



NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDWR schedules public meetings on Sept. 9-11 to provide updates on Phase 3 of the Northern Idaho Adjudications

COEUR D’ALENE – (Aug. 14, 2019) - The Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) will hold a series of six public meetings on Sept. 9-11 in northern Idaho to provide updates on Phase 3 of the Northern Idaho Adjudications.

IDWR officials plan to request fiscal authorization from the 2020 Idaho Legislature so that it can proceed with a water rights adjudication in the Clark Fork - Pend Oreille Basin. The state is also currently seeking public input on whether to ask the Legislature to authorize an adjudication of Kootenai River Basin water rights.

The public meetings will be held in Clark Fork, Sandpoint, Bonner’s Ferry, Coolin, and Priest River over three days as follows:

Monday September 9, 2019	Tuesday September 10, 2019	Wednesday September 11, 2019
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Clark Fork Public Library 601 Main St. Clark Fork, ID	1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Bonners Ferry Gateway Visitors Center 6373 Bonner St. Bonners Ferry, ID	1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. The Inn at Priest Lake 5310 Dickensheet Rd. Coolin, ID
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Best Western Edgewater Inn 56 Bridge Street Sandpoint, ID	6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Bonners Ferry Gateway Visitors Center 6373 Bonner St. Bonners Ferry, ID	6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Priest River Senior Center 339 E. Jackson Ave Priest River, ID

Already this summer, IDWR officials have met with state legislators from District 1 and District 7, as well as Bonner and Boundary County commissioners to discuss Phase 3 of the Northern Idaho Adjudications.

IDWR has been working through the Coeur d’Alene-Spokane River Adjudication since 2008. About 12,000 water rights claims have been filed in that adjudication, which should be completed in 2020. IDWR also has started working on the Palouse River Basin Adjudication. About 1,200 water rights claims have been filed so far in that basin.

Why is an adjudication needed: Water rights adjudications help protect the legal interests of existing property owners. Confirming the legal water rights of landowners, farmers, ranchers, and commercial and industrial businesses helps those existing water users protect their investments against future competition.

Population growth and development can lead to conflicts over resources. In times of shortage, water rights are distributed via a priority system of “first in time, first in right.” Under the Prior Appropriation Doctrine, the older, more “senior” water right entitles its holder to fully divert water before any younger, or “junior” water right holder can divert water. Adjudicated water rights establish priority dates, which determine who gets to use the water resource in a time of shortage.

There are several important considerations to keep in mind regarding the Northern Idaho Adjudications. First, water users may defer the filing of claims for the diversion of surface or ground water for domestic or stockwater use for up to 13,000 gallons a day until a later time. Also, although northern Idaho is often considered to be an area of abundant water supplies, much of the water used is diverted from smaller more finite water resources such as springs, small tributary streams, and aquifers.

Some background on the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Basin water use:

- Of the approximately 2,613 existing water right filings in the basin, only 394 are from the Pend Oreille River or Pend Oreille Lake.
- By comparison, 480 filings are from a spring or springs and 663 are from ground water.
- 794 water right records are unconfirmed statutory claims. It is likely many other uses are unrecorded. Delay makes it more difficult for longtime water users to substantiate the origins (priority dates) of their claims.

Some background on water rights in the Kootenai River Basin:

- Of the approximately 925 existing water right filings in the basin, only 44 are from the Kootenai and Moyie Rivers.
- By comparison, 261 filings are from a spring or springs and 213 are from ground water.
- 229 water right records are unconfirmed statutory claims. It is likely many other water uses are unrecorded. Delay makes it more difficult for longtime water users to substantiate the origins, or priority dates of their claims.

For more information, contact Doug Jones, IDWR Regional Manager, 208-762-2800.

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