



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDWR issues final notice requiring compliance with ground water flow meter order

BOISE – (May 17, 2018) – The Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) issued a final notice today to more than 400 ground water irrigators who have yet to comply with an order requiring installation of approved flow meters on ground water pumps in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) region.

The notices are being sent to people authorized to irrigate more than five acres of land. Watermasters will be authorized to curtail water use from non-compliant irrigation wells after June 1.

“Instructions in the final notice direct ground water irrigators to contact the department if they have installed ground water flow meters,” said Mathew Weaver, deputy director of IDWR. “If they haven’t installed a flow meter, they need to get into compliance immediately or they will be curtailed.”

IDWR Director Gary Spackman issued an order in July 2016 requiring flow meters to be installed on qualifying ground water wells in the ESPA region by the beginning of the 2018 irrigation season. “That deadline has come and gone,” Weaver said.

Ground water flow meters also were required in the 2015 historic water settlement agreement between ground water irrigators and the Surface Water Coalition. Department officials estimate that at least 80 percent of the approximately 5,500 affected ground water users are in full compliance.

In June 2017 and again this March, IDWR sent letters to qualifying well owners reminding them of the measurement requirement. IDWR received an overwhelmingly positive response to the March reminder. “We appreciate that most ground water pumpers have installed flow meters, which will lead to more accurate measurement and better reporting of ground water use in the ESPA region,” Weaver said.

Water users who do not have a department-approved measuring device installed will be subject to curtailment by the water district watermaster or a formal enforcement action by IDWR, officials said.

IDWR staff is conducting wide-scale field inspections on public and private property of all qualifying wells. That effort will continue through the summer, with an increased field presence beginning June 1, officials said. IDWR's priority for inspections will be well sites it believes are not in compliance with the order, based on lack of response to IDWR's notices and/or prior well inspections.

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