



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Priest Lake study recommends replacing outlet dam, improving Thorofare and maintaining pool levels for summer recreation**

BOISE - (Oct. 27, 2017) – The Idaho Water Resource Board held a special meeting on Tuesday to receive a presentation on the path forward for the Priest Lake Water Management Study, consider funding an aquifer recharge project in Elmore County, and consider joining in a feasibility study to evaluate raising the level of dams on the Boise River to increase water storage capacity.

Last year, the board authorized \$300,000 for the Priest Lake Water Management Study and selected consultant Mott MacDonald to complete the analysis. To maintain lake levels in the summer and current minimum discharges below the outlet structure during drought years, the consultant recommended a three- to six-inch increase in the pool level during the recreation season. The consultant also presented options for upgrading the Priest Lake outlet structure to accommodate the drought year pool increase.

In addition, the consultant evaluated options to help maintain sustainable navigable conditions in the Thorofare, a channel connecting Priest Lake and Upper Priest Lake. After reviewing a number of alternatives, the consultant recommended building a sediment-retention feature to replace the existing breakwater structure.

All of the improvements to Priest Lake are expected to cost less than \$5 million, board officials said. The board plans to work with northern Idaho legislators to secure funding for the project.

“This is an important project that will improve facilities on Priest Lake and ensure that we can maintain the lake levels required by state law and provide minimum discharges from the outlet structure during drought years,” said Dale Van Stone, a Water Resource Board member who lives in Hope, near Priest Lake.

“We’ve had several public meetings about this study, and I think the plan moving forward will be well-received by Priest Lake residents,” Stone said.

In other action, the board heard a presentation from Elmore County officials about a proposed water-recharge project on Canyon Creek. Studies show that Elmore County is dependent on water supplies that are insufficient to support existing uses and future development. Specifically, groundwater pumping from the Mountain Home Plateau Aquifer exceeds annual natural recharge, resulting in chronic

water level declines in the area. This project is designed to add water to the aquifer benefitting all of the groundwater users in the area, including the City of Mountain Home. The board passed a resolution for \$140,000 to assist Elmore County in the development of this project.

In other action, the board discussed information from a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers investigation of future water storage options in Boise River reservoirs. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has the authority to evaluate new storage on the Boise River and, in cooperation with the Corps, identified new smaller-scale options to increase water storage capacity by raising the height of Lucky Peak, Arrowrock and Anderson Ranch dams.

The board voted to commit the required 50-percent cost-share required by non-federal partners to work with Reclamation on a feasibility study of raising the three dams and to continue pursuing funds through the federal Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act for required studies and potential construction.

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