



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Idaho Water Board offers to sell Aqualife hatchery to ground water districts for \$3.2 million to facilitate water conflict resolution**

BOISE – (Nov. 19, 2015) – The Idaho Water Resource Board voted to expand an existing loan to 10 ground water districts in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) Tuesday by offering to sell the Aqualife fish hatchery property to the districts for an appraised value of \$3.2 million, bringing the value of the total loan to \$7.2 million. The loan must be paid back to the Water Board by September 30, 2016, officials said.

Brian Patton, chief of the planning and projects bureau for the Water Board, said the sale of the hatchery property is a vital aspect of reaching resolution to water supply conflicts in the Hagerman area between those who pump from the Eastern Snake Plain aquifer and those who rely on spring flows from the aquifer. The districts face a deadline of the end of 2015 to provide water to the Rangen Hatchery in the Hagerman Valley.

In the Water Board meeting in Boise on Tuesday, officials with the ground water districts appealed to the Board to reduce the price on the Aqualife hatchery property, arguing that it was inflated by as much as \$500,000. The Water Board approved the sale of the hatchery property to the 10 ground water districts at the \$3.2 million appraised value. They relied on the appraisal completed by LeMoynes Appraisal in August 2015.

After a lengthy discussion and a unanimous vote, Water Board Chairman Roger Chase said he sympathized with the pumpers, but the board couldn't justify reducing the property value. "I don't feel good about putting you guys in a corner. We appreciate your sacrifices," Chase said.

To which, Lynn Carlquist, representing ground water districts, said, "We're always in the cross-hairs."

In other business, the Water Board:

- Approved two enhancement projects to bolster two existing ESPA aquifer recharge sites, one in the Egin Lakes area near St. Anthony and one near Blackfoot in the Jensen Grove recreation area. The Water Board approved spending \$26,500 on the Jensen Grove enhancement project to improve the diversion and delivery system and \$1.03 million on the Egin Lakes project, which will improve the recharge capacity of that site by 50 to 150 cfs by building a new connection from the St. Anthony Canal to the Egin Lakes recharge canal.
- Viewed the Water Board's new educational video titled, "A New Era in Water Management on the Eastern Snake River Plain." The 20-minute video explains the history and context of how surface and ground water are managed in the ESPA area and multiple solutions now under way to restore the ESPA aquifer and conserve water in the future. The video can be viewed on the Water Board's web site.
- Approved spending \$100,000 for the Palouse Ground Water Basin Water Supply Alternatives Project, a new study that will look for ways to reduce ground water consumption in the Palouse Basin Aquifer area and also recharge the aquifer. The Palouse Aquifer, which supplies the City of Moscow and the University of Idaho, has dropped about 100 feet since the early 1900s and continues to drop. Ground water use overall has decreased in the region by 10 percent over the last 22 years as a result of a ground water management plan.
- Increased a loan to the Bee Line Water Association, located north of Bonner's Ferry, by \$200,000 to cover the cost of installing new equipment at the Meadow Creek diversion site and also for installing new sand filters. The total amount of the 15-year loan is now \$600,000 to cover the full cost of the system upgrade. Water users on the Bee Line water system are supportive of the investment, said Mike Hansen. Water users will pay \$9 more per month to cover the improvement costs. "People really like our gravity-fed water system," he said.
- Directed the Idaho Water Supply Bank to notify water rights owners who have leased water to the state on an indefinite basis that they will need to update contracts by Jan. 22, 2016 with the Water Bank to new, fixed-term contracts. Water Bank officials have been trying to reach the owners of 16 water rights, primarily in the Treasure Valley area, to let them know about the contract tenure change. Public notices will be sent out in hopes of reaching the water rights owners.

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