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National Weather Service, Boise, Idaho

Sage Winds

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http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/boi/

SERVING NWS BOISE WEATHER SPOTTERS AND COOPERATIVE OBSERVERS

Sage Winds

Severe Thunderstorm East of Burns, Oregon

On the afternoon of Tuesday April 20, a severe thunderstorm swept across the area between Burns and Crane in Harney County Oregon. This was one of the stronger thunderstorms to affect southeast Oregon in several years.

This storm developed ahead of a cold front that drastically changed the weather from sunny and mild to cool and wet. Temperatures in Burns hit 75 the day before this storm hit, falling to 52 the day after. Based on damage in the area, winds were estimated in the 70 to 75 mph range. Damage included over 50 power poles snapped, several houses with minor roof damage, irrigation pipes scattered with some pipes reported to have moved over one mile, and a mobile home moved 3 feet off its foundation.

There were reports of funnel clouds associated with this storm as well. There were reports of a tornado with this storm but all damage indicated that winds were straight line out of the south. Sometimes swirling motion can be seen on the leading edge of a storm like this, but a true tornado does not appear to have occurred.

SkyWarn Spotter Training

Persons in south central Idaho are welcome to attend the next training session planned for…

Wednesday May 5, 7-9pm in Jerome, Idaho. The session will be held in the Jerome City Council Chambers, 100 East Avenue A, Jerome, Idaho.

If your in the area, please attend. If you know of someone interested in the weather, please pass on this invitation to any of your friends or relatives,

Severe Weather Awareness Week
May 2-8, 2010

The week of May 2 has been designated as Severe Weather Awareness Week across Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. While we have already had one significant Severe Weather episode across the area (April 20 in Burns), more is sure to come. Now is a good time to think about safety procedures to follow when severe weather hits. The link below takes you to our web site where you can read about the various severe weather hazards that occur in the Pacific Northwest.

http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/severeawareweek.php

It's easy to underestimate the depth and force of floodwaters, especially at night and in unfamiliar areas.

Floodwaters often conceal damage to the roadbed.

Water Supply Outlook for Idaho and Eastern Oregon

El-Nino conditions in the tropical Pacific Ocean favored warmer and dryer than normal conditions in Idaho during the winter months. Winter Snow pack in the Pacific Northwest is usually below normal in El-Nino years and fit the pattern well this year. Total water content contained in the snow pack ranged from 50 to 70 percent of normal on April 1st which is historically considered the peak date to measure mountain snowpack before it begins to melt filling streams and reservoirs with water. The lack of water in the snow can be seen by comparing conditions observed this year on April 30th to snow conditions which were observed at the same time last year (figure 1).

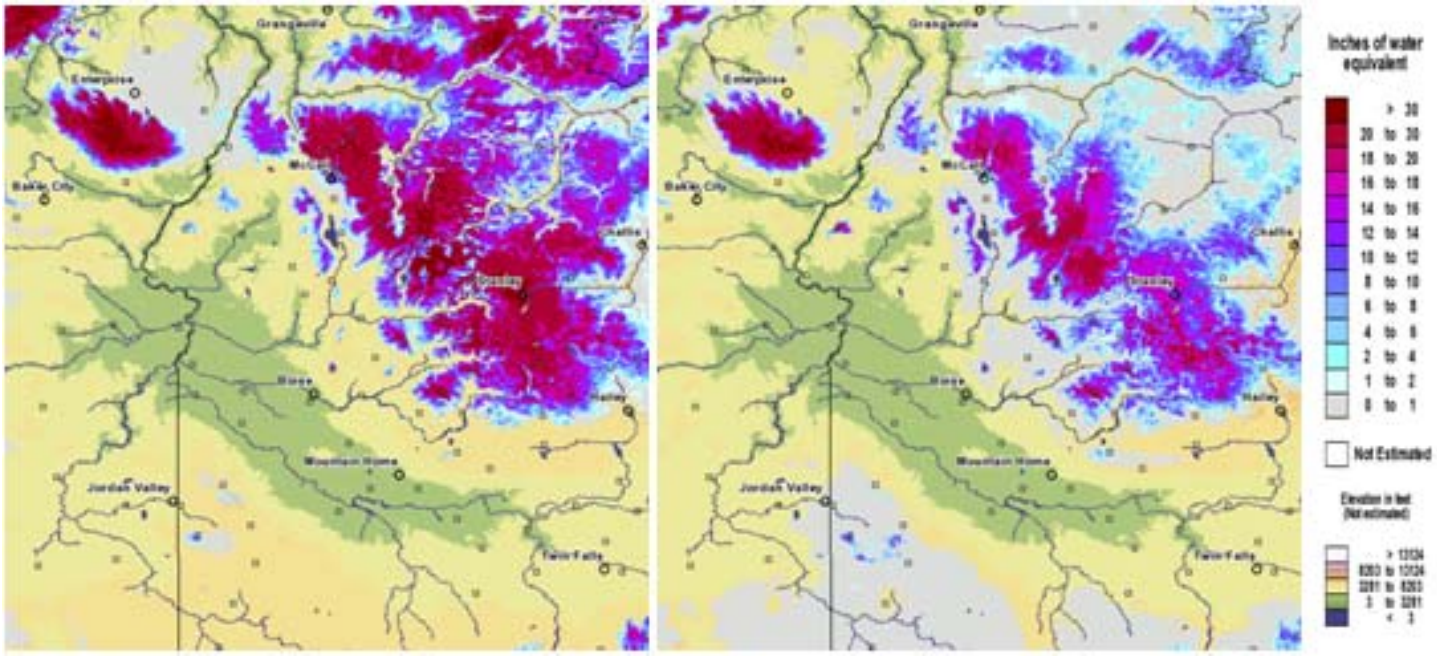

Figure 1. Comparison of Snowpack on April 30th, 2009 (left) to Snowpack on April 30th, 2010 (right) in southwestern Idaho and Southeastern Oregon.

This year, the weather turned colder and wetter during the month of April. This slowed early irrigation demand and preserved snow in the mountains, but the damage has already been done to the 2010 water supply which will average 50 to 60 percent of normal volume (figure 2).

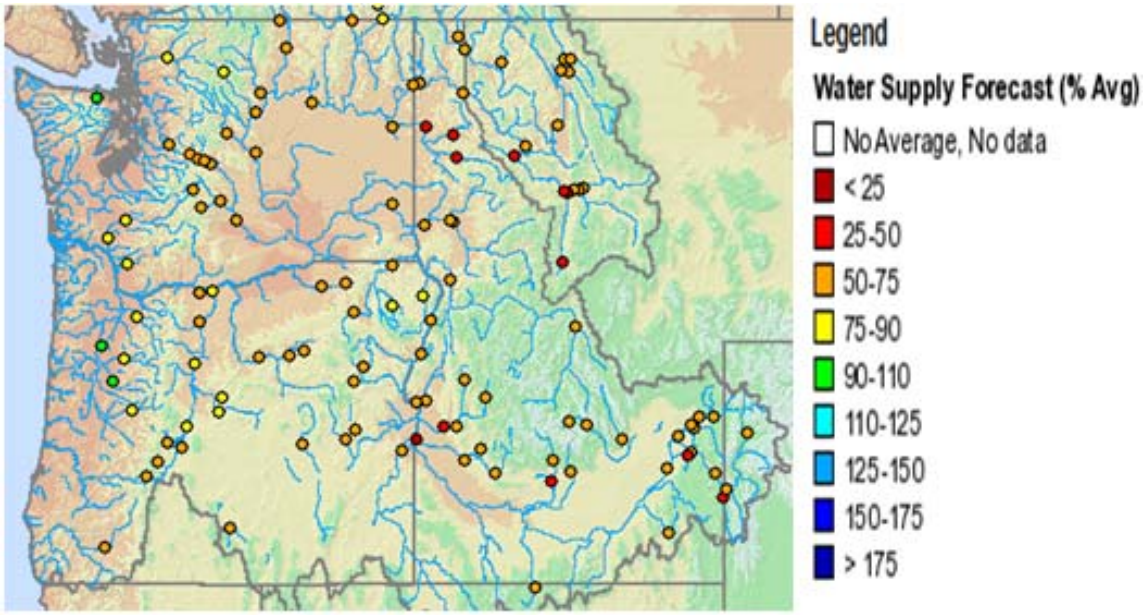

Figure 2. Expected Water volume produced by rivers and streams in the Columbia Basin expressed as a percentage of normal.

The bright spot in the hydrology picture is the excellent carry over storage in the reservoirs from the 2009 water year. Very wet weather which occurred in Summer 2009 cut down on irrigation demand and allowed reservoirs to store extra water. This means that it will not take as much water to fill the reservoirs as it usually does. Reservoirs in the upper Snake River including American Falls, Palisades and Jackson Lake are already nearly full (figure 3). Reserviors in the Boise and Payette River are about 77 percent full as of April 30th, 2010, and on pace to fill by early June (figure 4). Reservoirs in Eastern Oregon may not completely fill, with Warm Springs and Owhyee Reservoirs likely to fill to around 70 percent of capacity (figure 5).

Lower river flows are not all bad news for the recreational use of the rivers. Recreational activities such as kayaking and rafting will be able to begin a little earlier than usual this year due to the lower river flows and peak flows expected later this spring. Reservoirs such as Lucky Peak, which feature a lot of boating, will be allowed to fill early since not as much flood control space is required to accommodate melting snow.

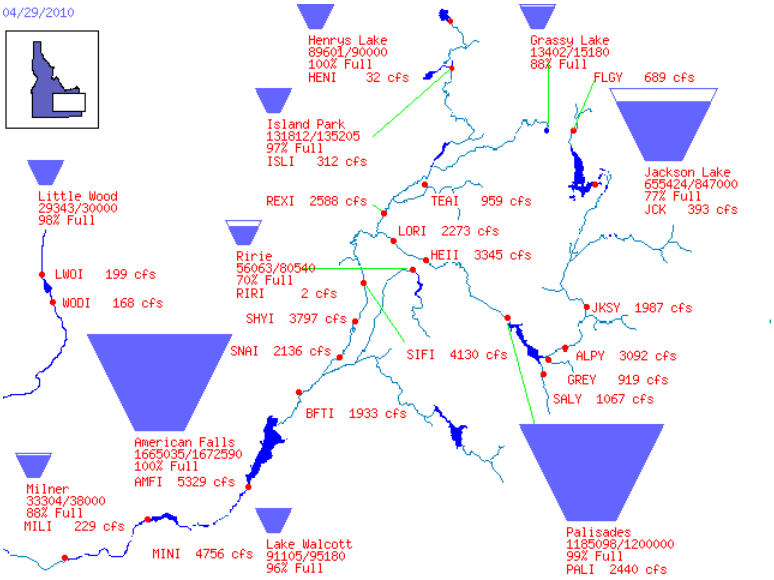

Figure 3. Reservior Storage on April 29th, 2010 in the upper Snake River Basin.

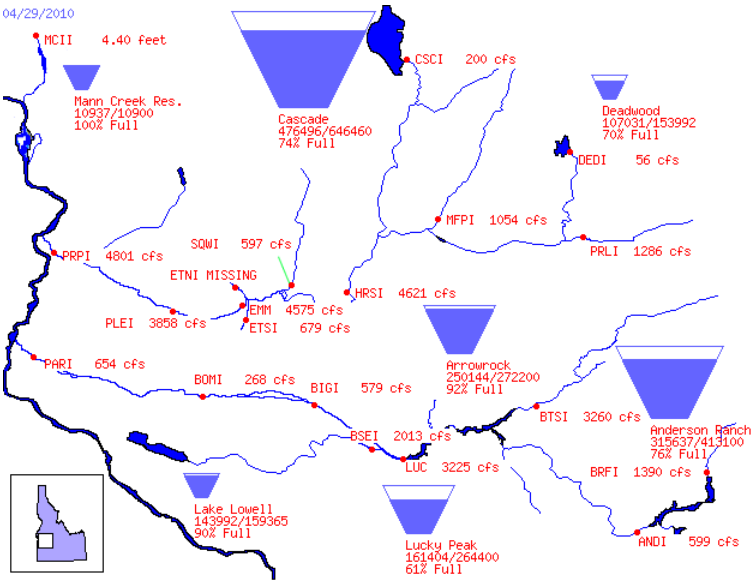

Figure 4. Reservior Storage on April 29th, 2010 in Boise and Payette River Basins.

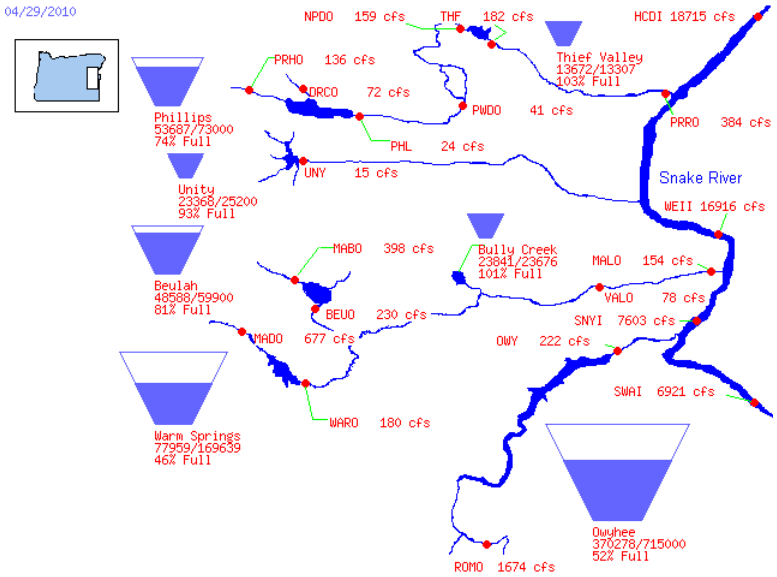

Figure 5. Reservior Storage in Eastern Oregon on April 29th, 2010.

Thoughts of spring!

I know it's early but my garden is going strong. I had surgery on my knee at the end of March so I needed to get as much done before the surgery as I could. I was able to get my onions and one batch of peas in and that was it. My daughter came for a visit after my surgery so I put her to work getting in the second batch of peas, carrots, leeks, beets, and lettuce. These are all plants that come up slow and can take a light frost.

The onions and first batch of peas are up and growing strong. We had a hail storm on April 27 that turned the ground white. Hail stones were 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter but no damage was done to the plants.

My knee is slowly improving so I hope that by late May I'll be able to get the rest of my garden in.

Paul

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Weather in the News

Late winter storm in the northeast— http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36826438/ns/weather/

And you thought it was windy at your house—http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36805917/ns/weather/

Just where is "Tornado Alley" - http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36807882/ns/us_news-environment/

Climate change wakes up volcanoes? - http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36627947/ns/us_news-environment/

Island Volcano Pictures—http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2010/04/more_from_eyjafjallajokull.html

Oil Spill in the Gulf: NASA has some satellite imagery of the oil spill occurring in the Gulf of Mexico. Press reports indicate that 210,000 gallons of oil a day are being pumped from the oil rig that had the accident recently. The photos are at:

http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/view.php?id=43768

Some experts fear this spill could be larger than the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska many years ago. It is expected to hit shore (at a wildlife refuge sadly) today.

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36850248/ns/us_news-environment/