



News Release – For Immediate Release

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Malad Valley Water Measurement District meeting set for Nov. 4, 2019

MALAD CITY (Oct. 7, 2019) – Idaho Department of Water Resources officials invite Malad Valley ground water users and landowners to the first annual Malad Valley Water Measurement District meeting to be held on Monday, November 4, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. at the Oneida County Fire District building in Malad City.

“Over 530 meeting notices were mailed last week to both owners of ground water rights and relevant landowners in the Malad Valley,” said Tim Luke, IDWR Water Compliance Bureau Chief.

Additionally, IDWR published notice of the meeting in the *Idaho Enterprise* on Sept. 26 and Oct. 3, 2019. Luke said IDWR officials will present information about the status of the ground water aquifer in the Malad Valley and answer questions at the Nov. 4 meeting.

“IDWR will present information and address questions about the measurement district,” Luke said. “We get the sense that landowners and water users are concerned about this process moving ahead too quickly, and we need to take a step back and provide some background about the Malad Valley aquifer and the process of creating a measurement district. We think that’s a good idea, and we appreciate the feedback.”

An agenda sent out with the meeting notices initially called for some other action items that will be addressed later on, Luke said.

Background: On Jan. 16, 2015, the Oneida County Board of Commissioners sent a letter to IDWR, requesting a temporary moratorium on issuing new ground water rights in the Malad Valley. IDWR reviewed the hydrologic data for the valley and found that a temporary moratorium was warranted. On November 4, 2015, IDWR issued an order designating the Malad Valley Ground Water Management Area and established a two-year temporary moratorium on new ground water rights.

In November 2017, IDWR adopted a ground water management plan and extended the temporary moratorium on new ground water use for another five years.

IDWR issued an order on Nov. 9, 2018, creating the Malad Valley Water Measurement District with an effective start date of Nov. 4, 2019. The measurement district is limited to ground water rights and wells in the Malad River drainage area for irrigation uses of more than 5 acres, and non-irrigation uses of more than 0.24 cubic-feet per second. Small domestic and stock water uses and wells are excluded from the district. IDWR's November 2018 order requires irrigation well owners in the district to install flow meters by Spring 2021.

IDWR hydrologic information about the Malad Valley aquifer shows a general downward decline over the last 20 years, officials said. Water levels in six of the seven wells monitored by IDWR rose in response to above average precipitation during 2016 and 2017; however, the 10- and 20-year trends indicate declining water levels in all of the wells.

Part of the process of creating a measurement district is determining a baseline "water budget," Luke said, to determine how much water is being drawn from the aquifer on an annual basis, and how much water is added to the aquifer through natural recharge, irrigation seepage and other sources. This is a similar process to balancing a bank account, he noted, understanding how much money is coming in, and how much is going out.

The long-term goal would be to determine a long-term sustainable water budget for the ground water aquifer in the Malad Valley, he said.

At the Nov. 4 meeting, IDWR staff will explain the purpose of the district, why it was created, and how a measurement district should be operated under Idaho state law. IDWR staff will also discuss the flow meter requirements and address questions, Luke said.

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