

Salt Flats washed out

Valerie Thompson Racing postponed again as Speed Week cancelled

Valerie Thompson, The World's Fastest Female Motorcycle Racer (and within a hair's breadth of fastest male or female) is also driver of the four-wheeled Treit & Davenport Target 550, a 43-foot-long, 8,740-pound streamliner powered by two supercharged alcohol-fueled Dodge HEMI engines generating over 2,500 horsepower each.

In 2019, in only her third pass behind the wheel of the Target 550, Valerie had posted a top speed of 291 mph at the 2-1/2 mile point and was headed higher, when the vehicle porpoised and both engines were damaged.

With the craft fully repaired, and two new engines receiving updated Stage V heads and Hogan intake manifolds for more horsepower, the team and craft headed next to Lake Gaird-

ner salt lake in Australia in early 2020. Valerie was just about to depart her home in Scottsdale to join them, when everything was shut down by the onset of the coronavirus era.

Back in the US, after event cancellations at the Bonneville Salt Flat the past two years, Valerie and the team finally headed back up this summer for the Utah Salt Flats Racing Association (USFRA) Test & Tune session, July 7-10, where they would have run time to make adjustments (as Bonneville is almost a mile higher than Lake Gairdner, and air density is very different), followed by SCTA/BNI's 74th Annual Speed Week, August 6-12.

However, this time the weather intervened.

Here is Valerie's update, sent from Utah on August 7: "Utter disappointment. There's no

other way to put it. Speed Week at the Bonneville Salt Flats was officially cancelled this morning. It rained hard, and the Salt Flats are one big lake. There's no hope for a dry race course this week. The standing water is running-board deep at the end of the road! Everyone is beginning to retrieve their things and head home.

"But we'll do what racers do...pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and try again. It's how we roll!"

"I continue to be grateful for the Target 550 team, the terrific land speed racing community and all the sponsors who are part of this effort. This is just a speed bump—we'll be back, so stay tuned! — Valerie"

Meanwhile, Valerie is keeping busy with a new passion—pickleball. You can catch her varied exploits on all the Valerie Thompson Racing social media channels. ■



And...

BMST also cancelled

Within days of the cancellation of Speed Week, the 2022 Bonneville Motorcycle Speed Trials (BMST) 2022, FIM Land Speed World Records and AMA Land Speed Grand Championship were also cancelled, after the event's assessment team reviewed current Bonneville Salt Flat conditions by air and on the ground.

Unfortunately, all track locations and alternatives were still flooded from the initial storm and multiple subsequent storm systems, with the conclusion that there was no possibility the water would recede and salt could dry out sufficiently in the week remaining to support track preparations and operations.

A University of Utah webcam had given some people hope that the area was drying, so they performed an aerial assessment, which revealed the entire length of the tracks and beyond were flooded.

With boots on the ground, wading into the flood waters at Intermediate start locations for the International and Mountain tracks, they found flooding four to 10 inches deep across the length of the tracks. Combined with detailed review of their aerial photos, it was determined there were 11.5 million cubic feet (327,000m³) of flooding directly over the racing surface, with no viable alternative locations. Perhaps most significantly, the numbers mean there had been less than a 3/4-inch decrease in water depth since the initial storms.

BMST organizers informed their participants, "We appreciate and understand all of the hours that you have dedicated to reach your goals throughout this year, and for our international friends, the additional logistics that you encounter to reach us."

"We are working alongside you as we extend ourselves to help you achieve your racing goals and support a premier Land Speed Racing event. We thank the volunteers for their contributions, the AMA and FIM organizations and support staff and our sponsors for their continued support of our sport. Keep posted to our web and social media pages for updates!"

Next year's Bonneville Motorcycle Speed Trials dates have been set, with that main event running August 26 - 31, 2023.

Stay posted at BonnevilleMST.com. ■



Valerie Thompson
10x Land Speed Record Holder
Sturgis Motorcycle Hall of Fame Inductee
World's Fastest Female Motorcycle Racer 328.467 mph
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