

# ***WESTLAND IRRIGATION DISTRICT***

## ***NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2017***

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Westland patrons,

The long winter of snow and ice is finally beginning to give way to warmer weather, which means another irrigation season will soon begin.

Here is some news and information since the October newsletter...

### **LITIGATION: ELH LLC et al vs. WESTLAND IRRIGATION DISTRICT**

As reported previously, a complaint was filed last June in federal court against the District by two entities and seven individual Westland Irrigation District water users alleging that the District has not been following Oregon water law in the distribution of irrigation water to its patrons. The entities and individuals who filed the complaint were:

- ELH LLC, owned by Patrick and Dixie Echeverria;
- Oregon Hereford Ranch LLC, owned by Doug and Don Bennett;
- Paul Gelissen;
- Frank Mueller;
- Maurice and Lucy Ziemer;
- Craig and Cynthia Parks; and
- Richard and Kristine Carpenter.

The District strongly disagrees with the claims filed against it and looks forward to the allegations made in the complaint being resolved.

Current Status: Following the filing of the complaint against the District in federal court, various motions were filed by the District and plaintiffs. U.S. District Court Judge Michael Simon heard oral arguments on these motions in Portland on October 18. At the conclusion of the hearing, Judge Simon indicated it could be thirty to forty-five days from the day of the hearing before he issued a ruling. To date, however, a ruling has not been issued.

The week following the October 18 federal court hearing, plaintiffs filed a similar complaint against the District in state court in Umatilla County. Oral arguments were scheduled in January

to be heard in Umatilla County Circuit Court but were cancelled on two separate occasions when the assigned judges recused themselves. To date, a hearing has not yet been rescheduled.

While the District's attorneys have advised that the District not engage in discussions and communications about the litigation itself, information that can be shared will be made available as the legal process move forward.

## **RESULTS OF ELECTION FOR BOARD OF DIRECTOR POSITION**

Cynthia Parks was elected in November as director of division number three of the five divisions into which the District is divided. She joins fellow board newcomer Jordan Bennett, who filed the only petition to represent division number two and was declared elected prior to November.

Both Cynthia and Jordan took the oath of office during the District's January organizational meeting, marking the beginning of their three-year terms as directors. Congratulations to Cynthia and Jordan and thank you for being willing to serve.

## **CENTRAL PROJECT**

The Central Project to bring water from the Columbia River to currently irrigated lands in the District, primarily north of Westland Road, continues to be evaluated by the District board of directors. Project feasibility work has been slowed, in part due to winter weather, while due diligence is performed on the long-term costs and benefits of the project.

## **WATER OUTLOOK**

As would be expected, the winter weather has produced above-average snowpack measurements coupled with expectations for extended spring flows in the Umatilla River. Projections are for McKay Reservoir to fill as well. In all, the outlook is for the best water year for irrigation since the reservoir last filled in 2014. As a quick reminder, water for irrigation must be scheduled and coordinated for use through the Westland ditch rider 24 hours in advance; the ditch rider phone number is 541-571-1201. If irrigation water is started without prior notice, the ditch rider has authority to require the use to stop until adequate water is in the canal system to meet demand.

## **WESTLAND IRRIGATION ONLINE**

To provide improved service and timely information to our patrons, a District website is being developed and should be online soon. A separate announcement will provide more details on the website address and content but in the meantime you can keep up on meeting notices plus irrigation information of interest by visiting the District Facebook Page at the following url: **[www.facebook.com/westlandirrigationdistrict](https://www.facebook.com/westlandirrigationdistrict)** or by entering **@westlandirrigationdistrict** into your favorite online search engine. If you would like to contact us by email, please do so at *info@westlandirrigation.com*

