



# North Unit Irrigation District

## Water Outlook by Mike Britton

Consistent with my report in the NUID March Newsletter “2018 Water Supply” - dry conditions and poor snow accumulation in the mountains have lead to a less than favorable forecast for the balance of the 2018 irrigation season. We began the irrigation season with a nearly full Wickiup at 199,207 acre feet (af), but given the lack of snow in the mountains from a dry winter and spring “natural flow” in the Deschutes has been poor at best. This means another year where we’ll rely heavily on storage from Wickiup and a reservoir that will end up at very low levels by seasons end.

Truth of the matter is things have taken a turn for the worse. Aside from near record low natural river flows a sinkhole appeared in Wickiup during the Memorial Day weekend. Fortunately the sinkhole is high up on the bank, but still drank an untold amount of water in an already tight water supply year. For all we know water from the sinkhole may have been providing some of the natural flow we received in the river in April and May?

Many of Oregon’s major irrigation reservoirs are storing near average amounts of water as of the end of May, but several have begun to dip below average. Wickiup for example has fallen below average with high early season irrigation demands, the likes of demands not seen in recent years. And don’t forget about early water releases for the Oregon Spotted Frog and an April 2 irrigation start date—all contributing to a reservoir that today is at 61% of capacity. Compared to 2016, a year in which the

reservoir reached its lowest level at 19,614 af, 2018 is currently tracking about 4,500 af below 2016 levels. As of today (June 12) Wickiup is at 121,404 compared to 125,795 in 2016.

Recognizing the potential shortcomings on the Deschutes side, the District has made a call on 10,000 af of water out of Prineville Reservoir which unfortunately comes with a sizeable expense in the purchase and pumping of this water. Not to mention the Crooked River Basin is in far worse shape hydrologically than the Upper Deschutes Basin. Drawing on the 10,000 af today may mean that all or portions of that water may not be there next year should another dry winter and spring present itself.

The June Water Supply Outlook Report from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service predicts water shortages across much of Oregon this summer. Unseasonably warm temperatures in May combined with a drier than normal snow season will mean significantly low streams in many areas. Snowmelt has been rapid and early this year. Of 81 real-time snow monitoring stations, only 5 still have snow as of June 1. Most snow monitoring sites melted out 1 to 2 weeks earlier than normal. Even higher elevation sites couldn’t escape the unusual heat. Snow at several of these locations melted out at rates that were up to twice as fast as usual for snowmelt in May.

NOAA’s Climate Control Center is calling for

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Introduction of New Employees

Seth Stites is our new Ditchrider for Ditchride 64. Seth replaces Mark Taylor who was promoted to Maintenance Foreman. Seth graduated from Culver High School and spent time on his grandfather’s farm in Ashwood. Seth and his wife, Hailee returned to Madras after his five years of service in the US Marine Corp as Sergeant.

Congratulations to Mark Taylor for being promoted to Maintenance Foreman after being a Ditchrider with the District for over two years.

Oregon State University student, Lisa Windom has been selected as the Special Projects/Water Operations Coordinator. As the job title indicates this is a varied, multi-faceted position which interfaces directly with District Management in addition to assisting with irrigation operations during the irrigation season. Lisa holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Chemistry from Colorado State University and is obtaining her Masters in Water Resource Science and Soil Science from Oregon State University.

### Inside this Issue:

Lien Process	2	Drainage	3
Water Outlook <i>(cont.)</i>	2	Road Watering Prohibited	3
Personnel & Office Hours	2	Chemical Treatments	3
Maintaining Water Rights	2	Beehive Safety/Dig Safely	3
Help Prevent Meter Damage	2	No Parking on Canal Roads	4
Irrigation Delivery-Private Ditches	3	How to Place a Water Request	4



## Lien Process for Delinquent Accounts

On May 15, 2018 letters of delinquency were sent to all delinquent accounts. If not paid, a Notice of Intent to Lien will be sent to delinquent account holders on July 15, 2018 or the first business day thereafter. If payment is not received within 30 days of July 15 then a lien will be filed. Fees will be assessed for the filing cost of placing and removing liens along with an administration fee of \$150. Pursuant to ORS 545.496, the

District will withhold delivery of water from a tract of land until the incurred charges for the current year and any prior years are paid in full as well as all interest, lien fees, collection costs and administration fees.

Customers may conveniently pay by credit card or eCheck via a service known as Point & Pay. A processing fee will be charged to you by Point & Pay to process the payment. Visit the District website or office for payment processing information.

## Water Outlook

*(Continued from page 1)*

a warmer and drier than normal summer and the drought monitor recently added a severe drought designation for parts of Central and Southeastern Oregon. Governor Kate Brown has officially declared a drought state of emergency in Grant, Harney, Lake and Klamath Counties. Waterusers are advised to plan for water shortages in these regions, especially those without access to reservoir storage.

In light of current conditions district waterusers are advised to monitor ongoing supply conditions regularly when considering late summer/early fall farm operations.

Each year the District emphasizes to its patrons the importance of conservative and efficient use of irrigation water. This mantra has become all the more important given current and future water and operational constraints.

## Maintaining Water Rights

Maintaining irrigation water rights on your property is important to you as a landowner. In short, state law has mandated that if your land has irrigation water rights, you must use those rights in a beneficial manner. For landowners with water rights “beneficial use” is a phrase that should be familiar, but can be confusing even for the most experienced water users. To fully use your water rights, the law requires that the total water right be used on the land, as mapped, at least one year in every five years in a “beneficial” way with any crop (no sagebrush or scrub grass).

Failure to comply with the “Beneficial Use” provision makes all or part of your water rights subject to forfeiture under ORS 540.610. Under this law the Oregon Water Resources Department considers these rights abandoned and can cancel them, which means that the water resource is lost forever to the District and the wateruser for irrigation purposes.

To prove that the water right has been used beneficially landowners can provide one or more affidavits from persons who can attest from personal knowledge or professional expertise that the right was exercised at the authorized location and for the authorized purpose. The affidavits must also include supporting documentation like crop receipts or expenditures, various agency records or dated photos. In a limited number of instances a user can provide documentation that the presumption of forfeiture would be rebutted under ORS 540.610(2).

The landowner can avoid losing all or a portion of their water right by:

1. Using the water beneficially at the current location and be able to provide proof.
2. Permanent or temporary transfer of the water to a new location.
3. Leasing the water right instream.

Maintaining water rights is also important to the District to provide the most efficient and cost effective delivery of water for the benefit of all waterusers within the District. Landowners who would like a copy of their water right map can contact the District office. Knowing where your water rights are located on your property is the first step to protecting them.

### Management:

Mike Britton, Manager

mbrifton@northunitid.com

Kirk Holcomb, Assn't Manager

kholcomb@northunitid.com

Gary Calhoun, Watermaster

gcalhoun@northunitid.com

Marlene Lloyd, Office Manager

mlloyd@northunitid.com

### Office Staff:

Pam Watson

pwatson@northunitid.com

Sue Light

slevitt@northunitid.com

Carla Bridges

cbridges@northunitid.com

Lisa Windom

lwindom@northunitid.com

### Board of Directors:

Division 1: Phil Fine

Vice Chair

Division 2: Mike Kirsch

Division 3: Martin Richards

Chair

Division 4: Richard Macy

Division 5: Vern Bare

### Office Hours:

Irrigation Season

Monday - Friday 8:00 - 5:00

Saturday 8:00 - 4:00

Phone: (541) 475-3625

(541) 475-3652

Fax: (541) 475-3905

Email: nuid@northunitid.com

Website: www.northunitid.com

### Help Prevent Meter Damage

The most common and expensive repair on a water flow meter is the replacement of the register. The damage commonly occurs when the wateruser is charging the irrigation system mainline. If the valve that charges the mainline is fully open it will cause the water flow indicator on top of the register (looks like a speedometer) to go beyond its limits, causing internal damage to the register. To help prevent damage, open the mainline charge valve slowly and check the water flow indicator on the top of the register to be sure the flow stays within the range for which it was designed.

## Delivery of Irrigation Water Through Private Ditches

Waterusers who use private ditches to receive irrigation water must maintain delivery easements and/or facilities for water conveyance beyond the District's headgates. District personnel do not have the right to cross private property that the District does not have an easement for and/or access private facilities without prior landowners approval. It is the water user's responsibility to maintain the facilities beyond the District's point of delivery and it is the waterusers responsibility to coordinate with neighboring waterusers to ensure they are properly receiving irrigation water.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) offers a dispute resolution program for farmers, ranchers and rural landowners. The Central Oregon Water Dispute Program is a special program created to help resolve issues that come about when property owners have disputes that arise over property boundaries, water distribution, maintenance responsibilities, weeds or right-of-way issues. ODA helps to bring property owners together to resolve disagreements, manage water rotation schedules, facilitate coordination with irrigation districts, address weed problems, property access issues and help foster other beneficial arrangements mutually developed by irrigators, through mediation. Working together can lead to better irrigation efficiency and water quality as well as reduce tension among neighbors. Contact ODA at (503) 986-4558 for more information or visit [www.oregon.gov/oda](http://www.oregon.gov/oda). Mediation is also available from the Oregon USDA Certified Agricultural Mediation Program and is free to the agricultural community on many issues. Please call (888) 628-4101 or visit [office@6rivers.org](mailto:office@6rivers.org) for more details.

## Drainage

The responsibility of the District for the water delivery ends at the District's point of delivery, measuring weir or headgate. The water, including tail water and run-off, then becomes the responsibility of the water user, or users, on that ditch or drain.

Landowners/waterusers that drain runoff to private drains and ditches

have both a right and a responsibility to work with their neighbors to maintain these facilities. When problems occur, the District is able to assist the waterusers to clarify issues or suggest solutions, but the responsibility ultimately lies with the landowners/waterusers along ditches/drains to resolve these matters. In addition, it

is the landowners/waterusers responsibility to ensure these drainage facilities are kept clean and free of debris to prevent damage to neighboring properties, roads, etc.

The District can provide ditch/drain cleaning services for a fee, based upon operator and equipment availability.

## Road Watering Prohibited

The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) has seen a steady increase in complaints over sprinkler end guns and wheel lines spraying the public roads and creating a public hazard, in addition to wasting water. In Jefferson County, the sheriff's office is now responding to the

complaints as a violation of ORS 368.256 "Creation of road hazard prohibited". In addition, OWRD's view is that water being applied to roads, including canal side roads, even inadvertently, is considered applying water to a location that does not have a water right or that is not

receiving beneficial use—a violation of Oregon water right statute. The District asks that waterusers minimize or eliminate "road watering" not only to reduce a potential hazard but as responsible stewards of a limited resource—water.

## Chemical Treatments

The District began applying aquatic herbicides to its irrigation canals in May and will continue to apply periodically as needed through October 2018. The aquatic herbicides may include the following products: Copper Sulfate, Dipotassium Salt of Endothal (Cascade), Magnacide H with

active ingredient Acrolein. The intended applications will control aquatic weeds and algae growth in District canals.

Waters within the irrigation delivery system of the District are intended for agricultural purposes. Customers are advised not to use the treated water

for recreation, aquaculture or human and animal consumption. Furthermore irrigation water, treated or not, is not potable water and not intended for human consumption.

Call the District office to obtain more information and to request notification in advance of treatment.

### Beehive Safety

Please check with District Management before placing beehives near areas that ditchriders frequent for operation and maintenance purposes, such as headgates. Any activity that impedes or interrupts their ability to work in a safe and timely manner must be taken into consideration.

### Dig Safely

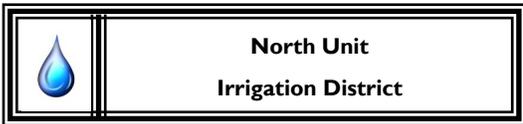
The District has numerous underground facilities throughout the county. Please call before digging, excavating, etc. For free underground utility marking by local companies call 811 or (800) 332-2344 two working days before you plan to dig or enter the information online at: [www.digsafelyoregon.com](http://www.digsafelyoregon.com).

### No Parking on Canal Roads

Parked vehicles and equipment on canal roads block ditchrider access and impedes their ability to do their jobs. It can also prevent District personnel from responding to emergency situations. Your cooperation to not park on canal roads is greatly appreciated.



*Please remind the kids to stay safe stay out of the canals!*



2024 NW Beech Street  
Madras, OR 97741

### How to Place a Water Request

The District can take more than 250 water requests a day. Those water orders can be processed by numerous staff before they are relayed to the appropriate Ditchriders. Information on how to place a water request in the most concise fashion is as follows:

1. Call 541-475-3625
2. Give your name and if ordering for someone else, the name of the operator you are ordering for.
3. State if you are turning water ON, CHANGING a current order or turning water all OFF.
4. Give the amount of water you want to turn on, change or shut all off.
5. You must know your headgate number.
6. **Water requests will not be taken more than a day in advance. If you are going to run water for only 24 hours, it must be requested.** There are no automatic orders; all orders will run until water is requested off unless specified at the time of the order. Ditchriders do not work on Sunday. If you are ordering a water turn on for Saturday a water change or turn off will not happen until the following Monday if requested.

Ditchriders make water changes once per day. Emergency turn offs can be requested in cases of power outages etc. Forgetting to call water off is not an emergency.