



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Idaho Water Resource Board expects 440,000 acre-feet of recharge flow into the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer due to water surplus**

BOISE - (March 27, 2018) – The Idaho Water Resource Board estimated that 440,000 acre-feet of water will flow into the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) during by the end of the current water year – 76 percent more than the annual recharge goal of 250,000 acre-feet.

The Water Resource Board set a record with 317,000 acre-feet of recharge to the ESPA last year. The Board has recharged more than 350,000 acre-feet of water from the Upper Snake River Valley and Magic Valley regions, with another month to go in the recharge season.

“We’re breaking new records every day now,” said Wesley Hipke, the Board’s recharge program manager.

Hipke said surplus water in the Upper Snake reservoir system and additional recharge site capacity developed by the Board and its water user partners has led to a very successful recharge season.

At its March meeting, the Water Resource Board also approved spending up to \$30,000 to study potential mitigation options for impacts to the northern Idaho ground squirrel resulting from a proposed expansion of the Lost Valley Reservoir near New Meadows. Lost Valley Reservoir water users want to raise Lost Valley dam to expand the size of the reservoir from 10,000 to 30,000 acre-feet. However, the reservoir is surrounded by populations of the ground squirrel, which is listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

The Board supports water users’ interest in increasing reservoir capacity to address water needs in the Weiser River Basin, but agreed that options to offset impacts to the squirrels should first be evaluated.

In other action, the Board:

- Approved a loan to the Goose Lake Reservoir Company for \$300,000 over 20 years. The company operates the 4,600-acre-foot reservoir near Brundage Mountain and McCall. The Board approved a \$20,000 loan to the company last July to complete a structural evaluation of the dam and spillway. The study found that the dam’s spillway retaining walls have experienced significant cracking and deterioration and recommended that they be replaced. The stored water serves ranchers who irrigate about 4,600 acres in Meadows Valley. The dam was built in 1920 and raised to increase reservoir capacity in 1951 and 1972.
- Approved spending \$2.19 million from the U.S. Department of Energy and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to better characterize the hydrogeology of the ESPA and the Big Lost River basin. Among other things the money will be used for 20 additional wells to expand the ESPA monitoring network, which provides information about consumptive water use and ground water levels in the ESPA.

- Learned that it will be overseeing a new \$1 million competitive grant program to provide flood-control districts throughout Idaho with State funding for projects related to flood-prevention, flood damages and other costs related to river flooding.
- Discussed defending Idaho's share of water under the Bear River compact. Board officials discussed the importance of defending its share of water for residents and other uses in Idaho. The compact allocates 125,000 acre-feet of water in Bear Lake to the State of Idaho.

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