



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Idaho Water Resource Board sets recharge target of 108,000 acre-feet of water into the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer in winter 2016-2017

BOISE - (Nov. 3, 2016) - The Idaho Water Resource Board is predicting that more than 100,000 acre-feet of water will be recharged into the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) during the winter of 2016-2017. The actual amount will be monitored based on available river flows and snowpack levels this winter, officials said this week.

Wesley Hipke, Recharge Project Manager for the Idaho Department of Water Resources, gave an update on recharge activities planned for this winter, as well as a progress report on recharge infrastructure projects currently under construction and in development. "Our target is to recharge 108,000 acre-feet of water if everything comes together," he said. "If things go well, we could beat that number."

The Water Board began recharge flows about 10 days ago after its water right for recharge came into priority on Oct. 25. The target flow represents an increase from last year's recharge flow of about 68,000 acre-feet. The long-term goal is to recharge 250,000 acre-feet of water into the ESPA to help restore aquifer levels.

All of recharge water this winter is expected to occur on Mid-Snake projects, Hipke said. The reservoirs in the Upper Snake River system are very low, so the board is not expecting surplus water to be available for recharge in the Upper Snake.

The Milepost 31 recharge project operated by American Falls Reservoir District #2 near Shoshone will be the workhorse this year. The canal company is currently recharging 200-250 cubic feet per second and plans to ramp up to 400-500 cfs in December after a construction project is completed, Hipke said. The Twin Falls Canal Company, North Side Canal Company and the Southwest Irrigation District are also major participants in conducting recharge for the Water Board this winter.

In other action, the Water Board passed a resolution adopting a new Sustainability policy that will be added to the State Water Plan. The Sustainability Policy was adopted by the board after it held a series

of public meetings around the state, during which a total of 120 public comments were received, including 58 oral comments in public meetings.

“The governor urged us to do this and involve the public throughout the state,” said Jeff Raybould, board vice-chair from the St. Anthony area. “It puts into place a lot of concepts that the Water Board has incorporated all along.”

In public meetings, the board heard comments from the public about balancing water consumptive use with the needs of fish, wildlife, recreation and water quality. Those items were addressed in the sustainability policy, which also protects existing property rights and water rights. The Sustainability Policy will be forwarded to Gov. Butch Otter and the Idaho Legislature for consideration in the 2017 session.

In other action, the Water Board:

- Received an update about a planned water pipeline from the Snake River to Mountain Home Air Force Base. IDWR staff will put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an owner’s advisor to be hired by January to oversee the project, officials said. The Air Force will be the lead agency in conducting an environmental assessment on the project. A design-build construction method is expected to be used to expedite project completion. The goal is to finish the project by the year 2020. The project would provide a stable drinking water supply to the air base.
- Approved funds for a Treasure Valley Recharge Feasibility Study. The Idaho Legislature directed the Water Board to conduct the study to assist in addressing aquifer stabilization and sustainability issues in the Treasure Valley. The study will look at the potential of utilizing recharge of surplus water as a water management tool throughout the Treasure Valley. The study is expected to go out to bid in November.
- Received an update on the installation of surface water measurement devices in Water District #02 on the Snake River between Milner Dam and Swan Falls Dam. The project was funded by WaterSmart grants via the Bureau of Reclamation and by water users. Installation was completed in September 2016. “You’ve done a great job on this in a short amount of time,” said board member Vince Alberdi of Twin Falls. “A big component of managing water use is water measurement.”
- Adopted updated criteria for the award of ground water conservation grants. There is \$200,000 available for ground water conservation grants through April 1, 2017. Applicants can request up to \$20,000 for projects and \$10,000 for studies that lead to ground water conservation projects. Matching funds are required.
- Received an update on a recently completed computer infrastructure investment project for the Water Supply Bank. In 2015, the Board authorized expenditure of \$500,000 to develop water right management software for the Bank. The software, which was developed on time and on budget, will improve application processing and administrative efficiencies of the Water Supply Bank program.

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