



## Oregon Wine Industry Crop Update

Sept. 14, 2011

### Warm late summer days lead to optimism for 2011 vintage

Winegrowers across the state are increasingly optimistic about the 2011 vintage as warm late summer days and the absence of precipitation over the last two months has buoyed their confidence that 2011 could result in an outstanding Oregon wine vintage, according to a survey of Oregon winegrowers by the Oregon Wine Board.

Growers are reporting that they have largely caught up from a late spring start, but are still projecting an October harvest target. Some regions may begin their harvest as early as the first week in October, but most won't get under way until the middle of October.

As the industry moves down the home stretch toward harvest, the short-term and long-term weather forecasts also appear to be cooperative with continued seasonal temperatures and precipitation increasing to normal patterns. While degree days trailed 2010 through July, they have exceeded last year in August and September, especially in the northern Willamette Valley. Precipitation has been lower than 2010 since the middle of July in all regions of the state.

According to the Climate Prediction Center, the forecast through the rest of September is for average temperatures and a higher probability of some precipitation. The 90-day CPC forecast shows seasonal conditions with temperatures remaining near average and the probability of precipitation increasing.

In the **Willamette Valley**, the harvest timeframe is trending later than normal though it could be pushed ahead if warm weather continues into the end of September. This is a big change from 2010 when the growing season not only got off to a late start, but there were fewer warm days in August and September to compensate.

Growers are reporting perhaps the largest yield since the early 2000s. This is largely attributed to good weather during flowering and set earlier in the summer. The challenge is not to work the vineyards to achieve the best ripening possible. Veraison, or color change, is in progress and progressed rapidly during the warm days in the first half of September.

“The generosity of fruit has left us with lots of opportunities,” said one vineyard manager who is in the process of thinning her vineyards to promote optimum ripeness. “This allows us to be a little picky and choosey. The fruit looks really beautiful. The vines are really healthy.”

The other threat looming on the horizon is migrating birds which were a particularly difficult problem in 2010 complicated by the lateness of the harvest. Armed with lessons from last year, growers are taking precautions to be prepared.

In **Southern Oregon**, the crop looks good and is about average in size. Other than the fact that the harvest remains late historically, the crop has experienced no damage due to weather. In hopes of gaining ripening horsepower, growers are doing their best to increase canopy size and height and maintain plant health later into the fall without risking potential for freeze damage.

Pinot noir has almost fully turned color, Cabernet Franc is still green and all other varieties are somewhere in between.

In the **Columbia Gorge**, color change is on par with 2010 as the weather has been even more favorable than in the Willamette Valley, with more sunny days and fewer clouds. The late summer heat has been an added bonus and set the stage for a strong harvest. Clusters and grapes are an average size.

Harvest is expected to start the first week in October with Merlot and Chardonnay from The Dalles and progress into Pinot gris in Hood River and Underwood Mountain. The Pinot noir harvest is expected about Oct. 15, which is comparable to 2010. Growers are also preparing for the potential for bird problems by installing netting.

#### **About the Oregon Wine Board**

The Oregon Wine Board is a semi-independent Oregon state agency managing marketing, research and education initiatives that support and advance the Oregon wine and wine grape industry. The Board works on behalf of all Oregon wineries and independent growers throughout the state’s diverse winegrowing regions. The Oregon wine grape and wine industry contributes over \$2.7 billion of economic activity to the state economy each year, including over 13,500 wine-related.

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