



Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan

Demand Reduction Working Group Meeting

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

August 4, 2009

Teleconference

AWEP UPDATE

Brian Patton (IDWR) provided the group a brief background on the AWEP (Agricultural Water Enhancement Program), explaining that the 2008 Farm Bill identified five priority areas nationwide—one of which is the ESPA. IDWR was successful in its pursuit of funds and has been accorded a total of \$15.2 million dollars over the next five years. Included in the Department's proposal are demand reduction projects; specifically a pilot crop mix modification program, groundwater demand incentives and conversion to dry land. Ken Beckman (NRCS) added that his agency contracts directly with producers and will follow the direction provided by IDWR regarding screening and ranking for potential projects.

Discussion Points:

- Wheat control fencing and grass planting are eligible practices. It is up to IDWR to determine where they want to use funds
- AWEP funds could be used in conjunction with CREP to encourage conversion from irrigated land to dry land or fallow farming.
- Each individual producer could receive up to \$300,000 in AWEP shares. The grant is funded at 75% of total. So, if the total cost were \$100,000, AWEP would reimburse \$75,000
- Flat rates are based on an annual survey of cost in the state. Rate is based on 75% of average cost statewide the previous year
- If an individual producer opts out of a contract simply due to changing his/her mind, then they would be charged any liquidated damage and 10% of the contract cost.
- The program is trying to focus on people serious about these types of initiatives—those that can afford and want to do this.
- The practice has to be completed within twelve months and can be a part of a longer-term project. For example, individual contracts with farmers can go up to nine years with funds obligated for various enhancements. Group projects are also possible.
- If the allocated funds are not fully utilized this year, there will likely not be a penalty on future funding. However, starting next year, subsequent funding will be influenced by ability to spend previous year's allocation.
- Information regarding the program will be shared with individual producers via the NRCS web-site (<http://www.id.nrcs.gov>), through local offices and through the newspaper.
- Implications for Demand Reduction Working Group: AWEP can be a funding tool. As outlined in the IDWR proposal, \$2.6 M in AWEP funds will support improvements in the Hagerman Valley Canal and cover a pilot crop mix program. NRCS is also in the process of reviewing previously submitted EQUIP applications that were not funded to identify potential projects to support with the remaining allocated funds for this year. As outlined in the proposal (p. 16), demand reduction initiatives were not included for this year. They increase in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Next Steps:

- ✓ Working group can develop screening and ranking criteria
- ✓ Working group can assist in reaching out to farmers and identifying potential applicants. (Note: AWEF funds are not to be used for outreach; IDWR may have some funds for outreach)

CREP INCENTIVES FOR INCREASED ENROLLMENT

CREP began in 2006 and by 2007, 21,000 acres were enrolled. Currently there are 18,000 acres in the CREP program. Two proposals for increasing CREP enrollment were presented and discussed: one from IDWR and the other from Lynn Tominaga.

Neeley Miller and Brian Patton (IDWR) presented the PERC State Incentive Outline, explaining that this would be a separate, parallel state agreement, which would avoid the need to re-open the federal contract. In other words, it would be a stand-alone agreement that would operate alongside the 15 year CREP agreement. The proposal describes a land value based ranking, the area, early contract termination penalties, a permanent retirement option and administrative fees for modifications to contract. For details, please see the 'PERC State Incentive Outline' handout.

Lynn Tominaga (Idaho Ground Water Appropriators) shared an overview of his research and recommendations for increasing CREP enrollment. His presentation summarized CREP's background, findings of an informal survey of producers (including pros and cons of CREP) and suggestions/recommendations.

Discussion Points

- *Prioritizing projects:* The group discussed whether and how to prioritize projects. Some of the ideas that were suggested include prioritizing:
 - Where conversions are not feasible/possible
 - Provide short and long-term benefits
 - Based on distance from river (further from river, benefit over a longer period of time)
- The Department conducts hydrologic modeling on an ongoing basis. The challenges are tracing changes to a particular intervention, as there are so many variables and that it is also location-dependent.
- Permanent retirement as an option (would depend on cost)

Next Steps

- ✓ Compare and contrast the two proposals and present the results of the analysis to the working group (Neeley Miller)
- ✓ Determine whether it is possible to get funds under AWEF for corners are areas greater than 400 acres (Peter Anderson to talk with NRCS)
- ✓ Provide maps of proposed conversions projects to identify those areas that are not reached under conversions
- ✓ Further discuss whether/how to prioritize projects

- Does the group want to prioritize specific areas or recommend a more general demand reduction program. Considerations include immediate versus long-term effects and the volatility of CREP (how to keep people in the program long enough to see a return on investment)
- ✓ Further discuss whether going to build on the federal program or suggest a parallel, state-based program.
 - Consider whether complimenting federal program with state dollars could provide the necessary incentive to keep people in the program

SURFACE WATER CONSERVATION

Brian Olmstead updated Working Group members on surface water conservation on the Twin Falls Canal Company tract. Four opportunities for surface water conservation were emphasized:

1. *Seepage reduction.* Seepage can be reduced without impacting other, senior water rights.
2. *Late season reduction.* Installation of a check structure and diverting less at Milner
3. *Pump backs.* Reduce evaporation off the rim.
4. *Aquatic reed control.* Aquatic reed herbicide (Cascade) that to date shows no significant side effects.

Identify additional potential sites for surface water conservation.

Next Steps

- ✓ Individual working group members to contact Brian Olmstead if interested in a tour of the areas where the aquatic reed herbicide has been applied.
- ✓ IDWR to share with Brian Olmstead the results of the analysis of different accounting scenarios.
- ✓ Brian Patton to talk with other staff at IDWR about possibility of sharing information on the Lemhi River System to see what the group could learn from the model as a way for moving water from tributaries down to the ESPA

NEXT STEPS & UPCOMING MEETING

Next Steps*

Action	Responsible
1. Check in with Rich Rigby on status of research on evaporation loss	Jennifer Graham
2. Look into the CO program where groundwater users need to mitigate for their own use. <i>Are water users identifying new ways to reduce demand?</i>	Jennifer Graham
3. Develop a one page summary of progress to share with the Implementation Committee	Jennifer Graham Neeley Miller Brian Patton
4. Research Demand Reduction programs in other states. <i>Please send a message to Jennifer to indicate which program you will be researching to avoid duplication of efforts.</i>	All
5. Compare and contrast the two proposals and present the results of the analysis to the working group	Neeley Miller
6. Determine whether it is possible to get funds under AWEP for corners are areas greater than 400 acres	Peter Anderson
7. Provide maps of proposed conversions projects to identify those areas that are not reached under conversions	Brian Patton Neeley Miller
8. Individual working group members to contact Brian Olmstead if interested in a tour of the areas where the aquatic reed herbicide has been applied.	All
9. IDWR to share with Brian Olmstead the results of the analysis of different accounting scenarios.	Neeley Miller

***NOTE:** Some tasks are repeated here that are mentioned earlier in the document in order to ensure they are summarized in one place.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, September 1st beginning at 1:00 p.m. The meeting will be a teleconference. For those wishing to participate in a face to face meeting, a teleconference will be available at the IDWR offices in Boise.

Potential Agenda Items

- Discuss screening and ranking criteria for AWEP funds
- Propose ideas for outreach to farmers and identifying potential applicants.
- Discussion regarding whether/how to prioritize projects (includes review of conversions maps)
- Information from demand reduction programs from other states
- Information on the Lemhi River System
- Results of analysis of comparing IDWR proposal and Lynn Tominaga Proposal

MEETING MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED

- CREP Incentive Program Options (PERC State Incentive Outline) Sent on 7/30/09
- Demand Reduction-CREP Incentives (Lynn Tominaga). Sent on 8/3/09
- Links to other Demand Reduction programs outside of Idaho. Sent on 7/21
- Bryce Contor's Crop Mix Analysis. Sent on 7/21

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Demand Reduction Working Group Members

NAME	AFFILIATION
1. Brian Olmstead	Surface Water User
2. Craig Evans	Water District 120
3. James Tucker	Hydropower
4. Peter Anderson	Conservation
5. Randy MacMillan	Spring Water Users

Ex Officio Members & Other Attendees

NAME	AFFILIATION
6. Brian Patton	IDWR
7. John Chatburn	Governor's office
8. Steven Gibson	Governor's office
9. Joan Kathol	CDR
10. Lynn Tominaga	Groundwater Users
11. Neeley Miller	IDWR
12. Jennifer Graham	CDR