working county, and as families find opportunity for stronger income they are empowered to give back.

There are more investments across Morrow County in store. In recent years the Port has put money into youth athletic facilities in Heppner, Irrigon and Boardman; housing development in Ione and Heppner; infrastructure improvements in Lexington, Ione and Irrigon; and

much more. "We are always looking for ways to invest directly into our communities."

As the port makes infrastructure improvements that help get agricultural products from this region to foreign and domestic markets, efficiency improves. The Port is a regional powerhouse, and its impact will continue to grow.

Economic growth will continue as they develop policies that build the local economy by making room for businesses both big and small.

"And there is a continued proud legacy for all of Morrow County, as we spend our resources wisely to ensure we are setting up the next generation for success," Stokoe continued. "This requires cooperation and coordination. We are stronger when we work together, and I value the partnerships we have with the county, all the cities, the school districts, the business leaders and everyone else who is striving to help Morrow County thrive."

"To that end, I am proud of the Morrow Education Foundation, which has distributed more than \$3.2 million provided from the Columbia River Enterprise Zone to Morrow County schools, along with all of the other investments in our youth. We know they are the ones who will carry on the good work into the future," he said.

"There has been so much progress and there is still so much potential at the Port of Morrow that I hope to have the privilege of being a part of. I know that the Port is doing its job well if the rising tide is lifting all of Morrow County."

HVAC contract awarded

In other business, the county agreed to sign a contract with Bruce Inc. Mechanical Heating & Air of Hermiston and Kennewick,

Description	Rate
Project Management	\$105.00
Sheetmetal Fabrication	\$85.00
Sheetmetal Installation	\$85.00
Refrigeration	\$95.00
Service Wiring & Start-up	\$95.00
Controls	\$95.00

for work done on county facilities. There were two bids received for the services. It will be a five-year contract and the company will charge the following hourly rates to the county:

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