



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Idaho Water Resource Board expects to recharge 290,000 acre-feet of water into the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer in Winter 2018-19

BOISE - (March 26, 2019) – With a surplus of water in the Upper Snake River Reservoirs, the Idaho Water Resource Board is projecting that it will likely surpass its goal of recharging an average of 250,000 acre-feet of water into the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) in the Winter 2018-19, officials said at the board meeting on Friday.

There’s still some ice and snow in canals, but recharge flows are increasing in the Upper Snake region and the Magic Valley region, said Wesley Hipke, Recharge Program Manager for the board. Surplus water flows may allow the board to conduct ESPA recharge activities through at least mid-April, Hipke said, adding that a more likely projection for the winter recharge season is 290,000 acre-feet of water flowing into the ESPA.

“We’ve had a big change from January until now,” Hipke said. “The month of February made all of the difference.”

Some parts of Idaho’s mountains had 300 percent of normal snow fall in February. All of that helps with ESPA recharge, particularly as the ice and snow recedes from canals, he said.

Last year, the board set a record by recharging more than 525,000 acre-feet of water into the ESPA, more than doubling the annual goal. In June last year, hydrologists with the Idaho Department of Water Resources noted that the ESPA rose by more than 1.7 million acre-feet in one year, the largest single-year increase in 80 years. The increase was due to ESPA recharge efforts, two robust winters back to back, the 2015 water settlement between the Surface Water Coalition and the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators (IGWA), and surplus water from high reservoir storage.

In other action, the board approved a 10-year, \$300,000 loan at 4.5 percent interest to the Monument Ridge Ranch Homeowners Association, a community near Star. The loan will allow the 330-acre Monument Ridge Ranch community to drill a new well for its irrigation water system, replacing a 50-year-old irrigation well that was falling into disrepair, officials said.

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