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Idaho Water Resource Board approves \$2.4 million sale of Pristine Springs fish hatchery to College of Southern Idaho

Board members call sale of hatchery a "win-win deal"

BOISE - (March 28, 2017) – The Idaho Water Resource Board voted unanimously to approve a \$2.4 million sale of the Pristine Springs Hatchery to the College of Southern Idaho (CSI) during its regularly scheduled meeting in Boise.

Water Resource Board member Vince Alberdi of Twin Falls said the deal has been in the works for about five years. Proceeds from the sale go to the State General Fund. The Idaho Senate and House voted last week to fund half of the purchase price for CSI. An artesian geothermal well is among the features that interested the college about the property.

"This is a win-win deal all the way around," Alberdi said. "The college and the community are supportive and legislative leadership is supportive."

The Board purchased Pristine Springs in 2008 in partnership with the City of Twin Falls and the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators to resolve a water call. CSI plans to use the geothermal well for heating operations and the hatchery for aquaculture education. The sale is expected to close soon.

The Water Resource Board also learned that recharge operations on the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) have been ramped up to take advantage of this year's substantial water supply. Water that otherwise would be released for flood control instead is being used for recharge across the ESPA from the Upper Snake down to the Magic Valley. A number of irrigation districts, canal companies and the City of Blackfoot are recharging surplus water from the Snake and Wood rivers into the ESPA through the Board's managed recharge program.

"We have the potential to surpass 200,000 acre-feet this recharge season," said Wesley Hipke, Recharge Project Manager for the Idaho Department of Water Resources. "Our partners have worked hard with the board to make this a record year for recharge."

The Water Resource Board also was updated on the Mountain Home Air Force Base Water Sustainability Project. Water for the base comes from a critically declining aquifer. In 2014, the Idaho Legislature approved Governor Otter’s request for funding to purchase senior Snake River water rights from the J.R. Simplot Co. to provide an alternate water supply for the base. The Board now is initiating design and development work of the infrastructure to deliver water to the base, including a pump station at C.J. Strike Reservoir, a pipeline, and a water treatment plant at the base.

The project is expected to be completed in 2021.

“This is a very high priority project for the Governor, Legislature and the Board,” Chairman Roger Chase said. “The State is committed to supporting a critical national defense installation and to help protect a base that has been a significant economic generator for the State of Idaho as well as the surrounding communities.”

In other action, the board approved a \$40,000 water conservation grant to the City of Hailey to continue a water conservation project in which property owners receive rebates if they convert from turf to low- to no-water alternative forms of landscape. Twenty-five property owners have participated in the program so far, resulting in the savings of 1 million gallons of water. Hailey is applying for a \$75,000 Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart grant, and is receiving in-kind contributions from the city and Wood River Land Trust for the rebate program.

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