



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Idaho Water Resource Board stops Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer recharge operations; surplus flows no longer available on Snake River

BOISE - (May 18, 2017) - The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) suspended Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) recharge operations today, effective immediately.

At the Idaho Water Resource Board's Upper Snake River Advisory Committee meeting on Tuesday, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation officials said they will decrease flows below Minidoka Dam to meet irrigation demand. Flows past Milner Dam will be at or near zero today to enable the filling of the Upper Snake River Basin reservoir system.

Consistent with its policy not to impede filling of the reservoir system, the board's recharge program is suspending its use of the Snake River's surplus flows to replenish the ESPA. If conditions change and the Bureau of Reclamation allows additional flows past Milner Dam, the board will reassess its managed recharge opportunities.

During the historic winter of 2016-17, the board set a record for recharge flows into the ESPA since the managed recharge program began with funding from the Idaho Legislature in 2015. More than 300,000 acre-feet of water has been recharged into the ESPA since last October.

More than 135,000 acre-feet of water has been recharged into the ESPA in the Upper Snake River Valley, with an equal volume of water recharged into the ESPA below Minidoka Dam in the greater Magic Valley area. Another 38,000 acre-feet of water has been recharged into the ESPA from the Big Wood River system.

On the Big Wood, the board and the Big Wood Canal Company will continue recharge efforts with surplus flows from the Big and Little Wood rivers as long as the board's recharge water right is in priority this spring.

For more information, contact Wesley Hipke, recharge program manager for the Idaho Water Resource Board, 208-287-4832.

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