

WESTLAND IRRIGATION DISTRICT

NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2018

**P.O. Box 944
Hermiston, OR 97838**

**Phone (541) 667-2030
Fax (541) 667-2031**

Dear Westland patrons,

The end of February means another irrigation season will begin soon.

Here is some water news and information since the last newsletter...

WATER – WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK FOR THIS SEASON?

Projections based on current snowpack and weather conditions are for normal to below normal river flows this irrigation season. McKay Reservoir is currently above average in amount of stored water held for this time of year. If the reservoir fills, it will help in offsetting the projected lower Umatilla River flows. The next sixty days will be crucial in terms of the outlook for the upcoming irrigation season. For updated information, please check the District's website, www.westlandirrigation.com ; Facebook page, www.facebook.com/WestlandIrrigationDistrict ; or the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service website, www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/or/snow.

LITIGATION: ELH LLC et al vs. WESTLAND IRRIGATION DISTRICT

The complaint filed in 2016 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 is ongoing. The entities and individuals who filed the original complaint are:

- 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.

* Frank Mueller filed notice in Umatilla County Circuit Court last fall dismissing all claims he asserted against the District.

The cost to defend the District against this complaint has now exceeded \$800,000, with the expectation for the allegations made in the complaint to not be resolved, and the expenses to continue, until possibly sometime late this year. Even with the District's insurer agreeing to be responsible for one-half of these ongoing defense costs, the growing accumulation of expenses resulting from the complaint has caused the District's Board of Directors to determine it necessary to include a \$7.50 per acre litigation assessment in the 2018 incurred charges to Westland patrons.

If you have questions or concerns about this litigation, please contact the District office at 541-667-2030 or info@westlandirrigation.com.

CENTRAL PROJECT FUNDS DISBURSEMENT

In November 2015, the District's Board of Directors adopted a resolution for incurred charges in the amount of \$30 per water righted acre for the purpose of paying expenses associated with developing additional water supplies from the Columbia River. In May 2017, the Board of Directors adopted a resolution abandoning further efforts for that purpose.

The remaining unspent funds will be disbursed back as a credit to each Westland patron who paid the \$30 per acre incurred charge, on the same per acre based as they were collected. If a patron so requests in writing to the District, the District will issue a check for his or her share of the remaining funds rather than apply a credit to the patron's account; please send written requests within 14 days of receiving this newsletter in order to facilitate check issuance.

NEW DIRECTOR APPOINTED

At the January 30th board meeting, Phil Sharkey was appointed to serve as director of division #3 of the District. He replaces Cindy Parks, who resigned from the board.

ANNUAL MEETING

The District will hold an annual meeting open to all Westland patrons on Tuesday, April 3rd, at 7:00 p.m. at the Umatilla County Fire District No. 1, Station 23, 78760 Westland Road, Hermiston. Updates will be provided on litigation, water distribution & water rights, tribal settlement, and other topics of interest. Bring your questions and plan to attend!

DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

Office (physical address): 77096 Highway 207, Echo, OR 97826

Office (mailing address): P.O. Box 944, Hermiston, OR 97838

Telephone: 541-667-2030; Fax: 541-667-2031

Office Hours: 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday

PERSONNEL

District Manager, Mike Wick	541-571-1200
Office Manager, Tami Sherer	541-667-2030
Field Supervisor, Bobby Bailey	541-571-1202
Ditch Rider, Alex Troppman	541-571-1201
Maintenance, Steven Cleveland	541-571-1203

DIRECTORS

Bob Levy, Chair	Division 1
Jack Bellinger, Vice Chair	Division 4
Jordan Bennett	Division 2
Phil Sharkey	Division 3
Justin Terry	Division 5