



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Idaho Water Resource Board contact: Sean Vincent, IDWR Project Manager, 208-287-4853

## **Idaho Water Resource Board approves five-year study to develop a Treasure Valley Groundwater Flow Model**

*U.S. Geological Survey to contribute to study and share costs*

BOISE - (May 24, 2016) - The Idaho Water Resource Board has approved \$500,000 for the first annual contribution to a five-year study to create a detailed model of the Treasure Valley aquifer system.

The State's total contribution to the study will be \$2.5 million over five years. The U.S. Geological Survey will collaborate on model development and provide federal matching funds for a portion of the work. A technical advisory committee will be formed to provide for transparency, share information and gather stakeholder input.

The model will simulate groundwater flow through the various aquifers that underlie the Treasure Valley. It will be used to evaluate groundwater and surface water interaction, said Sean Vincent, project manager for the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR).

Previous groundwater modeling efforts have struggled to develop a fully transient or time-dependent predictive tool, Vincent said. "The Treasure Valley is a complicated area to model, and we have some data gaps to overcome. Most of the money will be spent on data collection and data processing."

Water Resource Board member Albert Barker is pleased that the board is funding the model.

"The Treasure Valley is a very attractive place to live and work. We must prepare for growth and find ways to manage growth for a sustainable future," said Barker, who represents southwestern Idaho interests on the board. "Water is a critical part of that equation."

"The Treasure Valley Groundwater Model enhancement will provide water users, the Idaho Department of Water Resources and planners with an additional tool to evaluate where water is available in the Treasure Valley, how deep wells need to be, and where there are limitations on the supply of groundwater," Barker said.

The boundaries of the study are the Snake River along the southwest and northwest, the Main Payette River drainage to the north, the area where the valley floor meets the Boise Foothills along the northeast, and the Mountain Home Plateau to the southeast.

The study has strong support from water interests in the valley as well as the Idaho Legislature. Senate Concurrent Resolution 137 was passed by the Legislature earlier this year, directing the Water Resource Board to embark on statewide aquifer stabilization and sustainability studies in general, and specifically "to develop a groundwater model, with all necessary measurement networks, for the Treasure Valley Aquifer."

The study also will use satellite remote sensing data to estimate the rate of evapotranspiration – the sum of evaporation from the Earth’s surface and transpiration by plants – in the area, which will help the Water Resource Board understand what happens to water that is used to irrigate crops and lawns.

IDWR officials teamed up with the University of Idaho several years ago to help develop a sophisticated and accurate method of mapping evapotranspiration with Landsat data. Their application was recognized by Harvard University with an "Innovations in American Government" award in 2009.

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Study area

