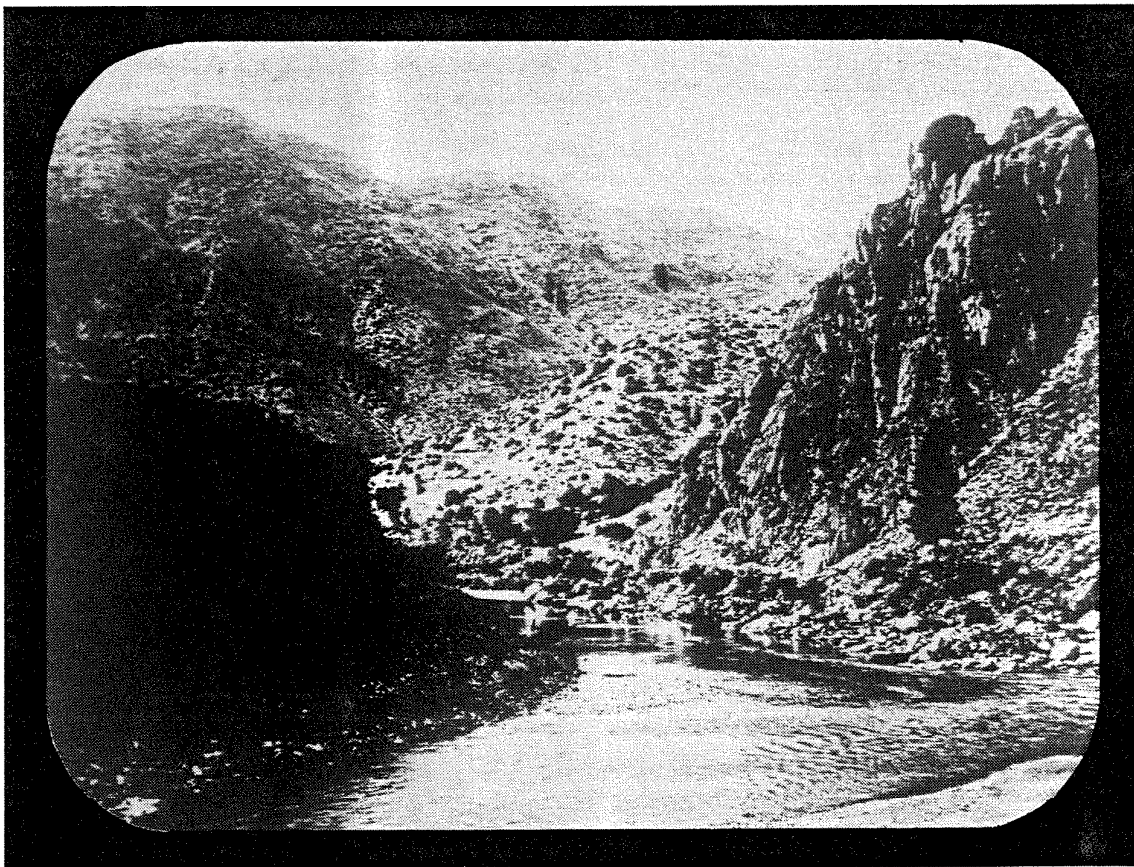


# Comprehensive **STATE WATER PLAN**

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## Upper Boise River Basin



Arrowrock Damsite - circa 1910

Credit: Idaho Historical Society

Idaho Water Resource Board  
1992

# **COMPREHENSIVE STATE WATER PLAN**

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## **Upper Boise River Basin**

### **Idaho Water Resource Board**

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Adopted by IWRB

December, 1992



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	4
PLANNING PROCESS .....	6
Process Steps .....	6
Data Collection .....	6
Scoping and Public Input .....	6
Resource Maps .....	6
Screening .....	6
Suitability Analysis .....	8
Recommended Actions .....	9
Draft Plan .....	9
Public Comment .....	9
Final Plan .....	9
BASIN OVERVIEW AND RESOURCE SUMMARY .....	10
Basin Overview .....	10
Geography, Geology, and Soils .....	10
Climate .....	11
History, Political Divisions, Population, Transportation and Communications .....	12
Land Ownership .....	15
Resource Summary .....	15
Water Supply: Quantity and Quality .....	15
Fish, Wildlife, and Biological Communities .....	17
Aesthetic Values and Natural Features .....	18
Cultural Resources .....	19
Recreation .....	19
Agriculture: Irrigation/Livestock Watering/Grazing .....	20
Domestic, Commercial, Municipal, and Industrial .....	21
Aquaculture .....	22
Mining .....	22
Timber .....	22
Energy and Power Development .....	23
Navigation .....	24
WATER ISSUES .....	25
Other Management Plans .....	25
County Plans .....	25
State Plans .....	26
Federal Plans .....	27
Local Issues .....	29
Water Allocations and Projected Uses .....	30
Minimum Stream Flows .....	32
Water Quality .....	32

Flood Control . . . . .	32
River Protection . . . . .	34
Historic and Existing River Protection . . . . .	34
Scenic and Recreational Values . . . . .	35
Basin Objectives . . . . .	37
<b>SUITABILITY ANALYSIS OF RIVER REACH DESIGNATIONS . . . . .</b>	<b>39</b>
Screening Evaluations . . . . .	39
Screening Evaluation for Biological Resources . . . . .	39
Screening Evaluation for Aesthetic Resources . . . . .	42
Screening Evaluation for Recreation Resources . . . . .	45
Resource and Development Summaries of Outstanding Reaches . . . . .	47
Management Alternatives . . . . .	47
<b>FINAL IWRB ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .</b>	<b>52</b>
Responses to Basin Objectives, Issues, and Considerations . . . . .	59
Water Quality . . . . .	59
Hydropower . . . . .	59
Recreation . . . . .	60
Fish, Wildlife and Aesthetics . . . . .	60
Economics . . . . .	60
Effects of Final Actions and Recommendations . . . . .	63
<b>APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY . . . . .</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT . . . . .</b>	<b>B-1</b>
Local Advisory Group and Affiliation or Occupation . . . . .	B-1
Summary of Public and Advisory Group Meetings . . . . .	B-2
<b>APPENDIX C: TECHNICAL REPORT . . . . .</b>	<b>C-1</b>
Water Supply: Water Quantity . . . . .	C-1
Precipitation and Snow Surveys . . . . .	C-1
Stream Discharge Data . . . . .	C-2
Storage and Flood Control Facilities . . . . .	C-4
Groundwater and Associated Geology . . . . .	C-10
Water Conservation . . . . .	C-11
Water Supply: Water Quality . . . . .	C-11
Physical and Chemical Quality of the Water . . . . .	C-11
Impacts to Specific Waterways . . . . .	C-13
Kirby Dam Failure and Impact on Water Quality . . . . .	C-14
Fish, Wildlife, and Biological Communities . . . . .	C-15
Special Species and Habitats . . . . .	C-15
Fisheries . . . . .	C-18
Aesthetic Values . . . . .	C-19
Visual Management Systems . . . . .	C-20
Landscape Scenic Values . . . . .	C-20
Viewer Characteristics . . . . .	C-21
Agency Visual Resource Management . . . . .	C-22

Additional Visual Resource Data Collected . . . . .	C-24
Cultural Features . . . . .	C-26
Recreation . . . . .	C-27
Methods . . . . .	C-27
Overview . . . . .	C-28
Recreation Opportunity Spectrum . . . . .	C-31
Developed Recreation Facilities . . . . .	C-31
Camping . . . . .	C-32
Swimming and Water Skiing . . . . .	C-34
Picnicking . . . . .	C-35
Boating/Floating . . . . .	C-35
Wildlife Observation . . . . .	C-38
Fishing . . . . .	C-38
Hunting . . . . .	C-39
Trails . . . . .	C-41
Winter Recreation . . . . .	C-42
Recreational Dredge Mining . . . . .	C-42
Sightseeing . . . . .	C-43
Additional Recreation Opportunities . . . . .	C-43
Agriculture: Irrigation/Livestock Watering . . . . .	C-44
Current Agriculture Water Use Within the Basin . . . . .	C-44
Future Irrigation Development Within the Basin . . . . .	C-45
Livestock Watering . . . . .	C-45
Domestic, Commercial, Municipal and Industrial Uses . . . . .	C-47
Mores Creek Drainage . . . . .	C-47
Boise North and Middle Forks Drainage . . . . .	C-47
Geothermal Resources . . . . .	C-47
Summary of Water Rights Within the Basin . . . . .	C-47
Minerals and Mining . . . . .	C-50
History of Mining in the Basin . . . . .	C-50
Recent Mining Activity in the Basins . . . . .	C-50
Current Laws That Regulate Mining . . . . .	C-52
Mineral Potential . . . . .	C-52
Placer and Dredge Mining . . . . .	C-53
Timber Resources . . . . .	C-54
Timber Harvests . . . . .	C-55
Riparian Forests . . . . .	C-57
Power Development and Energy Conservation . . . . .	C-58
Existing Hydropower Facilities . . . . .	C-58
Existing Facilities Without Power . . . . .	C-59
Hydropower Potential . . . . .	C-59
Energy Supply and Conservation . . . . .	C-61
Navigation . . . . .	C-62
APPENDIX D: MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES . . . . .	D-1
Draft Alternative A . . . . .	D-1
Draft Alternative B . . . . .	D-1
Draft Alternative C . . . . .	D-3

Draft Alternative D . . . . .	D-4
APPENDIX E: REFERENCES . . . . .	E-1

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	1990 Census Figures and Census Projections for Ada and Surrounding Counties to the Year 2010 . . . . .	15
Table 2.	Pertinent Data for Lucky Peak and Arrowrock Storage Facilities. . . . .	21
Table 3.	Attributes Identified by the Public as Important for the Upper Boise River Basin. . . . .	30
Table 4.	Important Threats to the Resources of the Upper Boise River Basin Identified by the Public. . . . .	31
Table 5.	Space Allocations in Arrowrock and Lucky Peak Reservoirs, 1988 Status . . . . .	31
Table 6.	Northwest Power Planning Council's Protected Areas Designations, Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	34
Table 7.	Streams Proposed for Study as Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers, Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	35
Table 8.	USFWS Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species and Conservation Data Center's Global and State Ranks for Sensitive Species in the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	40
Table 9.	Screening Evaluation Criteria and Results for Biological Resources, Upper Boise River Basin. . . . .	43
Table 10.	Screening Evaluation Criteria and Results for Aesthetic Resource, Upper Boise River Basin. . . . .	44
Table 11.	Recreation Evaluation Criteria and Screening Results, Upper Boise River Basin. . . . .	48
Table 12.	Resource and Development Summaries of Outstanding Reaches, Upper Boise River Basin. . . . .	49
Table 13.	Annual Unemployed Labor Force and Income % of National Averages for Boise, Elmore and Ada Counties . . . . .	61
Table 14.	Estimated Average Net Economic Use Value* of Recreation Activities in the Upper Boise River Basin. . . . .	62
Table 15.	Mean Annual Precipitation in Upper Boise River Basin, 1961-1985 . . . . .	C-1
Table 16.	Recording Stations - North and Middle Forks Boise River and Mores Creek . . . . .	C-3
Table 17.	Stream Flow and Drainage Area Composition of North and Middle Forks Boise River and Mores Creek Drainages, Exclusive of the South Fork Boise . . . . .	C-4
Table 18.	Physical and Chemical Water Quality in the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-12
Table 19.	Total Phosphorus Concentrations on Mores Creek . . . . .	C-13
Table 20.	Levels of Arsenic (As) and Mercury (Hg) in Samples Collected from the Middle Fork Boise River, After the Kirby Dam Failure . . . . .	C-15
Table 21.	Threatened and Endangered Wildlife and Plants Found Within Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-16
Table 22.	Global and State Ranks for Sensitive Species in Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-17
Table 23.	Boise River Wild Rainbow Trout Densities . . . . .	C-19
Table 24.	Outstanding Scenic Landscapes in the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-21
Table 25.	Key Viewpoints and Sensitivity Levels for the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-23
Table 26.	Visual Management Direction for Forest Service and BLM Lands . . . . .	C-24
Table 27.	VRM Classes for BLM Lands in the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-24
Table 28.	Estimated Recreation Activity Participation for Region 3 and the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-29



Table 29.	Number and Percent of Recreation Activities and Number of Visitors Observed on Segments of the Main, North and Middle Forks Boise River . . .	C-30
Table 30.	Developed Recreational Sites Within the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-33
Table 31.	Upper Boise River Basin Developed Public Campgrounds, and Number of Sites (USDA, 1987b; and USACE, 1988a). . . . .	C-34
Table 32.	Upper Boise Whitewater Segments . . . . .	C-37
Table 33.	Boating Activity Observed on the Boise River System . . . . .	C-37
Table 34.	Estimated Angler Hours and Catch Rates (fish/hour) in the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-40
Table 35.	Hunter Days for Mule Deer, Elk, Black Bear, Mountain Lion, Upland Game and Upland Birds . . . . .	C-41
Table 36.	Total Irrigated Acreages for the Lower Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-46
Table 37.	Active Cattle and Sheep Allotments in Upper Boise River Basin. . . . .	C-46
Table 38.	Water Rights by Use (decrees, licenses, permits, and claims--not including applications) and by Stream Reach for the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-49
Table 39.	Mineral Resource Investigation Studies Conducted in the Upper Boise River Basin, Their Minerals, and Potential Yield Summaries . . . . .	C-54
Table 40.	Recreational Dredge Mining Status in the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-55
Table 41.	BNF Timber Sale Program in the Upper Boise River Basin through 1999 . . .	C-56
Table 42.	Timber Harvested On State Lands in the Upper Boise River Basin in the Past Seven Years . . . . .	C-57
Table 43.	Mills Relying on Harvested Timber From Upper Boise River Basin (Morelau, 1991). . . . .	C-57
Table 44.	Power Generating Facilities Within the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-58
Table 45.	Inactive Filings on Study Sites and FERC Applications in the Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	C-61

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Map of Idaho Showing the Location of the Upper Boise Basin . . . . .	3
Figure 2.	River Basin Flow Chart . . . . .	7
Figure 3.	Upper Boise River Basin . . . . .	14
Figure 4.	Protected Rivers Designations and Minimum Stream-Flow Reaches . . . . .	53
Figure 5.	Minimum, Maximum, and Average Daily Discharge, Boise River, Near Twin Springs, Idaho . . . . .	C-5
Figure 6.	Minimum, Maximum, and Average Daily Discharge, Mores Creek, Above Robie Creek Near Arrowrock . . . . .	C-6
Figure 7.	Historic Flow, Boise River, Near Twin Springs, Idaho . . . . .	C-7
Figure 8.	Historic Flow, Mores Creek, Above Robie Creek Near Arrowrock . . . . .	C-8

## LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1.	Land Ownership
Plate 2.	Precipitation
Plate 3.	Water Quality
Plate 4.	Public Grazing Units
Plate 5.	Mining
Plate 6.	Timber
Plate 7.	Power Development
Plate 8.	Wildlife Inventory
Plate 9.	Fishery Inventory
Plate 10.	Aesthetic Inventory
Plate 11.	Recreation Inventory
Plate 12.	Biological Evaluation
Plate 13.	Aesthetic Evaluation
Plate 14.	Recreation Evaluation
Plate 15.	Composite Environmental Evaluation



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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This component of the Comprehensive State Water Plan is prepared by the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) for the upper Boise River basin (Fig. 1). This includes the Boise River and reservoirs upstream from Lucky Peak Dam, the North and Middle Forks of the Boise, and Mores Creek drainage. It does not include the South Fork of the Boise River; the South Fork Boise River basin Plan was completed by the Board in 1990 and approved by the legislature. There are roughly 1130 miles of rivers and their tributaries in the basin. While a portion of the basin is included in the Sawtooth Wilderness Area, reach descriptions and designations go only to the boundary of the Sawtooth Wilderness Area. Water development in the wilderness area is precluded by the federal government.

The average annual precipitation in the basin ranges from 20 to 50 inches per year, with the highest values in the eastern portion of the watershed. Stream flow rises in March, peaks in April through June and recedes to a base near the end of July. Low flows generally prevail from August through February. This basin contributes the majority of the runoff of the Boise River. Throughout most of the basin little groundwater exists. The water quality in the basin is generally considered to be good.

The basin lies in Ada, Elmore, and Boise counties. Though the past 30 years have seen Ada County experience a 145 percent population increase and Elmore County 222 percent, the basin is still sparsely populated (USDA, 1990a). Within the basin, there are two incorporated communities, Idaho City (1990 pop. 322) and Placerville (1990 pop. 14) and 5 unincorporated communities (Atlanta, Centerville, New Centerville, Pioneerville, and Quartzburg).

There is a total of 881,000 acres in the basin; 81% of that is within the Boise National Forest, 1.2% is managed by the Bureau of Land Management, 6.7% is state land, 9.6% is private and the remaining 1.5% is managed by the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The major commercial activities in the basin are timber, agriculture, mining, recreation, and power generation.

Protected river designations are made to protect and preserve the highly valued water resources of the basin (Final Actions and Recommendations, p. 52; Figure 4). Sheep Creek, including its forks and selected tributaries; the upper portion of the Roaring River, including its forks and selected tributaries; the North Fork Boise River from the Middle Fork Boise River to Rabbit Creek; the North Fork Boise River from Hunter Creek to Johnson Creek including selected tributaries; and Johnson Creek from its mouth to the Sawtooth Wilderness Area boundary including selected tributaries are designated as state Natural Rivers to preserve their aesthetic, recreational, and

biological values. Portions of the Boise River, the Middle Fork Boise River, the North Fork Boise River, Roaring River, Crooked River, Bear River, and Big Silver Creek are designated as state Recreational Rivers to preserve and protect recreational and biological values. Recreational designations are conditioned as needed to allow alterations in the streambed for construction and maintenance of bridges and culverts. The Board has made several recommendations primarily to state and federal resource management agencies, to further protect and manage the water resources in the basin.

The Board will apply for the establishment of minimum stream flows to protect the water quality and fish and wildlife habitat for portions of the Middle Fork Boise River, the Yuba River, the East Fork Montezuma Creek, Crooked River, and Elk Creek.

This plan does not impact existing water rights and uses or other vested rights, and has no direct impact on timber harvest or stock grazing. When a river reach is designated for protection in this plan, it is the purpose of the plan to protect the streambed from disturbances that are not in the public interest, and the stream water from diversion to out-of-stream uses. The plan does not impact private property rights in the riparian area. Implementation of this plan will not interfere with rights to water vested under state law or the delivery of water to its rightful user.

Unless the plan designating a particular waterway as a state protected river specifically requests the governor to seek inclusion of the waterway in the national wild and scenic rivers system, the designation of a waterway as a protected river shall not be a basis for seeking inclusion of such waterway in the wild and scenic rivers system [Idaho Code, Sec. 42-1734I].