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Salute to Agriculture



- Soulen Family carries on shepherding tradition
- Kozgro Organics • Water Outlook
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A Peruvian herder keeps a band of sheep heading in the right direction on a 300-mile trailing route that extends from the Snake River Birds of Prey area south of Kuna to grazing land near Brundage Mountain in McCall. Photo by Ernest Shook

Soulen family carries on Idaho's sheepherding tradition

Rancher hopes to pass on business to fourth generation

by Philip A. Janquart

They had just started dozing off when the dogs began reacting to something unseen, somewhere out in the darkness, bringing them back to the cognizant world.

By the time they jumped out of their sleeping bags and grabbed their guns, all hell had broken loose on what had started out as a peaceful summer evening on the Payette National Forest.

The Peruvian herders had trailed their band of 2,000 sheep some 300 miles from the Snake River Birds of Prey area south of Kuna to McCall to feed on native grasses and brush.

During the months-long journey, much of it on foot, the herders guided the animals, protecting them from predators and other dangers along the way.

But they could do little now except fire a few shots into the air and keep their eyes open for a glimpse of what could be anything from a bear to a coyote.

By morning, the carnage was clear, the culprits long gone.

"Later, we found out we had a pack of 13 wolves that got into our sheep," said Harry Soulen, a third-generation Weiser rancher.

"It was just as we were trailing them onto the forest," he said. "The next day, after we started counting, we found they had killed 73 head in one night. They had eaten one whole lamb almost completely and the bags (udders) out of two ewes, but everything else was just killed and left to lay, so that was a pretty bad night."

"That isn't even the worst of it. We've had hundreds taken before," said Soulen's wife, Angie, referring to a single summer when they lost 330 head to wolves. Another year, a bear put the band on a run down a steep draw, the sheep piling on top of each other, crushing themselves under their own weight. The Soulens lost about 200 head that night.

Hard to accept as it may be, it is part of the risk of ranch life; it is the

proverbial nature of the beast.

Harry and Angie have many stories stemming from their decades of experience with cattle and sheep, Harry choosing long ago to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, Harry Soulen, Sr., and father, Phil Soulen.

How it all began

Harry Sr. founded Mesa Sheep Company in Mesa, Idaho, south of Council, in 1926. In 1929, at the start of the depression, he purchased the Clinton Sheep Company and, adding some ground in Payette and Gem counties, renamed the operation Soulen Livestock Company.

He built the business into a 32,000-acre operation with over 10,000 head of sheep and around 400 head of cattle. Later, son Phil, expanded the operation to 47,000 acres in eight SW Idaho counties, with some 12,000 sheep and 1,800 head of cattle.

"I like everything about it," Phil told writer Steve Stuebner in an article written for the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission before Phil's passing in 2019 at the age of 90.

"Ranching, you live out in the open," he said. "You look up at the sky, and you know what it's going to do, rain or shine; you've got your work to do, and you just do it. That's all. It's an active life. That's what I like about it. It's that simple."

Phil graduated from Weiser High School in 1948 and earned a business degree from the University of Idaho in 1953.

More than a businessman, who created a tax base and hired folks out of Weiser, Phil was also a philanthropist and supported education. He was active in the Weiser Education Association, which provided kids with college scholarships, and sat on the hospital board, donating money to improve the facility, which is now known as Weiser Memorial Hospital. Harry, Jr. spent his life alongside his dad, learning the business and spending countless hours on foot, or in a saddle, herding livestock and sleep-

ing out under the stars.

"Yeah, my father followed his father, and I've followed my father, so I'm a third-generation sheep rancher for sure; been doing it all my life," said Harry who graduated from Weiser High School in 1978 and studied Agribusiness and Animal Science through the University of Idaho's College of Agriculture.

Although the Soulens are no longer in the cattle business, their sheep operation is thriving.

Part of the secret to its success is most likely rooted in tradition and proven practices that result in superior end products.

600 miles of trailing

The company, in large part, has been doing things the same way for almost 96 years now. The route along which the herders drive the sheep hasn't changed much, stretching from grazing lands on the Payette National Forest north of McCall, at its northern extreme, to Bureau of Land Management tracts located in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey area at the route's southernmost end.

Approximately 300 miles separate the two locations, representing a stark geographical contrast from high, forested mountains, to low desert plains and canyon lands. Herders and their sheep put in no less than 600 miles per year, round trip.

During winter, herders use traditional sheep wagons to sleep, the ones with rounded, tin roofs and small smoke stacks many people associate with Basque sheep herders who disappeared from Idaho's industry in the 1970s.

"From November until March, we still use those old sheep wagons and that's what the herders live in during that time," Harry said. "From now, about March to October, they live out of tents, and we move those camps with horses and mules. We have several pack strings that we use to move

Cover Photo: Harry Soulen leads sheep across the historic Highway 30 bridge spanning 380 feet across the Boise River in Caldwell. Constructed in 1922, the bridge has outlived its engineered lifespan and could eventually transition to a pedestrian-only bridge as part of Caldwell's Boise River Greenbelt.

Photo by Ernest Shook
 www.ernestshookphotography.com

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It takes professional shearers about 10 days to shear thousands of sheep for Soulen Livestock Company, which harvests the wool and sends it to various companies that process it and then sell it to manufacturers. Although the wool is valued as an income source, Harry Soulen said the real revenue lies within the lambs, which are sold for their meat to a company in California. *Photo courtesy of Ernest Shook*

the living facilities and cooking facilities from camp to camp. It's very traditional in that sense; it's still kind of the old-school way."

It all happens on a kind of perpetual cycle, the sheep arriving in McCall and then turning around to head south again toward Kuna, and back up to McCall again. The cycle continues year after year.

If there is a start, however, it could be said that it all begins in November, near Caldwell, when the bucks/rams are introduced into the band of ewes that are heading south.

"One ram will typically breed about 50 ewes during breeding season," Harry explained. "We only leave the bucks in for 36 days, which is a little over two heat cycles, from Nov. 5 until early December when we start pulling them back out; and then they are just put in a separate pasture for the rest of the year."

The ewes then begin their journey to the Snake River Birds of Prey area before heading north again to Letha, Idaho, just outside of Emmett where the shearing season starts in March. From there, the sheep trail to the Crane Creek area northeast of Weiser, where lambing occurs from April to May.

There are typically over 8,000 head of sheep following lambing.

Around the middle of June, they hit the trail again, this time headed over West Mountain, dropping down into Cascade Reservoir, then on to McCall.

"July, August, and September, we are on our sheep allotments, which are close to Brundage Mountain ski area, and we will stay up there until we ship the lambs in late September," Harry said. "In late September or October, we kind of reverse the trail and come back down out of the mountains and trail down toward Caldwell again, either on pastures or Symms Fruit Ranch."

Another bucking season is at hand and the cycle con-

tinues.

"They aren't in one location very long," Harry said. "We kind of get in certain areas for about a three-month period and then weather moves us on to the next spot."

The herders

Idaho has a long and storied tradition of sheep ranching. During the early 20th century, the state ranked second only to Sydney, Australia, with as many as 2.65 million sheep in 1918, according to the Idaho Humanities Council. In comparison, the total state population during that time was around 430,000.

Today, Idaho's population is approximately 1.9 million, according to a July 2021 U.S. Census Bureau population estimate. There are an estimated 170,000 sheep in Idaho, representing a dramatic drop compared to 1920s numbers.

People of various cultures came to Idaho to work as sheep herders, historians commonly citing the large population of Basques that journeyed here from western Europe.

But Harry said beginning in the 1920s, when his grandfather founded Soulen Livestock, many of the company's herders came from the eastern portion of the U.S.

"During the Depression, they were coming out of Tennessee and Virginia because there were no jobs," he said. "That labor force began to dry up and so we turned to the Basques and the Spaniards, and we had almost an entirely Basque crew during the '50s, '60s, and into the early '70s. Our first Peruvian came to work for us in 1973 and we've probably been an all-Peruvian crew since about 1980. That's when the last Basques and Spaniards worked for us."

The crew of approximately seven travel from their homes in Peru, over 4,600 miles away, on 33-month con-

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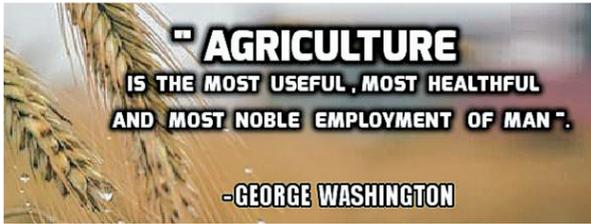

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The Soulens use a press to form 'wool packs' that weigh about 450 pounds a piece. The company is set to ship 135 of them to various processors, who will turn around and sell the product to manufacturers. Though wool is a source of income, the Soulen's main revenue comes from its lambs. *Photo by Ernest Shook*

tracts as part of the government's H-2A work visa program under the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service.

At the end of those contracts, they are obligated to go back to Peru for 90 days, but then return on a new set of contracts.

Guard/herd dogs

Accompanying Harry and his crew of herders are 14 guard dogs, most of them Anatolian Shepherds, and a group of herd dogs that are mostly Border Collie-Australian Shepherd mixes. They are critical to the operation, helping to keep predators at bay and the sheep together and moving along their route.

"Predators are an all-the-time thing; every day of the year," Harry bemoaned. "That's why we have those big, white guard dogs to try to help protect the sheep. Our No. 1 predators are coyotes."

Harry said Idaho law allows ranchers to protect their livestock, but stopping predators is largely an act of futility, especially at night under the cover of dark.

"There's not much that can be done," he said. "You start gathering them up, make sure you get the rest of your band together, count the losses, and make sure that the government trapper is aware of what happened, so he can take care of the predator from there."

Government trappers are individuals hired by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to perform predator control in livestock areas. (To learn all about government trappers, visit www.aphis.usda.gov.)

Why trail sheep?

Harry said there is a significant advantage in feeding sheep on natural grasses as opposed to putting them on pastureland and feeding them hay.

"If you are going to make good lambs, you've got to have them on pretty good quality feed," he said. "The only time we feed them hay is when we are confined there in Letha and we are shearing, and then it's only for about 10 days. After that, we start heading for the early spring grass again. For those young, growing lambs, they need lush,

greener feed or they will quit gaining weight."

Feed also determines the quality of wool.

"If the sheep are on real good feed throughout the year and are doing well, the staple, or length of the wool will be longer because they have better nutrition," Harry said. "The other thing that can happen, if a ewe gets stressed or gets into a real bad feed situation, where she is not doing well, the wool will continue to grow, but during that period, it will have what's called a 'break,' a kind of weak link, that breaks there. It lessens the value of that fleece because they can't spin the strands as long as they would like."

Slaughtering and shearing

Some people might assume the value of a sheep lies within its wool, but that would be a misconception. Although wool is another product that generates revenue, the value for sheep ranchers is the lambs, which are sold for their meat.

"What you are going to sell is the market lambs; lambs that are going to slaughter," Harry explained. "That's where the bulk of the money is, and you also have money in your aged ewes."

There is a growing number of ethnic groups in America who value the taste of aged ewes, which has created a market for sheep that are no longer kept in production, according to Harry.

Soulen Livestock primarily sells its lambs to a company in Dixon, Calif. where they are slaughtered, and the meat packed and sold to commercial customers. The lambs are usually slaughtered at about six to eight months after they are born.

The sheep are sheared once per year, the wool pressed into 450-pound bales called "wool packs." Fleece from about 40 sheep make up one wool pack.

The Soulens currently have about 135 of them ready to ship to various companies, which then turn around and sell the product to manufacturers.

Passing down the tradition

Harry and Angie have two children who attend the University of Idaho. Their son, Phil, is a senior and their

daughter, Grace, is a sophomore.

In addition, they have several nieces and nephews. Any of them could be candidates to continue the Soulen tradition, according to Harry.

"Soulen Livestock is a family corporation, and we are hoping that somebody in the next generation is going to want to take the business over and run it, but only time will tell," he said.

Soulen Livestock Company is one of only three traditional range operations left in western Idaho, a small group that includes John Peterson, who is also president of the Idaho Wool Growers Association; and Frank Shirts, the Association's western district director.

Harry said there may be about 12 companies left statewide that still run traditional herding operations.

Idaho Gov. Brad Little, who married Harry's sister, Teresa, is a rancher himself and says he appreciates Harry's contribution to Idaho's agricultural economy and history.

"Harry Soulen (my brother-in-law) and his family have had an incredible impact on both the Weiser area and the State of Idaho. Harry continues the legacy of service to community and Idaho," Gov. Little said in an email to the *Weiser Signal American*. "I remember being in the Fiddle Festival parade (in Weiser) with Phil and Harry. The common refrain from bystanders was, 'I do not know who is in the back seat (me), but he must be Ok because he is with Harry and Phil!'"

"Harry's grandfather, Harry (Sr.), started the sheep operation and built a legacy that both Phil and now Harry have continued. It has always been a family and community-focused ranching and farming operation. I am proud of my family and business association with Harry and his family.

"Teresa makes certain we take many opportunities to join the family, including our six young grandchildren, as we assist Harry and his family and crew with the trailing, shipping, and shearing each year, learning more about each other and the landscape of this beautiful state we call home. Idaho's greatness has been built on generations of family farms and ranches."



Kozgro Organics located in Cambridge is helping farmers create a better growing environment for their crops. A product they produce, Agricultural Field Blend breaks down the salt layers created by chemical fertilizer which reduces irrigation runoff. The humic acid also increases the soil's water retention. Kozgro's products make the soil more conducive to micro and macro-organisms living in the soil. Pictured at the Nampa Farmers Market are from left, Anthony Butler, Kaitlyn Butler, Christa Amos, Preston Amos. *Courtesy photo*

Fuel, fertilizer costs soars amid war in Ukraine

Cambridge business has alternative to help farmers grow nutritious crops

by Deidre Roundtree

Farmers across Idaho are preparing for the next growing season as spring begins to wake up the ground. Farmers that have been tending to these lands for years are facing new challenges as they attempt to accommodate for the doubling and tripling cost of fertilizers.

Current fertilizer prices are at astronomical highs, and with wars raging in Eastern Europe, many are speculating the fertilizer prices will continue rising for the foreseeable future.

Adding the surging prices of fuel to the high cost of fertilizer will prove detrimental to millions of farmers across the country. Many farmers across America are currently exploring methods for easing the costs of their essential growing resources.

Located in Cambridge, Idaho is one alternative that could offer potential solutions for farmers: KozGro Organics.

The desire to support local farmers in growing nutritious crops is a passion for KozGro Organics. Since their founding in 1956, KozGro Organics has been a company that cares more about the welfare of local farmers and the state health of our soils than getting rich at the expense of their customers.

KozGro's product was designed to create healthier soil and a healthier plant. Their product works to increase the micro and macro-organism population living in the soil by creating an environment conducive to their survival.

Agricultural Field Blend (AFB) breaks down salt layers created by years of chemical fertilizer usage which reduces irrigation runoff. The humic acid in AFB increases the soil's water retention which can reduce the field's irrigation needs.

KozGro Organics was first created by Oree Ivie as a soil amendment for his personal use; however, upon seeing his results, he realized he'd created a product that deserved to be shared. From Oree mixing his first batch of KozGro to today, KozGro has continued to be a family owned, Idaho business. Today, the third generation of KozGro is working hard to spread the word that KozGro Organics is a positive economical addition to modern day farming.

While their name says "organic," we are not in business to service only organic growers. In fact, most of our agricultural field blend, AFB, is purchased by farmers that use a combination of our soil amendment and chemical fertilizers. Why would a farmer need to use both organic soil amendments and chemical fertilizers? Two reasons: cost effectiveness and soil health.

Healthy crops cannot grow in damaged soil. When soils have been depleted of their natural fertility, chemical fertilizers must be added at incredibly high amounts to see crop production. Consequently, this leads to a much higher fertilizer bill for the farmer. When supplementing fertilizer usage with AFB, many farmers can cut their fertilizer application and still expect adequate yields.

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The cost of off-road diesel on Sunday was \$4.709 a gallon compared to \$5.20 for on-road. The red dyed diesel is used for off-road equipment and vehicles and as such it doesn't have road fuel taxes included in the price. Last year off-road diesel was costing farmers around \$2.25 per gallon.

No sign of relief as fuel, shipping plague farmers

Farmers paying twice as much for diesel in 2022

by Philip A. Janquart

Most everything farmers do for their operation requires the use of equipment.

Four-runners, trucks, combines, tractors, and numerous other machines all require diesel fuel.

With fuel prices going through the roof, most farmers in the area, and across the U.S., are feeling the effects of domestic and global dynamics that have Americans shelling out big bucks to run their vehicles.

"This year, we are paying between 40 to 50 percent more for fuel," said Gabe Flick, a Weiser farmer who primarily raises seed crops, along with sugar beets and grain. Usually fuel markets bottom out in January and February, providing an opportunity to purchase lower-cost fuel for the season, provided you have the storage," he said. "However, markets have been anything but normal the past few years."

In 2020, diesel was selling for roughly \$2.21 per gallon. On March 28 of this year, the U.S. Energy Information Administration reported a national average of approximately \$5.10. Diesel on Saturday, April 2 was \$5.20 at various filling stations in Weiser, and \$4.699 for the farm diesel price at Valley Wide Cooperative where many area farmers make their bulk fuel purchases.

When prices are too high, most consumers have the option to walk, ride a bike, or use public transportation. That fact is, however, that farmers don't have those options.

"When it comes to fuel, gasoline is much more elastic than diesel," Flick said. "For instance, as gas prices increase, normal consumers might drive less. With diesel, we still have to run equipment to keep the business moving, regardless of price."

"We certainly try to drive less, idle equipment less; it plays into some decisions where we might try to make one less pass across a field if we can avoid it. For the most part, however, we continue to do what needs to be done."

During a normal season, Flick said he spends around \$11,000 on fuel, purchasing between 3,000 to 4,000 gallons per year. This year, he anticipates spending between \$16,000 and \$17,000 for the same amount of fuel.

So, what has caused prices to skyrocket

et?

There are multiple factors involved, including the effects of lock downs during the pandemic, which caused a decrease in demand and fuel prices to subsequently decrease. In 2020, fuel stations in Idaho were selling gas between \$1.89 and \$2 per gallon. People began driving again, increasing demand and the price for fuel.

In 2021, gas prices rose over \$3 per gallon for the first time since 2014, according to GasBuddy.com.

Today a gallon of gas can cost between \$4.49 and \$5.50 per gallon, depending on where you live, representing a roughly 53 percent increase over two years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Some also point the finger at the Biden Administration, specifically citing Biden's executive order killing the Keystone Pipeline and his plans to restrict drilling on government lands and waters, and to tighten regulations on oil and gas producers.

"This plan will only increase prices. The goal of the environmental movement and factions within the Democratic Party is to make oil prices so high that oil will not be viable as an energy choice," said William Manning in a Feb. 24, 2022 blog for American Thinker.

During Biden's presidential campaign, he said, "we are going to get rid of fossil fuels," a point he underscored when he killed Keystone after he took office.

It means the last nail in the coffin for fuel independence in America, which has returned to dependence on foreign sources. Biden's solution was a request that Saudi Arabia increase production to decrease prices, and to release oil from Strategic Petroleum Reserves.

He also blamed the industry for price-gouging, which may or may not be a point well made.

There are other factors, too, such as the inflation that has followed, the war in Ukraine, and supply chain issues.

How are supply chain problems affecting farmers?

"I think that is a question that has multiple answers," Flick said. "I'll preface this by saying I am no expert in supply chains or the macro-economic and geopolitical factors that affect them. However, there is

see **FUEL**, Page 7



Mann Creek Reservoir is about 43 percent full as of March 27. The snowpack in the mountains are melting fast due to the warm temperature. Normally the reservoir would probably be around 75 percent full. The irrigation districts are working on plans to try to stretch the water for farmers as long as they can.

Water outlook not looking good in 2022

Reservoir levels low, water district to consider rotation schedule
by Philip A. Janquart

Jay Edwards of the Weiser Irrigation District remembers only one other time when farmers were forced to receive irrigation water on a rotating basis.

The 2022 season could very well be the second.

"We are looking at how full the reservoir is and it's not good," said Edwards who served as the district's secretary for over 30 years and has now taken over for former chairman Vern Lolley who retired last year.

"We will have some final figures about how much water the district has, and what we will probably end up doing is going on a rotational basis," he said. "Half the people will be on, while half the people will be off, and then we'll be able to stretch what we have."

Corey Loveland, Idaho Snow Survey Supervisor at the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), said water levels at Mann Creek and Crane Creek reservoirs are very low compared to normal this time of year and doesn't expect that to change much at this point.

"Mann Creek, we are talking about 43 percent full as of yesterday (March 27), so that's not even half full," he told the *Weiser Signal American*. "Normally this

time of year, it would probably be around 75 percent full, so the reservoir status is pretty low on that."

Loveland did not have an official level for Crane Creek but estimated it to be no more than about 50 percent full.

"We do surveys there, but I don't know how full it is," he said. "I know that it has been pretty low. January was a really good survey because there was a lot of snow, but then there was a lot of melt and with March, I think there was hardly any snow out there and I could probably guess that right now, all of that snow has melted with all the warm temperatures we've had. With that said, Crane Creek reservoir has probably received all that it's going to get."

When asked if the weather pattern, extended through the summer, could lead to drought, Loveland said that it is a possibility when looking at river flow. The NRCS's March 1 forecast put the Weiser River flow at 87 percent of normal. March, however, saw very little precipitation in the Weiser Basin, prompting the agency to downgrade its forecast to 70 percent of normal.

"To answer your question on drought - see *WATER*, Page 8

From Page 6

High production costs will impact farmers

a lot at play. COVID certainly played a huge role. It also highlighted the issues associated with just-in-time manufacturing where suppliers don't necessarily have a supply of inventory waiting to be sold.

"Freight movement is also an issue; we don't have enough truckers on the road to move through a backlog of freight very quickly as pent-up consumer spending drives the demand for goods. Are we affected? Yes. I have had parts and supplies on back-order since November and no one knows when the products might show up.

"Certain chemicals are short, as well as certain blends of fertilizer. In agriculture, we rely on a lot of different suppliers from all around the world for fertilizer, chemicals, and parts. When these become scarce, it becomes hard to do our job, and at the end of the day, that's a national security issue for our coun-

try."

The war in Ukraine has slowed the shipment of fertilizers and prices are set to skyrocket.

In the U.S., the share of Russian supplies in total imports is 6 percent for potash, 20 percent for diammonium phosphate and 13 percent for uria, according to an April 1 article by the *The Economic Times*.

In FY2021, Russia alone accounted for 17 percent of total MOP (muriate of potash or potassium chloride) imports and almost 60 percent of NPK (nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium) imports - all components of fertilizer.

Russia is also the world's top wheat exporter. Russia and Ukraine together account for roughly 29 percent of the global wheat export market and bottle-necked supply from those countries will continue to add to the increase in prices for food.

The Office of Foreign

Assets Control of the U.S. Treasury on March 24 published a new general license which effectively removed Russian mineral fertilizers from possible sanctions. They were included in the list of vital products along with agricultural products, medicines, and medical products, according to *The Economic Times*.

Are fuel prices complicating the supply chain situation in the U.S.?

"I don't think they are complicating it necessarily. However, they are getting passed on in the form of increased prices on all the goods that are shipped," Flick said. "It will cost us more to get grain to the elevator, and especially sugar beets to the factory. We have already seen fuel surcharges increase on seeds that we ship across the country by quite a bit. I hope diesel prices come down by harvest but I'm kind of doubtful that they will."



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Lack of water and precipitation could pose a problem for farmers

yes," he said. "It's been dry. We were hoping March would be a miracle March where storms would come in and drop some much-needed snow, but that didn't really happen. We had some really light storms that dropped a little bit, but just kind of a blip on the radar, nothing significant, and I don't anticipate anything significant happening in April. Looking at the streamflow forecast and what is currently in the reservoir, it's not looking good. I think it's pretty much bad news."

Edwards said the district is conducting a meeting this week to discuss the situation and will know more about its plan on how it will allocate water this year but reiterated a probable rotation schedule.

He added that the district normally draws on the Weiser River first before drawing on reservoir storage.

"We'll use as much Weiser River water as we can and supplement it with Crane Creek water, so we'll have kind of a minimum flow in our canal," Edwards said. "We have a large water right on the Weiser River, so we have about 120-cfs that we can take even at the lowest time, so we'll keep using the river water and then, when necessary, we will start drawing from our storage. We'll have a plan and then we will be sending a letter out to everybody to explain what we are doing."

"Last time we did this, it worked out very well because you take a block of three or four users and, say, two would be on and two would be off."

Whatever the district ultimately plans, Edwards said the water will be turned on in about the next week and a half.

"There was only one other time we went to a rotational basis, and it was very successful, and we made it through the season. It

wasn't the same as 1977 when the district was suing people to get them to turn their water off. People would be up in the middle of the night and barricade the canal to get water but, you know, that's their livelihood."

Farmer Gabe Flick raises seed crops, along with sugar beets and grain. He said his operation draws from a few different sources, including the Snake River and Owyhee Reservoir, which is about 40 percent of normal. He also relies on Crane Creek.

Between his three sources, Flick said he should be able to make it through the season.

"We do expect water to be tight toward the end of the season but if the summer temperatures are not abnormally high and if they don't come early, we should be able to stretch out our limited supply and get through the season," he said.

The Farmer's Almanac's long-range weather forecast, along with several other sources, anticipates higher than normal temperatures for the Weiser area beginning May.

Flick said he made it through last season Ok. Snowpack in 2021 wasn't bad, but the high temperatures led to irrigation being turned off about two weeks early.

What does it mean for you if the water is shut off early?

"In the case of sugar beets, it can certainly affect the yield and quality but if the soil becomes dry and hard, they become especially challenging to harvest. We plant several seeds crops in the fall that are required to grow through the winter to vernalize (trigger their reproductive phase)," Flick said.

"If the water is shut off early, we will be unable to establish these crops in August-September. This is a problem that seed companies are facing throughout the west right now, especially with carrot seed and certain brassica seed crops."

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