



## Drought—COVID—Super Cells....What next!?

Consistent with the district’s report in the NUID March Newsletter “2020 Water Supply” – low reservoir levels, rapidly melting snow and shrinking natural flow levels from basin tributaries and springs continue to exacerbate an already difficult 2020 irrigation season. The district began the irrigation season the first week of April to take advantage of early season flows in the Deschutes system. As an indicator of natural flow the natural flow conditions in the Crooked system were so poor NUID had to call on its Prineville Reservoir stored water in early April in order to pump water to try and maintain reservoir elevations in Wickiup. In addition, the district is seeing and experiencing the cumulative effects of several years of below average snow and precipitation in the region. To put this in perspective the following are, typically second week of April, Snow Water Equivalents or what we commonly refer to as “snow pack” 2013 81%, 2014 60%, 2015 13%, 2016 76%, 2017 128%, 2018 63%, 2019 106%, 2020 87%. In short, the region needs multiple years of average or above average precipitation to get back to a somewhat “normal” hydrologic condition.

The district began the irrigation season with Wickiup at 141,000 acre-feet, second lowest irrigation season starting point only to last year’s starting level of 137,000 acre-feet. Given the lack of snow in the mountains from a dry winter and spring “natural flow” in the Deschutes has been and will be poor at best. Although the district set an allotment of 1.25 for DR and .60 for CR, today Wickiup reservoir is at a record low 107,450 acre-feet as of June 1st.

The June Water Supply Outlook Report from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service predicts water shortages across much of Oregon this summer. Short periods of unseasonably warm temperatures in May, combined with a drier than normal snow season will mean

significantly low stream flows in many areas. Snowmelt has been rapid and early this year. Of 81 real-time snow monitoring stations, only 5 still had snow as of June 1. Most snow monitoring sites melted out 1 to 2 weeks earlier than normal. Even higher elevation sites could not escape the short periods of unusual heat. Snow at several of these locations melted at rates that were up to twice as fast as usual for snowmelt in May.

As of June 1, 2020, the U.S. Drought Monitor places much of Oregon (96%) in some form of drought status. Portions of Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson counties are rated as severe to extreme drought. That said the 3 counties have applied for emergency drought status with the state which in some cases can provide assistance and opportunity to individuals that may not have previously been available.

All the above makes for another difficult irrigation season with limited supplies and less than favorable conditions going forward. This means yet another year where the district will rely heavily on storage from Wickiup and a reservoir that will again end up at very low levels by seasons end. Considering current conditions, district waterusers are advised to monitor ongoing supply conditions closely and regularly when considering late summer/early fall farm operations.

Related to COVID-19, the district office continues to be open during normal business hours but closed to walk-in visitors. In person meetings with district staff can be arranged via appointment by calling the district office at 541.475.3625. Should Jefferson County apply and be approved for further “reopening” per Phase II of the state’s “reopening” plan, the district will re-evaluate a return to normal office business operations per Phase II restrictions and guidelines.

## Leonard’s Retirement & New Staff Introductions

After 40 years with the district Leonard Lang (Ditchride 43) is retiring. Leonard joined the district in 1979 and has been the Haystack Damtender for the past 40 years as well. Leonard will spend his retirement enjoying his family and fishing.

Cole Simmons has joined the district as the 43 Ditchrider. Cole grew up in the area and has a degree in Geological Sciences with a Hydrology

option. Cole has been training with Leonard and will be a valuable asset to NUID.

J. Sauls has recently joined the NUID maintenance crew. J. has an extensive maintenance background and will be a great addition to the NUID maintenance department.

Please join us in congratulating Leonard on his retirement and welcoming Cole and J. to their new positions with the district.

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Fortunately, district field operations were not significantly impacted by the COVID pandemic. If drought and COVID were not enough, a super cell thunderstorm or tornado(?) rocked the region on the afternoon of May 30. Widespread damage in

the region and particularly the Culver and Metolius area was experienced.

The Majority of district facilities remained intact with no serious damage resulting from the storm. However, the district anticipates crews will be mopping up storm related matters well into the summer. Please know our thoughts and prayers go out to those who have been impacted by drought, COVID and the storm.

## Chemical Treatments

The district began applying aquatic herbicides to irrigation canals in May and will continue to apply periodically as needed through October 2020. The aquatic herbicides may include the following products: Copper Sulfate, Dipotassium Salt of Endothall (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 agri-

cultural purposes. Customers are advised not to use the treated water for recreation, aquaculture, human or animal consumption. Furthermore, irrigation water, whether treated or not, is not potable water and not intended for human consumption.

Please call the district office to obtain more information or to request notification in advance of treatments.

### Water Portal

The water portal for the most part is working great. As with all new programs we have encountered some minor glitches and growing pains. We appreciate the feedback and patience as we work to make the water portal more efficient and user friendly.

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



### 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's 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 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.

## Drainage

The responsibility of the district for 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 run-off 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, 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.

### Management:

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Irrigation Season  
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### 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 under ground facilities throughout the project. Please call the district before digging, excavating, etc. For free underground utility marking call 811 or (800) 332-2344 two working days before you plan to dig. Or visit www.digsafelyoregon.com to enter your dig information online.

## 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.

## Lien Process for Delinquent Accounts

On May 15, 2020, letters of delinquency were sent to all past due accounts. If not paid by the date specified, a Notice of Intent to Lien will be sent to account holders on July 15, 2020, or the first business day thereafter. If payment is not received within 30 days of July 15, 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.

## 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 may re-

spond 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 service 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.

## 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 to 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 program known as 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 fees for this service 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.

## NUID REVISED HEMP POLICY

The districts revised hemp policy is intended to establish a uniform standard for district patrons that desire to use district-delivered water to irrigate hemp crops, and is further intended to ensure district-delivered water is used in conformity with the 2014 Farm Bill, the 2018 Farm Bill, the Controlled Substances Act, and State law.

Proof of Registration or License. Prior to delivery of district water to a patron growing or cultivating hemp, a patron who intends to use district-delivered water to irrigate hemp must provide to the district office a written copy of either:

- a) that patron's current, valid industrial hemp grower registration issued by Oregon Dept. of Agriculture (ODA). "Industrial hemp" has the meaning given to it in ORS 571.269(5). Patrons may only use district-delivered water to irrigate industrial hemp if the patron has a valid and current industrial hemp grower registration issued by the ODA. The district will accept ODA-issued industrial hemp grower registrations for the 2020 irrigation season but will no longer accept these registrations as of October 31, 2020. After the 2020 irrigation season, any patron that has previously operated pursuant to an ODA-issued industrial hemp grower registration must provide a written copy of a current, valid hemp producer license issued by USDA before delivery of district water to that patron; or
- b) that patron's current, valid commercial hemp producer license issued by USDA.

**The revised policy can be found on the district website [www.northunitid.com](http://www.northunitid.com). Please contact your Ditchrider or the district office should you have any questions.**