



# AGENDA

## IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD

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### Water Resource Planning Committee No. 1-26

Friday, May 8, 2026

8:30 a.m. (MT) / 7:30 a.m. (PT)

Water Center

Conference Rooms 602 C – D

322 E. Front Street

BOISE

Livestream available at <https://www.youtube.com/@iwrp>

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**Brad Little**

*Governor*

**Jeff Raybould**

*Chairman*

St. Anthony

At Large

**Jo Ann Cole-Hansen**

*Vice Chair*

Lewiston

At Large

**Dean Stevenson**

*Secretary*

Paul

District 3

**Dale Van Stone**

Hope

District 1

**Albert Barker**

Boise

District 2

**Brian Olmstead**

Twin Falls

At Large

**Marcus Gibbs**

Grace

District 4

**Patrick McMahon**

Sun Valley

At Large

1. Introductions and Attendance
2. South Fork Snake River Basin Plan\*
3. Other Items
4. Adjourn

#### Committee Members:

Chair Al Barker, Dean Stevenson, Jeff Raybould, Jo Ann Cole-Hansen, and Marc Gibbs.

### Water Supply Management Committee No. 1-26

Begins upon adjournment of the Water Resource Planning Committee No. 1-26

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1. Introductions and Attendance
2. House Concurrent Resolution No. 34 - Bear River Legislative Report\*
3. IWRB Palisades Storage Release and Swan Falls Agreement Flows\*
4. Other Items
5. Adjourn

#### Committee Members:

Chair Jeff Raybould, Dean Stevenson, Brian Olmstead, and Jo Ann Cole-Hansen.

\*Action Item: A vote regarding this item may be made at this meeting. Identifying an item as an action item on the agenda does not require a vote to be taken on the item.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** If you require special accommodation to attend, participate in, or understand the meeting, please contact the Department no later than five days before the meeting. To request an accommodation, please send an email to [milin.ream@idwr.idaho.gov](mailto:milin.ream@idwr.idaho.gov) or call (208) 287-4800.

# MEMO



**To:** IWRB Water Resource Planning Committee  
**From:** Neeley Miller, Planning & Projects Bureau  
**Date:** May 1, 2026  
**Subject:** South Fork Snake River Comprehensive Basin Plan – Dredging issue/new EA

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**REQUESTED ACTION:** Recommendation to Recognize Updated EA Citation

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The South Fork Snake River Basin Comprehensive Basin Plan (“Plan”) was adopted by the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) in 1996 and approved by the legislature in 1997. The plan designates McCoy Creek from its headwaters to the backwater of Palisades Reservoir as a Recreational River to protect the public interest, current resource use, and the multiple-use character of the basin.

The plan prohibits dredging or placer mining activities on recreational rivers in the basin with the following exception:

- Stream channel alterations for recreational dredge mining may continue on McCoy Creek from the headwaters to Fish Creek confluence, and on the following perennial tributaries: City Creek, Camp Creek, Miners Delight Creek and Iowa Creek. This activity is allowed as currently regulated by the Caribou National Forest through a Special Use Permit issued according to the guidelines established in the "Environmental Assessment for Small Placer Mining Operations in the Caribou Basin Area" (Record of Decision issued December 12, 1994), and with a Stream Channel Alteration Permit from the Idaho Department of Water Resources.

Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) Stream Channel Alternation staff have received a letter from the US Forest Service Soda Springs Ranger District requesting the information regarding rules on the IDWR website for suction dredging in the McCoy Creek drainage be updated due to outdated information:

Specifically, the IDWR website and suction dredging permit instructions reference the 1994 Environmental Assessment and Notice of Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact for Small Placer Operations, Caribou Basin Area, Caribou National Forest. **These documents are no longer applicable.**

The correct reference should be the 2021 Environmental Assessment for Caribou Basin Small-Scale Placer Mining (2021 EA) and the associated Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact.

The letter goes on to request:

IDWR update their website and suction dredging permit instructions to reflect how small-scale placer mining operations (i.e., suction dredging) in the McCoy Creek drainage are administered by the Forest Service per the 2021 EA. This includes:

- Up to 15 instream operations per year may be allowed for suction dredging and motorized sluicing.
- Instream activities may occur between August 1 and October 31.
- Operations may disturb up to 50 feet of contiguous stream channel.
- Suction dredges may not exceed a 5-inch diameter nozzle and 15 horsepower motor.

Additionally, on July 25, 2025, IWRB meeting public comment was received from dredgers in the McCoy Creek drainage requesting the IWRB update the South Fork Snake River Basin Plan to reference the 2021 EA. IWRB Executive Manager Brian Patton recommended that the Planning Committee should consider the issue.

**Attachment(s):**

- *Letter from the US Forest Service*

**File Code:** 2800  
**Date:** November 13, 2023

Tim Luke  
Chief, Water Compliance Bureau  
Idaho Department of Water Resources  
P.O. Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720-0098

Aaron Golart  
State Coordinator, Stream Channel Protection Unit  
Idaho Department of Water Resources  
P.O. Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720-0098

*Sent via email*

Dear Mr. Luke and Mr. Golart,

It has been brought to my attention that the information regarding the Forest Service rules on the Idaho Department of Water Quality (IDWR) website for suction dredging in the McCoy Creek drainage is outdated. Specifically, the IDWR website and suction dredging permit instructions reference the 1994 Environmental Assessment and Notice of Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact for Small Placer Mining Operations, Caribou Basin Area, Caribou National Forest. **These documents are no longer applicable.**

The correct reference should be the 2021 Environmental Assessment for Caribou Basin Small-Scale Placer Mining (2021 EA) and the associated Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact. IDWR staff served on the interagency interdisciplinary team for the development of the 2021 EA. IDWR was also provided opportunity to review these documents and provided comments during their development. Changes to the administration of small-scale placer mining operations in the McCoy Creek drainage as a result of the 2021 EA and decision took effect in the 2022 season.

To better serve the recreational suction dredging community and to avoid potential confusion, the Forest Service requests IDWR update their website and suction dredging permit instructions to reflect how small-scale placer mining operations (i.e., suction dredging) in the McCoy Creek drainage are administered by the Forest Service per the 2021 EA. This includes:

- Up to 15 instream operations per year may be allowed for suction dredging and motorized sluicing.
- Instream activities may occur between August 1 and October 31.



- Operations may disturb up to 50 feet of contiguous stream channel.
- Suction dredges may not exceed a 5-inch diameter nozzle and 15 horsepower motor.

It was the Forest Service's understanding that once the 2021 EA was complete, the next step would be that IDWR would update their 1996 *Comprehensive State Water Plan for the South Fork of the Snake River* and the Recreational Mining Permit to reflect the updates to how the Caribou-Targhee National Forest administers these mining operations.

I am aware that there has been much confusion and angst on the part of the suction dredging community. It appears that prospective miners are getting conflicting information from the Forest Service and IDWR, as well as the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), who administer the Idaho Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (IPDES) General Permit for Small Suction Dredge Placer Miners in Idaho. My staff is currently working with Angela Anderson, IDEQ IPDES General Permit Supervisor to coordinate a more simplified, interagency approach to guide miners.

It may be helpful to start a discussion this fall/winter, well in advance of the upcoming mining season. Please coordinate with Diane Wheeler, Forest Geologist, at 208-516-6297 or at [diane.wheeler@usda.gov](mailto:diane.wheeler@usda.gov) to schedule a call.

Sincerely,

BRYAN K FUELL  
District Ranger

Cc: Angela Anderson, IDEQ

# MEMO



**To:** IWRB Water Resource Planning Committee (Committee)  
**From:** Planning & Projects Bureau Staff  
**Date:** May 8, 2026  
**Subject:** Other Items

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## INFORMATIONAL ITEM

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This item is included to allow the Committee an opportunity to bring forward and discuss any other matters.

**Attachments(s):**

- *None*