

Weekly Ag Report
Tom Getts, UCCE Weed and Crops Advisor
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Morning, this is Tom Getts with the Lassen County Extension office, and it is time for the Weekly Ag Report. So how has El Nino been treating you this winter? We have had a series of storms that have been rolling through, and hopefully they keep coming! This report is about some precipitation monitoring tools.

Back in 1929 the state set up a Cooperative Snow Survey Program to track snowpack. In late January last year, snowpack was estimated to be a dismal 27% of the normal year-to-date average. Currently this year we are doing much better with snowpack estimated to be at 129% of the normal year-to-date average. But just because we are above average currently, doesn't mean the drought is over by any means!

The US Drought Monitor, out of the University of Nebraska Lincoln, is a great tool to track the drought. They produce maps every week estimating the severity of drought nationwide, based on factors such as soil moisture, streamflow, and a few precipitation indexes. These maps can be viewed at droughtmonitor.unl.edu. Unfortunately the drought monitor map currently places the majority of Lassen County in either extreme or exceptional drought. I'll be crossing my fingers for as much rain and snow as we can get in the coming months...

Last week I was able to attend the Winter Ag meeting over in MacArthur, where I saw a few familiar faces from Lassen County. Anyway, California's State Climatologist, Mike Anderson, gave a great talk on California's current and historic climatic trends. He also made a pitch for more CoCoRaHS in North Eastern California. Now you're probably thinking "What is CoCoRaHS, it kind of sounds like a dance, or chocolate bar?" Well, it is actually a catchy acronym for The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network. This is a citizen science group where volunteers throughout the country check and record the amount of precipitation received daily. The information is then uploaded to an online database and can be accessed by the public and researchers alike! CoCoRaHS started in 1998 to develop more comprehensive precipitation data over a wider area, simply by having more rain gauges across the landscape. Mike pointed out that precipitation can vary widely even in just a mile or two, especially in a state with mountainous topography like California. Currently there are very few CoCoRaHS stations here in Northeastern California, and a lot of variability in precipitation from place to place. You can be a volunteer for CoCoRaHS, all you need is a little motivation, a standardized rain gauge, and access to a computer. More information on how to sign up, or to view the data can be found at cocorahs.org.

No Ag Report about precipitation monitoring would be complete without at least mentioning the California Irrigation Management Information System, or CIMIS. But there isn't time to go into details today, once it warms up there will be a more detailed AG Report on CIMIS. If you would like a copy of this report it can be found posted on the Lassen County Extension website. Until next time, that was your Weekly Ag Report.