



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **IDWR reminds ground water pumpers of April 1 deadline for installing ground water meters**

BOISE – (Feb. 20, 2018) – The Idaho Department of Water Resources is reminding farmers who use ground water for irrigation in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) region that they must install department-approved flow meters prior to the beginning of the 2018 irrigation season, which typically commences on April 1. Ground water pumpers who fail to comply will have their water supply shut off until they install the flow meters.

“We’re giving them a head’s up that the department will be forced to curtail water use for those who don’t comply at the start of irrigation season,” IDWR Deputy Director Mathew Weaver said.

About 60 percent of the farmers who irrigate with ground water have complied so far, according to IDWR records, with less than 45 days to go before the compliance deadline. About 5,400 ground water wells in the ESPA region are subject to the requirement. Domestic and stockwater wells and small irrigation wells servicing less than five acres are exempt.

IDWR officials encourage farmers to notify their ground water districts that they have complied with the order to ensure compliance records are accurate.

A number of ground water districts have grant funds available to help farmers with the cost of installing the meters, said Lynn Tominaga, executive director of the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators (IGWA).

“We’ve been working hard to obtain grant funds to help farmers with the expense of installing flow meters in a timely manner, and we’ve got about \$2.8 million available,” Tominaga said. “Farmers should contact their ground water districts to learn how to apply, and do it quickly.”

Ground water users can file a variance request if they qualify.

“To give the department time to process them, all variance requests should be filed with the IDWR state office by March 1,” Weaver said. Here is a [web link](#) to a variance request form and more information about [eligibility requirements](#) for variances.

IDWR Director Gary Spackman issued an order on July 20, 2016 requiring the installation of department-approved flow meters for all qualifying ground water users in the ESPA region by the start of the 2018 irrigation season. In addition, the historic water settlement agreement forged by the Surface Water Coalition and IGWA in 2015 specifically requires ground water pumpers to install flow meters.

The Director's order required non-irrigation ground water users such as cities, manufacturing plants, dairies and others to install approved flow meters by January 1, 2018. According to IDWR records, more than 50 percent of those users complied.

The purpose of the director's order is to provide the most accurate information to IDWR and ground water districts about ground water consumption in the ESPA region. The ESPA has been over-drafted by about 200,000 acre-feet per year since the 1950s. The meters also will help IGWA and ground water districts track ground water use reductions as required in the water settlement agreement.

Besides curtailment of their water supply, ground water users failing to comply with the director's order also could face civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per violation.

"We are hoping that our efforts to inform ground water users about the compliance deadlines will minimize the number of curtailments," Weaver said. "We see water shut-offs and a Notice of Violation as a last resort. But we will not be soft on enforcement given approximately 60 percent of the effected water users have complied with our order and have already purchased and installed measurement devices. We want to be clear that this is a mandatory requirement."

Affected ground water users can reach out to IDWR staff, local water districts or ground water districts officials to receive assistance with technical questions associated with flow meter installation. Water district and IDWR staff will be conducting flow meter inspections through March. Inspections will increase on April 1, officials said.

If water users have questions about the water meter installations, contact Brian Ragan, 208-287-4800 or [info@idwr.idaho.gov](mailto:info@idwr.idaho.gov). If the media have questions, please contact Mat Weaver at 208-287-4800.

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