



# The Inland Northwest Informer

Information For Storm Spotters, Cooperative Observers And Everyone

A Publication Of WFO Pendleton, Oregon

Fall/Winter 2018 - Volume 23

## A New Face at NWS Pendleton

By Michael Vescio, Meteorologist-in-Charge

The National Weather Service (NWS) in Pendleton is happy to welcome Marc Austin as our new Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM). WCMs serve a key role in the NWS, as they interact with the public and emergency management community on the use and interpretation of our products and services. One of the primary duties of a WCM is to ensure NWS core partners and the public are aware of threatening weather, and know how to respond to weather hazards to stay safe. Some of the common duties WCMs fulfill include attending public safety expos and school outreach events, designing and participating in hazardous weather exercises, and serving as a weather expert during planned events and emergencies where people may become vulnerable to hazardous weather.

Marc began his NWS career in 2009 in Tallahassee, FL as he was attending graduate school for meteorology at

Florida State University. He obtained his degree and moved to Norman, OK in 2011 to work at the National Weather Center, where both the Oklahoma City NWS office and Storm Prediction Center are housed. His time in Oklahoma brought him vast experience in forecasting severe

forecaster. There, he gained valuable experience in tropical meteorology, and developed strong skills in marine forecasting as the office liaison to Port Tampa Bay. Marc arrived here on October 5th of this year and is excited about all of the opportunities eastern and central Oregon, and southern Washington present. He's especially happy to live in a place with four seasons again!

When he's not "geeking out" over weather, Marc enjoys hiking, fly fishing, and spending time with his wife and toddler twins. As he expects to be out and about in the community on a regular basis, it's probably only a matter of time before you meet him in-person. Welcome aboard Marc!



Marc Austin is the new Warning Coordination Meteorologist for the NWS Pendleton Oregon office.

You can follow Marc on Twitter: @marc\_austin84

storms and tornadoes, winter storms, and dangerous fire weather conditions. In the summer of 2015, Marc relocated to Tampa, FL to assume the role of Senior

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Banner Image by T.W. Earle

# Winter 2018-2019 Outlook

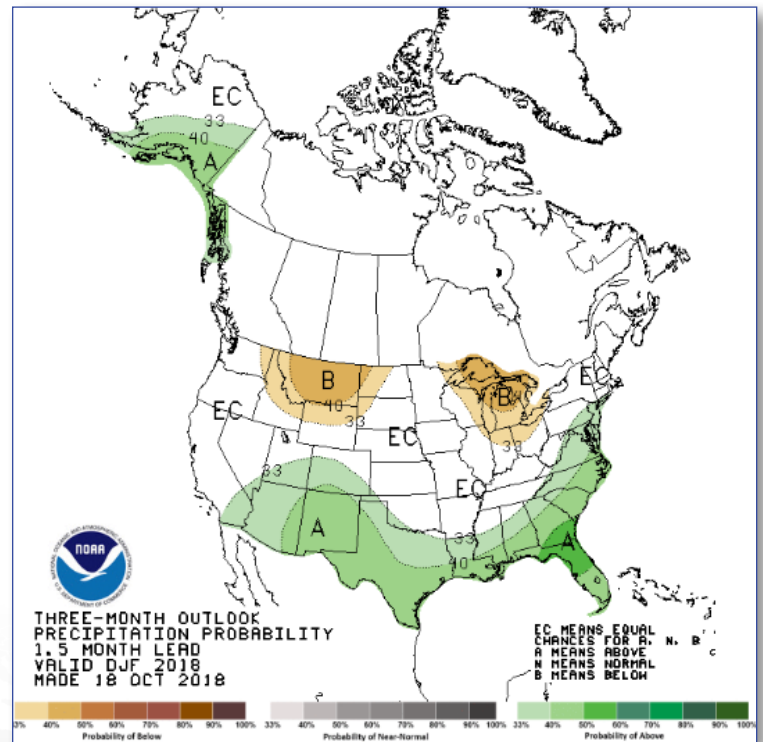
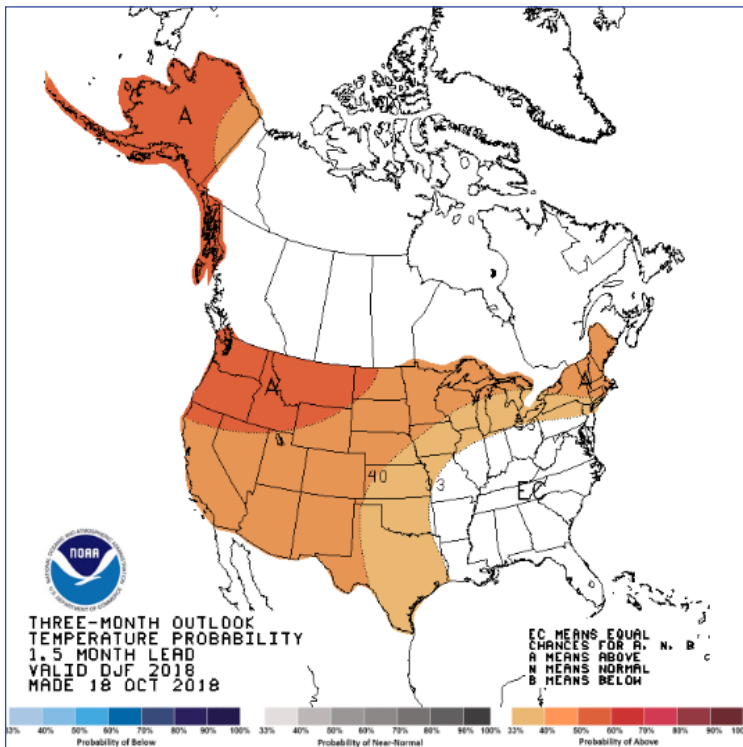
By Roger Cloutier, Meteorologist

The recent summer can be summarized as being much drier and hotter than normal. ENSO conditions were such that a moderate La-Nina from last winter has, and continues to, transition to an El-Nino pattern with warmer than normal tropical sea surface temperatures off the coast of Central America and southwest North America. This pattern is expected to continue through the winter, which will result in a milder and drier than normal winter for the Pacific Northwest for the winter of 2018-2019 if an El-Nino does indeed prevail.

The following images show the three-month seasonal outlook for December through February (DJF) from the Climate Prediction Center. For the Pacific Northwest and

the County Warning Area temperatures are favored to be above normal by as much as a 50 percent chance of being above normal.

The precipitation outlook for these same 3 winter months are favoring the region to have equal chances of a drier or wetter than normal winter season. However, in previous outlooks a drier than normal winter season was predicted. These data will likely affect snow pack in the mountains and therefore next summer's fire season and mountain water supply. Based on the precipitation outlook the fire season for next summer could have equal chances of being an over-active or an under-active fire season. ❖





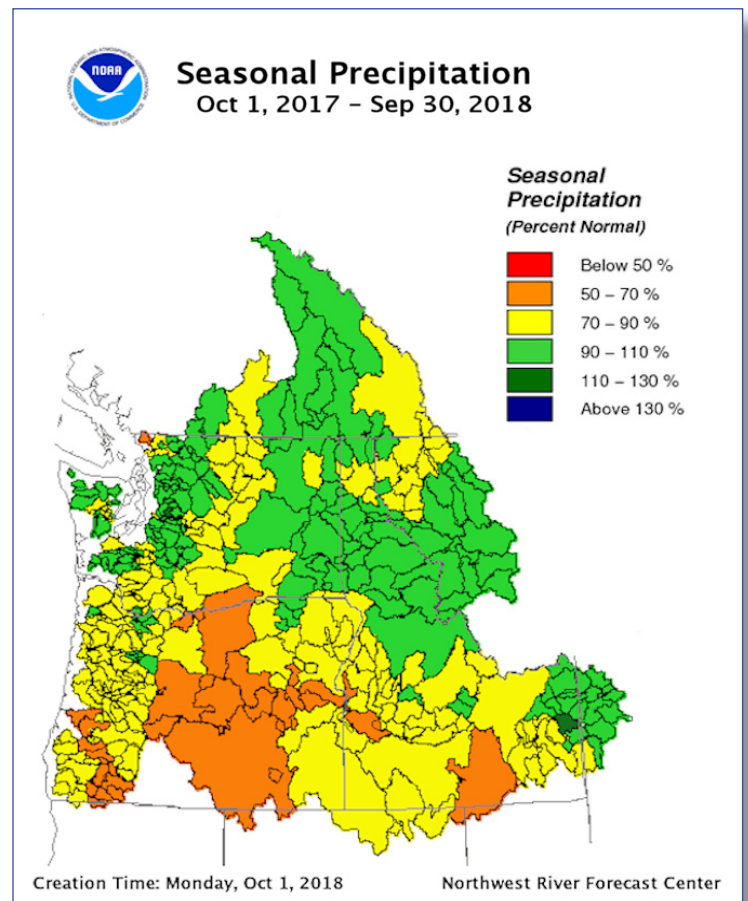
# Water Year Precipitation October 2017 - September 2018

By Marilyn Lohmann, Service Hydrologist

Location	Amount In Inches	Percent of Normal
Bend.....	5.46.....	48%
Dufur.....	11.23.....	81%
Heppner.....	10.62.....	76%
John Day City.....	8.58.....	65%
La Grande.....	17.50.....	106%
McNary Dam.....	8.10.....	96%
Madras.....	7.36.....	70%
Meacham.....	38.51.....	120%
Milton-Freewater.....	12.86.....	78%
Mitchell 2NE.....	11.12.....	80%
Pelton Dam.....	4.93.....	44%
Pendleton Airport.....	10.62.....	82%
Pilot Rock.....	12.69.....	88%
Prineville.....	7.28.....	68%
Redmond Airport.....	4.59.....	52%
The Dalles.....	9.28.....	64%
Wallowa.....	16.73.....	96%
Wickiup Dam.....	11.61.....	54%
Cle Elum.....	17.24.....	77%
Dayton.....	18.20.....	95%
Ellensburg.....	7.62.....	85%
Hanford.....	6.62.....	95%
Ice Harbor Dam.....	8.99.....	81%
Mill Creek Dam.....	19.54.....	105%
Mt Adams RS.....	44.87.....	105%
Prosser.....	6.83.....	76%
Selah.....	5.75.....	79%
Sunnyside.....	5.95.....	79%
Whitman Mission.....	14.35.....	99%
Yakima Airport.....	5.29.....	64%

month. The dry trend continued through March, followed by a much wetter than normal April. May was drier than normal as was June. July and August were very dry with many locations seeing no measurable precipitation. September closed out the water year with another month of drier than normal conditions.

The snowpack ended up being near normal over the Washington Cascades, while southeast Washington and northeast Oregon saw amounts 85 to 90 percent of normal. It was very dry across the John Day Basin as well as along the Oregon Cascades with most locations only seeing about 60- 65 percent of the normal snowpack. ❖



October 2017 started off the water year with above normal precipitation, followed by above normal precipitation for November. December was cool with near to below normal precipitation. January was warmer than normal with a mix of precipitation. February was also rather dry with most locations only seeing 30-60 percent of normal precipitation for the

# 2018 Fire Season Review

By Mary Wister, Incident Meteorologist / Fire Weather Program Leader

The 2018 wildfire season across the western United States is definitely one for the record books, and a season that nobody wants to repeat. The devastating wildfires in California have been tragic reminders that fire behavior can become extreme in a matter of seconds. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those affected by the recent fires. Although the largest and most notable wildfires in NWS Pendleton's County Warning Area (CWA) were primarily grass and wheat fires, the amount of land blackened by uncontrolled fires is heartbreaking, and the Substation Fire near The Dalles took the life of a tractor operator who attempted to suppress the fire. This was also a year with substantial smoke from neighboring fires that plagued some

wildfire in Washington and Oregon at 100,207 acres.

In NWS Pendleton's CWA, there were six large wildfires that required Type 1 and/or Type 2 Incident Management Teams (IMT). The Graham Fire located 15 miles north of Sisters began on June 21 and burned 2,175 acres of timber, brush, and short grass. The Graham Fire was one of three major wildfires in central Oregon during this time. The Boxcar Fire and the Jack Knife Fire were also started the same time as a result of thunderstorm activity. A month later, the Substation Fire near The Dalles and Moro began on July 20. The Substation Fire was one of many grass and wheat fires in north central Oregon

<b>2018 Large Wildfire Statistics</b> (as of November 15, 2018)		
<b>Washington and Oregon</b>		
	<b>2018</b>	<b>10-year Average</b>
<b>Acres Burned</b>	<b>1.34 Million Acres</b>	<b>757,828 Acres</b>
<b>Number of Large Wildfires</b>	<b>3,686 Fires</b>	<b>3,301 Fires</b>
<b>National</b>		
	<b>2018</b>	<b>10-year Average</b>
<b>Acres Burned</b>	<b>8.5 Million Acres</b>	<b>6.3 Million Acres</b>
<b>Number of Large Wildfires</b>	<b>51,898 Fires</b>	<b>59,272 Fires</b>

communities for weeks. It cannot be overstated how important it is to manage your property and create a defensible space as well as how important it is to follow burn ban regulations. Our wildland firefighters are working hard for us; we owe it to them to be proactive in preventing wildfires.

According to statistics from the National Interagency Coordination Center, the number of large wildfires in Washington and Oregon was slightly above the ten-year average, but the acreage burned surpassed the ten-year average by 178 percent. The Klondike Fire located 9 miles southwest of Selma, OR was the largest wildfire at 175,258 acres. The Boxcar Fire located just east of Maupin, OR was the second largest

and the eastern Columbia River Gorge this past summer. The Substation Fire burned 78,425 acres of grass and brush. Shortly after the Substation Fire was almost fully contained, the Long Hollow Fire near Dufur started on July 29 and lasted for several days, burning 33,451 acres. The South Valley Fire near Dufur burned for over a week at the start of August, totaling 20,026 acres of grass and timber. All three of these major wildfires in north central Oregon were extremely difficult to contain due to gusty winds and occasional dust devils. Meanwhile, 30 miles south of Heppner near the Bull Prairie Reservoir, the Wilson Prairie Fire began on July 23 and was fully contained on August 13. The Wilson Prairie Fire burned 405 acres of timber and brush. The Miriam Fire near the White Pass Ski Resort began

*Continued on page 5*

on July 30 and persisted through the end of September as crews performed a combination to contain, confine, and monitor. The Miriam Fire burned 5,400 acres in heavy dry timber, including brush with snags from the 2009 Twin Peaks Fire.

Out of the six wildfires in the CWA managed by IMTs, only two were started by lightning—the Graham Fire (including the Boxcar and Jack Knife Fires) and the Miriam Fire. All the others were either human-caused or classified as unknown.

If the 2018-19 winter season proves to be an “El Niño Winter” with above average temperatures and below average

precipitation (thus, below average snow pack) across the Pacific Northwest, the upcoming fire season could be problematic with dry or even critically dry fuels. There are great resources available online with tips on creating a defensible space around your home and property. Now is the perfect time to prepare and plan for the next fire season. ❖

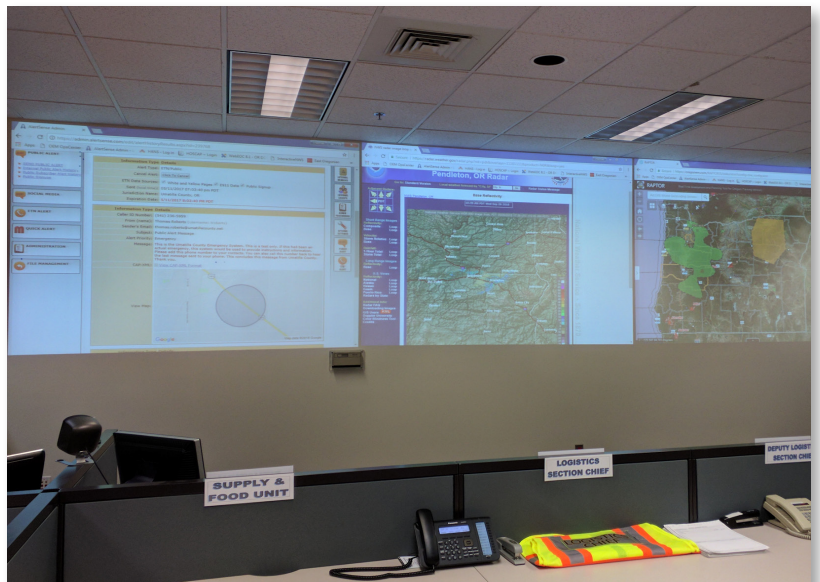
A useful guide (pdf) from FEMA: <https://go.usa.gov/xEChr>

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Preparing-homes-for-wildfire>



*On September 26, National Weather Service Pendleton had the honor of presenting the Umatilla County Sheriff's Department with Storm Ready certification. Presenting the Storm Ready certification at the Umatilla County Sheriff's Department, left to right, Mike Vescio (Meteorologist-in-Charge), Grant Cooper (NWS Western Region Director), Tom Roberts (Umatilla County Emergency Manager), Larry Givens (Commissioner), George Murdock (Commissioner Board Chair). Photo by A. Adams*

*A tour of the facilities took us through the Umatilla County Emergency Operations Center  
Photo by A. Adams*





# SKYWARN Recognition Day

## December 1, 2018

By Ann Adams, HydroMeteorological Technician

On December 1st, Ham radio operators from around the country, in conjunction with the National Weather Service SKYWARN program, scanned the airways to make contact with other operators from as many locations in the U.S. and internationally as possible. This event was the annual SKYWARN Recognition Day. NWS Pendleton hosted several operators at its Ham radio station, WX7PDT, in the office, including recently retired meteorologist Alan Polan.

SKYWARN Recognition Day was designated in 1999 by the National Weather Service and the American Radio Relay

League (ARRL). It celebrates the contributions that volunteer SKYWARN radio operators make to the National Weather Service. During the day, and into the evening, SKYWARN operators visit NWS offices and contact other radio operators around the world. ❖

For more information on the SKYWARN Program, visit <https://www.skywarn.org/>

For more information on Ham Radio operations, visit <https://www.arrl.org>.



*Ham operators manning the radio WX7PDT at NWS Pendleton for SKYWARN Recognition Day 2018. From left to right: Emery Heintz (KE7YX), Dennis McKenry (K17CUS), Alan Polan (KE4TRR).  
Photo by A. Adams*



# Cooperative Program Highlights

On September 26, National Weather Service Pendleton presented an Honored Institution Award to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) at the Mill Creek Dam and Bennington Lake Project, for 75 years of outstanding service in the National Weather Service's Cooperative Observing program.

The NWS Cooperative Observer Program (Coop) is the nation's weather and climate observing network of, by and for the people, and was formally created in 1890 under the Organic Act. More than 8,700 volunteers take observations on farms, in urban and suburban areas, national parks, seashores and mountaintops. ❖



*Justin Stegall (left), Operations Project Manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Mill Creek Dam, accepted the 75-year Service Award. Presenting the award is Grant Cooper, NWS Western Region Director and Mike Vescio, Meteorologist-In-Charge at WFO Pendleton.  
Photo by J.Smith*

# Photo Album



*Snow beginning to fall in Wheeler County.  
Photo by A. Adams*

*Convective clouds and showers over Morrow  
County. Photo by A. Adams*



*Country road overlooking the Wallowa Mountains.  
Photo by A. Adams*

