



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Idaho Water Resource Board expected to surpass 200,000 acre-feet of recharge into ESPA this week, may reach 300,000+ a.f. this spring**

BOISE - (Jan. 8, 2018) – The Idaho Water Resource Board is poised to surpass recharging 200,000 acre-feet of water into the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) this week, and it's on course to exceed the board's annual recharge goal of 250,000 acre-feet per year, officials said Monday.

"We are hoping to not only meet our annual goal but potentially surpass the record we set last year of 317,000 acre-feet of water, depending on what the weather brings the rest of this winter," said Wesley Hipke, recharge project manager for the board.

"Now that colder weather has settled over the ESPA region, we expect recharge flows to decrease in the short term because of freezing temperatures and icy conditions in the canals, and then pick up again in the early spring when temperatures warm up."

As of Friday, Jan. 5, recharge flows reached 200,044 acre-feet of water into the ESPA. This year, the board's recharge program has benefitted from a surplus of reservoir storage in the Upper Snake River region, Hipke said, allowing the Surface Water Coalition to donate 61,100 acre-feet of water for recharge under the historic water settlement agreement. Those flows were recharged into the ESPA between Aug. 30 and early November.

In addition, the board has been working to expand the number of recharge sites that have the potential and capacity to participate in the program and also boost the capacity of existing sites. So far, more than 100,000 acre-feet of water has been recharged into the ESPA from the Upper Snake region, above Minidoka Dam, by eight different irrigation districts or canal companies. Below Minidoka Dam, three irrigation districts and canal companies have recharged more than 95,000 acre-feet of water into the ESPA. The board pays the districts and canal companies to conduct managed recharge using the Board's water rights on a per-acre-foot basis with funds provided from the Idaho Legislature.

The board's goal of meeting an annual target of 250,000 acre-feet of recharge into the ESPA per year is intended to restore the ESPA to sustainable levels, along with a reduction of 240,000 acre-feet of

ground water pumping by the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators (IGWA) and nine ground water districts across the ESPA region through the settlement agreement.

Up to 2016, the ESPA was being overdrafted by an estimated 200,000 acre-feet per year. Last year, ground water monitoring wells showed that the ESPA was beginning to bounce back, showing an increase of in storage of at least 660,000 acre-feet.

“We are starting to see the benefits of the board’s recharge program in the ESPA, along with contributions from the Surface Water Coalition and IGWA,” Hipke said. “However, to meet our long term goals when water isn’t as abundant, we need to continue to expand the recharge infrastructure.”

The participating canal companies and irrigations districts are shown below, with their contributions to the recharge program so far, as of Jan. 5:

Snake River – below Minidoka Dam:

- American Falls Reservoir #2 - 88,105 a.f.
- Twin Falls Canal Co. - 4,950 a.f.
- SWID – 4,306 a.f.

Snake River – above Minidoka Dam:

- Fremont-Madison ID – 42,486 a.f.
- Farmers Friend Irrigation Co. – 10,300 a.f.
- Great Feeder Canal Co. - 20,222 a.f.
- Idaho ID - 3,076 a.f.
- Snake River Valley ID - 8,697 a.f.
- Enterprize Canal - 5,230 a.f.
- New Sweden ID - 2,661 a.f.
- Aberdeen-Springfield Canal - 8,703 a.f.

Big/Little Wood River:

- Big Wood Canal (BWCC) – 1,307 a.f.

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