

BEFORE THE IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF THE PRIEST )  
LAKE WATER MANAGEMENT )  
PROJECT )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) owns the Priest Lake Dam (dam) which was constructed in 1950 and reconstructed in 1978 as an outlet control structure to maintain lake levels in the Priest River in accordance with Idaho Code §70-507; and

WHEREAS, Idaho Code §70-507 authorizes the director of IDWR to contract operation and maintenance of the dam, and requires the water surface level of Priest Lake be maintained at 3.0 feet on the USGS Priest Lake Outlet gage (located upstream of the dam) after run-off of the winter snowpack until the close of the main recreational season; and

WHEREAS, as a result of drought conditions in northern Idaho in 2015 and 2016, it was difficult to maintain required pool levels and downstream flow in the Priest River during the recreational season; and,

WHEREAS, the Priest Lake, Upper Priest Lake and Priest River are significant draws for tourism and recreation, and are highly valued environmental and economic assets for Bonner County and the State of Idaho; and

WHEREAS, in 2016 the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) authorized the expenditure of up to \$300,000 from the Revolving Development Account to complete the Priest Lake Water Management Feasibility Study (study) to evaluate strategies to meet long-term water management objectives for the Priest Lake and Priest River system; and

WHEREAS, the study has been completed and recommends temporarily raising surface level 3 to 4 inches during the recreation season of dry years and integrating real time streamflow data to allow more flexibility; and

WHEREAS, the study also recommend making outlet structure improvements to the scour apron, modifying and strengthening gates; and

WHEREAS, the study also recommends replacing the current existing porous breakwater with a sediment retention feature with some dredging included; and

WHEREAS, the estimated cost for these recommendations is approximately \$5 million; and

WHEREAS, in November 2017 the IWRB accepted and endorsed the recommendations in the Priest Lake Study and recommended proceeding with the project if and when funding becomes available.

WHEREAS, the Governor's recommended budget for FY 2019 includes \$2.4 million to be used for the Priest Lake Water Management Project; and

WHEREAS, by letter dated November 21, 2017, Bonner County has committed \$50,000 towards the Priest Lake Water Management Project; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Idaho Legislature appropriated \$3,000,000 to the IWRB's Revolving Development Account and specified that it be used for loans to ground water districts on the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) to implement the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) program; and

WHEREAS, as of today the ground water districts on the ESPA have used only \$580,420 from the CREP appropriation, leaving a remaining balance of \$2,419,580; and

WHEREAS, the CREP program has not been utilized to the degree initially anticipated, so the remaining balance will not be used for the CREP program; and

WHEREAS, the IWRB's Finance Committee met on January 16, 2018 and recommended to the IWRB that a request be sent to the Legislature to re-direct the remaining balance of \$2,419,580 to the Priest Lake Water Management Project; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the IWRB hereby requests of the Idaho Legislature to redirect the remaining balance of \$2,419,580 in the CREP appropriation to the Priest Lake Water Management Project on the condition that local contributions to the project total at least \$200,000.

DATED this 26<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2018



Roger Chase, Chairman, IWRB

ATTEST



Vince Alberdi, Secretary, IWRB