



News Release

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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www.idwr.idaho.gov

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IDWR Issues Letters To Water Rights Holders Warning Of Potential Water Curtailments Next Spring

The Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) today mailed letters to ground water users hydraulically connected to the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer warning of potential water curtailments of junior ground water rights next spring. The warning letters were issued as part of a continuing response to water delivery calls made in 2005 by senior water right holders from seven water delivery organizations known as the Surface Water Coalition, and senior spring water users Blue Lakes Trout Company and Clear Springs Foods' Snake River Farm facility.

The letters were sent to approximately 1,700 water right holders and affect approximately 3,000 water rights that could be subject to curtailment in 2009. If required, the curtailment orders could affect certain ground water users with junior water rights in portions of Gooding, Lincoln, Jerome, Cassia, Minidoka, Blaine, Bingham, Power, Jefferson, Bonneville, Butte, and Bannock counties in South Central and Eastern Idaho (see attached map). These include water rights for irrigation, commercial, industrial, municipal, non-exempt domestic uses, and other consumptive uses. Non-consumptive uses and culinary in-house uses of water will not be subject to curtailment under the water delivery calls.

Under a worst-case scenario curtailments in the spring of 2009 within the Surface Water Coalition delivery call area could affect water rights bearing priority dates junior to May 12, 1977. The worst-case scenario is based on 1977 conditions in which spring runoff was 45% of normal, the lowest runoff on record. Curtailments in 2009 within the Thousand Springs delivery call areas could affect water rights bearing priority dates junior to January 4, 1973.

(more)

IDWR Issues Letters To Water Rights Holders-Page 2

A water delivery call is made when the holder of a senior water right experiences a shortfall in the amount of water the holder is authorized to receive and can put to beneficial use in accordance with Idaho law. Under the state's conjunctive management rules, which incorporate the effects of ground water pumping on surface water supplies, IDWR requires the holders of junior water rights to mitigate or replace the effects of their depletions to the aquifer or stop diverting water. This is accomplished by submitting a written plan to IDWR or through voluntary or mandatory curtailment in order to allow more water to satisfy the senior water right.

Water delivery calls and curtailment orders are necessary to satisfy the IDWR director's duty under Idaho law to administer water rights in accordance with the prior appropriation doctrine in times of shortage. Reasons for the water shortage resulting in the water calls include successive years of drought, ground water pumping and more efficient irrigation practices resulting in less recharge to the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer.

"We were blessed with a good water year in 2008 and there will be much more carry-over storage water than we had in 2007. But as IDWR director I am obligated to give early notice to the water users that could potentially be affected by the water calls. Like all the water users I am hoping for a great snowpack this winter. This early notice is necessary so that water users can make plans in case shortfalls occur," said IDWR Director David Tuthill.

Information regarding the 2009 curtailment warning letters can be found on the Idaho Department of Water Resources' web site at www.idwr.idaho.gov under the heading "Major Issues"

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(map on page 3)

Map of Curtailment Areas

-  Selected Water Districts
-  Area of Common Ground Water Supply
-  Snake River Farm Ground Water Curtailment Area
-  Blue Lakes Trout Ground Water Curtailment Area
-  Surface Water Coalition Ground Water Curtailment Area

