

## PIPING OF DISTRICT OPEN LATERALS IN BOARDMAN

Lateral 11 in Boardman is the latest open ditch to be piped. It serves 160 acres and will be a pressurized system. Morrow County completed their work at Wilson and Laurel last spring and the District laid its pipe in December. The deliveries and new pump station will be completed in early April. We applaud the landowners who were so patient last season, waiting for the new pipeline and who worked with the District for the pressurized system. This will set a standard for future projects. Water will be pressurized to each parcel using a variable frequency pump station. We received \$25,000 from the Bureau of Reclamation's WATERSMART grant program to help with the cost.

This fall, we will use another WATERSMART grant (\$75,000) to eliminate the lateral 5 open ditch and install a pressurized system for Lateral 9 (east of Eastregaard Rd).

We are looking for funding to pipe Laterals 12, 13, 15, and 17, so landowners should start planning for a closed system. We have given this information to the local NRCS office in Heppner. They will try to find funding to assist irrigators as they upgrade their irrigation systems. Landowners will be contacted as these projects move forward.

Piping in other areas may happen as folks want to convert from flood on a case by case basis. Contact the District as necessary.



## FLOWERING RUSH FOUND IN COLUMBIA BASIN

### What is it?

Flowering rush is a perennial freshwater aquatic plant that grows in lakes, rivers, and wetlands, either submerged in water 20 feet deep or more or emergent along shorelines. It spreads quickly as it is capable of breaking off and forming new plants by its fragments.

### Is it here yet?

It is established in the upper Columbia River watershed, the lower Yakima River, and the Spokane River. It has been found above McNary Dam.

### Why should I care? I

It can outcompete native plants and create areas where no other plants can grow. It reduces recreational opportunities by clogging water bodies making boating and swimming difficult, and has been linked to swimmer's itch. It provides cover and nesting habitat for invasive fish that eat desirable native fish such as salmon and trout. It impedes water delivery in irrigation canals and is difficult and costly to control.

### What are its characteristics?

- Long, thin, triangular, sword-like leaves.
- Flowering stalk can grow up to 5 feet tall.
- Clusters of pink flowers with three petals and three smaller sepals below the true petals.

### How do I distinguish it from native species?

Flowering rush is difficult to identify when not flowering; it blends in with other shoreline and aquatic vegetation. If not flowering, the presence of rhizomes and triangular leaves help identify it.



**What if I find it?** Contact the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Noxious Weed Control—Mark Porter

[mporter@oda.state.or.us](mailto:mporter@oda.state.or.us)

### **HOW WATER START-UP WORKS**

It should seem fairly simple to start water, but there is a process. Winter is a very busy time for the District crews because that is when all the repairs and system maintenance takes place. But, now comes the water! An typically, at the same time—here comes the wind. The water start-up begins about 10 days before the actual water is turned in—basically burning weeds and shoring up last minute repairs.

**UPPER CANAL**—also called Umatilla or Irrigon Canal. We try to turn water into the canal at the headworks located at Three Mile Falls Dam around March 15. The crew will have a long “Flush” day of sending the water down the canal, flushing the weeds, closing headgates, and so on. There are always open valves or drains that are found along the way. Once the water reaches our spillway near I-84, we are done for that day. The next day, we take the canal back down to put in the checkboards and fix anything found during the flush day. If all goes well, we will have the water back up that same day or the next. If problems are found, they are fixed and the canal restarted.

**BOARDMAN CANAL**—Within a few days to a week, we head to Boardman. Crews will button up their work and burn the weeds in the canal. Then, the water is turned in. That takes 9 hours from I-84 to the end spillway. Crews will lock the headgates to the laterals. Those of you in Boardman realize that we clean the 13 open ditch laterals with the prison crews. But, weeds will have blown in and need to be burned out. The laterals are opened back up once they are clear of weeds and debris. Landowners are then responsible to keep the laterals clean when they are taking water, which is a problem on those windy days. Sometimes a lateral is cleared several times during this early part of the season.

**IRRIGON SYSTEM**—Next comes the Irrigon system. The crews do the last minute repairs and project cleanup in Irrigon. The district will select a day for water start-up in Irrigon, typically the around the 5th of April. On the start-up date, the system is turned on. Each leg of the system is flushed and drains closed. Open valves on landowners properties are closed as leaks show up. Booster stations are turned on as demand increases over the season.

**PUMPING STATIONS**—The various district pumping stations are started up as demand on their systems increase. We have to wait until there is enough irrigators so pressure on the station does not build up too high. It's helpful for landowners to contact the District when they are ready.

**WATER RIGHTS:** The water rights that you have on your property are appurtenant to your land; they stay with the property until you transfer or forfeit them. With the rising cost of water, many irrigators are considering whether they can afford to keep all their water rights. They are transferring off the water rights that they don't use, either for cost savings or to protect the water rights from non-use statutes.

Under Oregon water law, the right must be used one year out of every five to avoid forfeiture. With readily available satellite imagery, it is easy for the District, agencies and concerned citizens to see if you have or haven't used your water.

If you are not using all your water, considering giving up a portion of your water rights either on a temporary or permanent basis. If you're not ready for a permanent transfer, consider a temporary transfer. This moves the water for one year only and it returns back to your property. Often, farmers are willing to take that water for a year and pay that portion of your annual bill.

Contact the district by March 1 of each year in order to make a change for that year. If you want additional water rights, contact us so we can put you on the waiting list. District staff is pleased to assist you in understanding and working with your water rights.

## **THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF THE WATER SEASON**

Here is some general information about our irrigation delivery system.

### **WATER ORDERING—922-9372**

- 1) Irrigators 20 acres or more use the call-in number to order water for turning ON and OFF. Calls need to reach the office by 7 a.m. the day before making the change or 2:30 pm the day before for upper canal water users. Providing a schedule of your irrigation will meet this requirement.
- 2) Flood irrigators will report when you start for the season and anytime you will not take water on your regular schedule. You will be assumed to take water on your schedule once you start for the season. Be sure to call the water order line when you are requesting extra water.

### **HEADGATE TAGS**

Boardman irrigators must have a tag on the headgate when they are irrigating. Please remove the tag and adjust the headgate when you are done. If you have lost your tag, contact Lisa at the office to request a new tag. Tags left on the gate when irrigation is finished will be removed by the ditchrider.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

Practices such as taking water out of turn, taking too much water and wasting water will subject the irrigator to enforcement. First offense is a written warning identifying the problem. Second offense is a \$100 fine to the landowner. Third and following offenses are \$500 fines to the landowner. Each step will involve a written notice placed at the delivery and a certified mailing (\$20 fee) to the landowner. If offense continues, the outlet will be locked off and water delivery prohibited. Landowners may appeal any enforcement action taken by management to the Board of Directors in writing.

### **WATER SCHEDULES**

Schedules will continue as last year. If you have forgotten your irrigation days, or need to make a change, please contact the office early in the irrigation season..

### **METERS**

If you have a flow meter, be sure to check that it is working properly. Look for any condensation or moisture that may make it difficult to read. If you have a battery operated meter, be sure to replace the batteries at the start of the season. For any questions you may have on learning more about your meter or questions about reading or repairing it, contact the office.

### **WATER CONSERVATION**

Everyone is asked to water effectively using conservation measures. Flood irrigators need to be on site to take care of their water. Those with wheel lines and pivots need to fix any leaks and make sure NOT to water roadways and neighbors properties. Landowners using impact sprinklers need to run their water only for the time needed to irrigate efficiently (2—8 hours typically).

### **CANAL SAFETY**

The District is concerned with the safety of the general public and wants to remind everyone of the dangers posed by open irrigation canals. The canals and ditches contain slippery moss, sharp rocks, debris and herbicides. There is the hidden underwater danger of turbulence or suction, strong enough to pull even an adult under in many places.

Kids playing in or around the canals or ditches is extremely dangerous. Please communicate to your friends and family how dangerous ditches and canals can be, and please call the District office immediately if you see a safety concern of any kind.