



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Idaho Water Resource Board contact: Brian Patton, Chief, Planning Bureau, 208-287-4800

Idaho Water Resource Board approves funding for phase II study of Lewiston Regional Aquifer to learn more how it functions

LEWISTON - (May 22, 2017) - The Idaho Water Resource Board has approved spending \$109,273 with Ralston Hydraulic Services Inc. of Moscow for the second phase of the Lewiston Regional Deep Aquifer Study.

Officials said at the Water Resource Board's regular meeting in Lewiston last week that Phase 2 of the study will continue investigating how the aquifer south and east of Lewiston is replenished by surface and ground water sources, and determine the aquifer's sustainable yield.

Aquifers underlying the Lewiston area have been in decline since the early 1990s. The Lindsay Creek Ground Water Management Area was designated in 1992. The Lewiston Plateau Ground Water Management Area was created in March 2015 when depletion was discovered in a larger area of shallow basalt aquifers.

The board wants to ensure the aquifers are managed to prevent further decline and can provide reasonable growth opportunities from available water supplies. Phase 2 of the aquifer study is expected to be completed in June 2018.

The board also received an update on the Palouse Basin Water Supply Study. A team of consultants has been hired by the Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC) to see which water supply projects appear to be the most promising for meeting future water needs in the Palouse groundwater basin.

An initial evaluation was completed in February. The consultant team created a regional 50-year water-demand projection and water supply target, using different rates of conservation savings. It also developed four water supply alternatives, including the possibility of:

- Diverting water from the Snake River and piping it to Pullman and Moscow.
- Diverting flows from the North Fork Palouse River and piping it to Pullman and Moscow, plus Paradise Creek or South Fork Palouse Aquifer Recharge for Moscow.
- Store water in Flannigan Creek and convey and treat water for Moscow and the University of Idaho, plus South Fork direct diversion for Pullman to Washington State University.
- Paradise Creek aquifer recharge for Moscow, South Fork aquifer storage and recovery for Pullman, Pullman wastewater reuse, and Moscow wastewater reuse and ground water recharge, plus conservation.

The PBAC group will be conducting community outreach over the next several years to develop a preferred alternative for a long-term water supply. The goal is to have a refined set of alternatives developed by 2020, and a plan ready for implementation by 2025.

In other action, the board passed a \$12.1 million budget for water management projects in fiscal 2018 for the Secondary Aquifer Planning, Management and Implementation account. The budget includes \$7.6 million for recharge operations, infrastructure and investigations; \$1.7 million for Treasure Valley ground water, future storage and conservation studies; \$50,000 for projects in the Mountain Home/Elmore County area; \$100,000 for projects in the Weiser River Basin; \$109,273 for Phase II of the Lewiston Regional Aquifer Study; and \$1.8 million for other aquifer studies, cloud-seeding, ground water conservation grants and more.

The board also heard about progress being made on the Mountain Home Air Force Base Water Sustainability Project. The project includes construction of a pipeline and water treatment plant to deliver a reliable water supply from the Snake River to the base. In addition to water-characteristic studies to select a water treatment method, the results of an environmental assessment are scheduled to be released by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in the coming week.

#####