



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Lewiston Plateau deep aquifer study provides insight into areas where ground water development may be sustainable or less reliable**

BOISE - (Nov. 30, 2018) – Portions of the Lewiston Plateau deep aquifer that are hydraulically connected to the Snake River or other surface waters are going to be more reliable for sustaining long-term ground water pumping than areas that have little to no hydraulic connection to surface water, the study author told the Idaho Water Resource Board on Wednesday.

Dale Ralston, Ph.D., of Ralston Hydrologic Services, said the areas of the Lewiston deep aquifer that are closer to the Snake and Clearwater rivers hold more promise than areas farther to the south that are not recharged by surface water and involve pumping more than 1,500 feet to reach water.

“As you go south, the take-home message is that it gets a little bleak,” Ralston told the board. “It’s not a pretty picture for long-term development.”

Jo Ann Cole-Hansen, a Lewiston-based member of the board, said she found Ralston’s report illuminating. “This report is very important for our area. There are some subdivisions out there to the south, and their water supply may not be sustainable in the long-term,” she said.

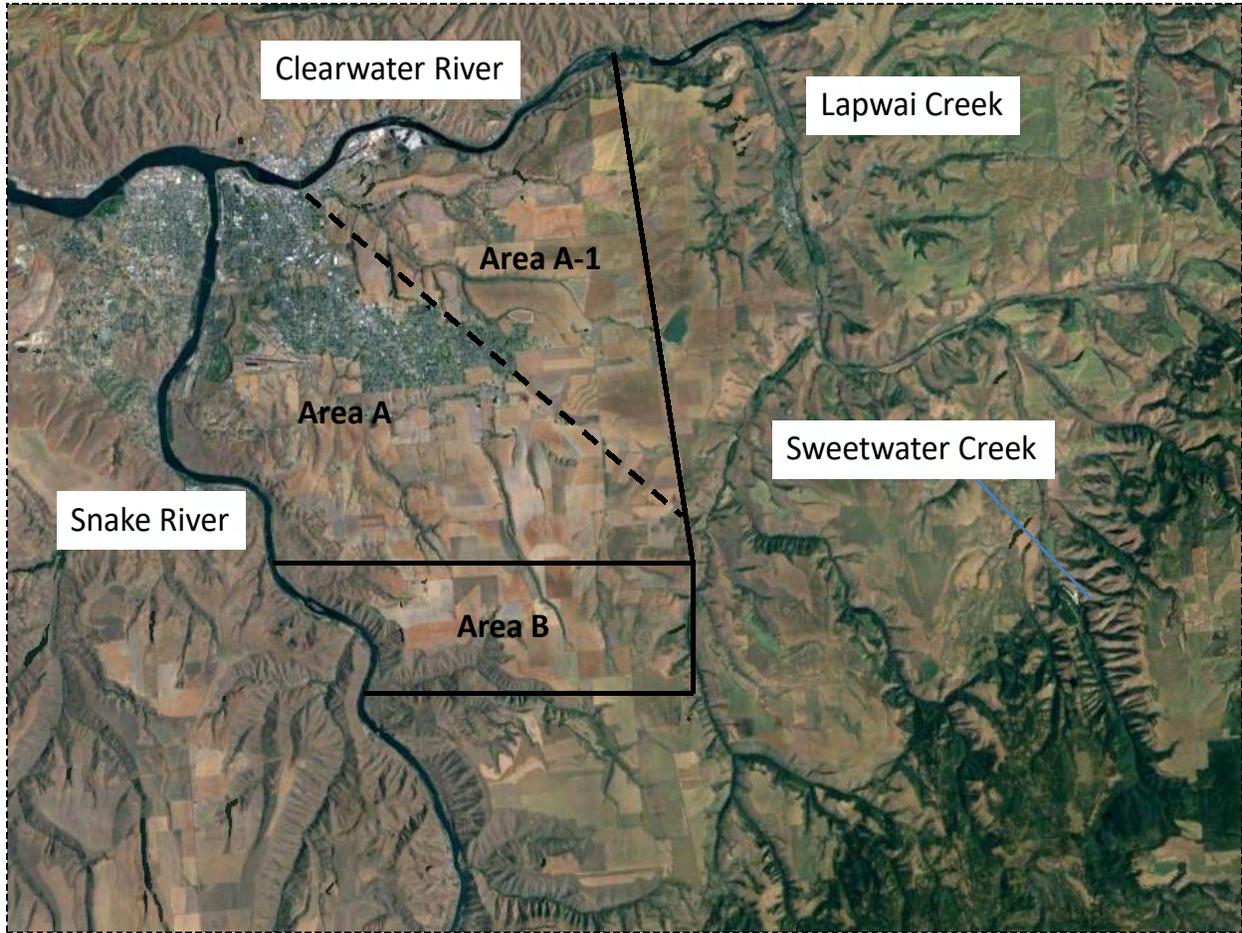
The Idaho Legislature passed SCR 137 in 2016 directing the board to undertake a study of the Lewiston Deep Aquifer to determine if there is a sustainable long-term water supply. The Ralston study was authorized by the board in late 2016. Phase 1 of the study was completed in 2017, and Phase 2 was completed in late 2018.

Ralston said the purpose of the study was to develop a better understanding of the hydrogeologic setting and ground water recharge characteristics in the eastern and southern portions of the Lewiston Plateau GWMA.

The study involved the collection and analysis of geologic and hydrologic data with an emphasis on the hydraulic connection of aquifers with surface water streams including, the Snake River, Clearwater River, Lapwai Creek, and Sweetwater Creek.

“Aquifers that receive recharge only from surface sources (precipitation and irrigation) have a much less potential for large-scale well development than aquifers that are hydraulically connected to surface water systems,” he said.

Ralston provided a map showing the areas of the deep aquifer that held the most promise for sustainable use, and those that did not.



The area labeled as Area A on the map held the most potential for sustainable use, Ralston said, while Area A-1 had less potential in southern portions of the zone, and Area B would be problematic.

In other action, the board received an update on the Priest Lake Water Management Project, indicating that preliminary engineering, design and permitting work are proceeding on schedule.

A Steering Committee has been meeting on a regular basis to guide the process, said Neeley Miller of the board planning staff, and a public meeting/open house was well attended in late September. The consultant will continue to work on preliminary design and permitting tasks through mid2019, Miller said, final engineering and design is expected to be completed in late 2019, and construction should begin as early as 2020.

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