

**WINTER PROJECTS—2017-2018**

This will be the second winter for our crew and they are ready to go with all sorts of projects. Once the system is, the main canal drains cleared and open, and all pumps and deliveries winterized, we will start our winter work.

Starting in November, we will finish Lateral 11 (Laurel Lane project) in Boardman. We were delayed by weather last winter and were not able to do this project. There is about 4000 feet of pipe to lay.

In Irrigon, we have a dozen or more delivery outlets to repair or replace. We will do more work at the 7th Street pump station, replacing the manifold and some steel pipe. We have a small project to finish up as part of the mainline project at our Columbia River Station in Irrigon. We will pull the 4th Street pump and take it in for likely rebuild. We plan to do these projects as soon as water is off in Irrigon.

In the Umatilla area, we want to clear decades of sagebrush and overgrowth between I-62 and our dam and address some concrete panel work. We have several valves and deliveries that need work or replacement down the canal. We will do the headgate inspections early this year so the landowners can be contacted early about any Headgate or screen issues that we see. We will also inspect all bridges and other crossings, letting owners know of any issues.

The main canal from south of Irrigon through Boardman has three large areas where concrete is badly deteriorated that we want to get to as soon as we can. We had a lot of damage to the liner after last winter's big freeze. We spent six weeks and replaced over 250 concrete panels, but the damage last year was more than we had time to address.

In Boardman, we have identified a handful of turnouts that need attention and some washout areas on several laterals. We did a rebuild on Lateral 31 during the summer, which is not when we really like to do that work. Fortunately, the landowners were very cooperative in 105 degree weather with no water for five days. But, that is not the way we prefer to do repairs. We'll identify and prioritize the work early this fall and see how much we can get done this winter.

Boardman Lateral 5 is still scheduled to be eliminated as part of the Rippee Road project done in 2016. We are not sure if we can get to that this off season. Lateral 9 is the next lateral to be enclosed. We have received a \$70,000 federal grant for these two projects and plan to have them complete by March 1, 2019. We will apply for grant funds to work on Laterals 12, 13 and 15 next.

The annual canal cleaning, lateral cleaning (with inmate crews) and concrete liner replacement will start in January. If you know of an urgent repair, please let us know right away so we can consider it as we plan our work.

**Water shut-off Dates****Irrigon Systems**

Thursday, Oct. 19

**Main Canal**

Tuesday, Oct. 31  
7 am shutdown in  
Umatilla

(Water will take a day to  
drain)

If weather turns cold or  
very rainy, shut-off may  
occur earlier.

**PLEASE REMEMBER  
TO DRAIN AND  
WINTERIZE YOUR  
IRRIGATION SYSTEM**

**WEST EXTENSION IRRIGATION DISTRICT****FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER****2017 IRRIGATION SEASON SUMMARY**

*Manager Bev Bridgewater*

We are almost through the 2017 irrigation season. The good news is there will not be a special assessment. Our pumping costs for 2017 are within our annual budget, so there will not be a pumping surcharge at the end of the season. The power bills for those on a pressurized system will go out in late November or early December.

Our crew, while still fairly new, has worked very hard at their job—not only on managing and delivering the water, but also on cleaning up the easements, mowing, weeding (and weeding and weeding). And repairs! We don't like to do major repairs during the season, but we had several that came up this year. You can see that I am very happy with our crew. They are:

Ben de los Santos—Field Supervisor

Frank Villegas, Alan Svatonsky, Adam Tompkins (ditchriders, maintenance, equipment operators, water managers), and the young 'un, Kasey Kroske, who focused on mowing and easement work plus filled in as ditchrider and operator. Walt Steagall, retired from the District, was around a lot to help out as were Dave Payne, Verlyn Penry and Saul Ochoa. All together, I couldn't be more proud of our crew (past and present) for learning, sharing and their commitment to the District.

Moving forward, we hope to step things up a bit with housekeeping, using some technology to make things quicker, and putting an equipment and pump maintenance program in place. Getting our system maps online will be a big step that we hope to achieve. In any case, we will do what time and budget allow to better serve our patrons and the public.

**WATER RESOURCES DEPT ANNOUNCES AWARD**

The Tyler Hansell Agricultural Efficiency Award was presented to the City of Hermiston and West Extension Irrigation District (WEID) for their reclaimed water project.

*"This project solved a problem for both the City of Hermiston and the WEID. The City of Hermiston received multiple warnings from DEQ that they were not meeting the temperature discharge requirements of their DEQ Wastewater Discharge Permit. The West Extension Irrigation District needed additional water to meet the needs of their patrons. Through a joint effort between the City of Hermiston, WEID, and BOR, the City of Hermiston was able to pipe their Class A reclaimed water into the irrigation canals of WEID solving a problem for both entities."*

# WINTERIZING YOUR IRRIGATION SYSTEM

Every year, after the irrigation system is shut-off, the ritual of winterizing becomes the priority for most of us. Even if you have drained some water out of the system, the remaining water can freeze, expand and crack the PVC piping if the frost level extends below your installed pipe or valves. To minimize the risk of freeze damage to your irrigation system, you'll need to "winterize" your irrigation system.

The district uses a double valve irrigation delivery. The valve off the mainline is the district's valve and for emergency use only. It should be left open at all times (except during blow-out, see below). Every landowner should have their own shut-off valve with it being their standard "on/off" valve. **The valve referred to below is the landowner's valve.**

## 1. Shutting off system.

It is best to wait until the irrigation season is over, as the main pipeline or canal will drain itself and any water between your valve and the District's line will drain into the system. If you need to drain your irrigation lines before district shut-off, you will need to close your valve.

## 2. Take care of any automatic controls.

If you have an automatic system then you will need to "shut down" the controller (timer). See manufacturer directions for this.

## 3. Drain the system.

Now you need to remove the water from the pipes, filter, meter and sprinklers so that they won't freeze and break. There are two main methods to drain your pipes: the manual drain method and the compressed air blow-out method.

### A. Manual Drain Method

Use when manual valves are located at the end and low points of the irrigation piping. To drain, simply open all the manual drain valves. Don't forget to drain the filter and meter. You should leave all valves and drains open during the winter to allow any moisture to drain off and keep from expanding and freezing. You may want to remove your meter and store during the winter.

### B. "Blow Out" or Compressed Air Method

A few irrigators (typically urban folks) want to "blow out" their system using compressed air. Unless you are experienced at this, we recommend you hire a contractor to do this work.

## 4. Storing for Winter.

After winterizing, open all valves and drains and leave open for winter to keep moisture from collecting and freezing. You may want to insulate above-ground valves and meters or remove your meter and store during the winter. Please be sure to call in your final meter reading to the district office.

## 5. Spring start-up.

After you have left your system open for the winter, you will want to close your drains and valves PRIOR to irrigation system start-up. March 1 is a good time to do this.

**NEVER CLOSE THE DISTRICT'S VALVE. USE ONLY YOUR LANDOWNER VALVE. DISTRICT CREWS SHOULD BE CALLED FOR OPENING OR CLOSING THE DISTRICT VALVE.**



# GROUNDWATER PUMPING CONCERNS

If you've paid much attention to the WEID past newsletters, reports, our legal budgets and consultant fees, you will know that West Extension Irrigation District has spent a lot of money and energy to protect its water. As the lowest diverter on the Umatilla River, we are reliant on return flows for our natural water source. We remain concerned about the decreasing natural flows in the Umatilla River. We allege that much of this is due to groundwater pumping in the Umatilla Basin.

So, how does groundwater pumping affect our District? The return flows we rely upon come from the upland irrigators. Our system was designed by Reclamation in 1909 to get the tailwater or return flows from Hermiston ID, and McKay Reservoir return flows from Stanfield and Westland IDs. When shallow well pumpers pick up that water, it is lost to the river and thus to WEID. Since the early 1950's approximately 16,000 acre feet of water has been lost to the WEID, according to our delivery records.

Why can't the State regulate the wells in favor of WEID? The State allows for regulation within 1/4 mile of the river and does shut off those wells when WEID makes a call (asking for regulation due to water shortage).. The District identified wells within one mile of the river that were found to have a direct effect on our flow. The State studied these and agreed. Those well owners are compensating WEID for pumping costs in lieu of being shutoff. We have presented our case with the State showing decreasing flows and the need to regulate additional wells to five miles from the river. This would be a far-reaching action to many Basin irrigators and the State would need a comprehensive study to support or deny this action. There are not funds to do such a project, which is considered a lower priority than many other around the State (Klamath, Deschutes, Walla Walla, Harney).

What is WEID doing about this? We have protested new groundwater permits issued within five miles of the Umatilla River. We developed our McKay return flow water right. The State has approved our certificate but will not regulate at this time. We have prepared a legal document requesting declaration of a critical groundwater area in the lower Basin which will stop and regulate the groundwater. These actions are known by the State and they have asked us to put things on "hold" for now.

What is the answer or outcome to all this? We have always planned for a cooperative resolution and believe our cumulative loss of water can be solved through negotiations. Whether these negotiations will be with local groundwater well water users or as part of the CTUIR water right settlement remains to be seen. We have put down our "markers" on the legal issues, have quantified return flow losses in previous years and will now work to quantify what has been and will be lost due to the federal actions of the exchanges and any proposed CTUIR water right settlement. Identifying losses due to these specific actions will boost our case for a negotiated settlement.

Last year, the Oregonian did a five-part special report on the groundwater issue called "Draining Oregon." We featured excerpts from that document in last fall's newsletter. The Oregonian has released a followup report which some of you may be interested in. The links are below and provide interesting reading.

The original entire 2016, 41-page report with pictures and illustrations can be found here:

[http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/page/draining\\_oregon\\_day\\_1.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/page/draining_oregon_day_1.html)

Here is the link to the September 2017 article.

[http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/09/draining\\_oregon\\_1\\_year\\_later\\_s.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/09/draining_oregon_1_year_later_s.html)

WEID continues to be active in the Basin to protect its water rights. The ongoing CTUIR water right settlement negotiations are a concern to WEID as we may be further injured as a result. We continue to pipe our open laterals and do repairs to save water. That said, the settlement may become an opportunity to work cooperatively to keep us whole. Time will tell. Conserve, negotiate and protect are our goals right now.