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Mid-Season District Update

Irrigation

Favorable spring weather conditions have helped soften the blow of NUID's historic low allotments. Wickiup Reservoir, the primary source of irrigation water supply for NUID, is currently at 31% of capacity, the second-lowest level on record for this time of year. Live flow in the Deschutes River was near normal for May and early June. With the arrival of warmer weather, the available NUID live flow continues to diminish, and the district is increasingly relying on Wickiup stored water to meet patron demand. Due to extremely low inflows in the Crooked River Basin and Prineville Reservoir, the District received just 39% of its 10,000 acre-feet of stored water in Prineville Reservoir. In water-short years, Prineville Reservoir storage accounts fill at a proportional fill rate. If the reservoir reaches 86,113 acre-feet, then all storage accounts receive 100 % of their stored water. For the 2022 irrigation season, Prineville reached a maximum capacity of 48,720 acre-feet. Today, less than 200 acre-feet of NUID's stored water remains within Prineville Reservoir, and the District is currently pumping the remaining amount. NUID started the season with 110,244 acre-feet in Wickiup Reservoir and 3,877 acre-feet in Prineville Reservoir. At this point, roughly half of the water allocated to NUID water users has been delivered to its users. Assuming conditions do not drastically change, the District's remaining stored water is anticipated to carry patrons through the summer to the end of September. Please keep in mind that the possibility remains of an order cap being instituted to meet the end of September goal if live flow conditions worsen. Instituting an order cap is the last resort option, and district water managers are optimistic this option will not be used.

To recap this season's events thus far; at the March 29, 2022, NUID Board of Directors meeting, a record low water allotment was set at .45 acre-feet per acre for Deschutes River water rights and .225 acre-foot per acre for Crooked River water rights. The NUID Board of Directors added .050 to the total allotment on May 20, 2022, and another .050 again on June 14, 2022. The current Deschutes allotment is .55 acre-foot per acre, and the Crooked River allotment is .28 acre-foot per acre.

As a reminder, the NUID Board of Directors relies on the best information available, including hydrologic models, historical data, forecasts and projections, and professional advice, to determine the most stable and accurate allotment deliverable by the District in a given irrigation season. More specifically, the District takes into account available storage, snowpack, natural streamflow forecasts, operational restrictions related to endangered species, and limitations in our current irrigation delivery transport efficiency when considering seasonal irrigation supplies.

Basin Outlook

The Oregon Department of Agriculture, June 16, 2022, Basin Outlook Report, states, “Unusually cool and damp conditions from April through early June slowed the annual melt-off to maintain mountain snowpacks and brought some improvement to the drought conditions.” “The July-September period should be markedly cooler than last year with near or above-average precipitation. However, since this is typically the driest time of the year, don’t expect much additional improvement in drought conditions.”

Drought Financial Aid and Relief

If you have not taken advantage of emergency drought aid and/or relief, I encourage you to investigate the various available resources. The Jefferson County Soil Water Conservation District recently sent out Producer Verification Forms for the management of noxious weeds. The deadline for application submittal has been extended to July 14, 2022. Other programs have and continue to be rolled out, such as the Emergency Drought Assistance that NUID received to assist district patrons as a result of water shortages during the 2021 season. The Emergency Drought Assistance Program can provide a credit against 2021 district assessments. Another program you should be aware of is the Oregon Disaster Assistance Payments Program, that will be administered through local financial institutions such as Umpqua Bank, Columbia Bank, Bank of Eastern Oregon, and Old West Federal Credit Union. For additional information, please refer to <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/agriculture/Pages/DroughtDisaster.aspx>. Application deadlines for these programs are running short, and I encourage you to take advantage of them if you have not already done so. Please feel free to contact the district office should you need additional information.

I’m hopeful that favorable weather and supply conditions continue, and everyone weathers this extreme drought the best way possible. The NUID Board of Directors, staff, and I continue to work hard to serve the needs of our patrons during these difficult times. God Bless!

Sincerely,



Josh Bailey
General Manager