



## IWRB Regional Water Sustainability Priority List Criteria

The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) maintains the [Regional Water Sustainability Priority List](#) (RWS Priority List) to identify and promote projects that have the potential to improve long-term water sustainability across Idaho. As stated in the [Idaho State Water Plan](#), sustainability requires the active stewardship of Idaho’s water resources to satisfy current uses while ensuring water availability for future generations. Surface and groundwater systems are not limitless, and many regions of the state are experiencing increased pressure due to declining water levels, growing demand, aging infrastructure, and changing hydrologic conditions.

To support effective statewide water management, the IWRB uses the RWS Priority List as a planning tool to highlight regional scale (basin-wide, multi-entity, and statewide) projects—both studies and capital improvements—that address significant water resource challenges. These projects may contribute to stabilizing aquifer levels, modernizing critical infrastructure, improving drought resilience, resolving anticipated water supply conflicts, and protecting existing water rights and beneficial uses identified in Idaho Code. The IWRB may group related efforts into a single program or establish programs to support coordinated regional implementation.

The RWS Priority List also supports implementation of the Idaho State Water Plan, including the prioritization of IWRB funding programs, development of cooperative regional solutions, and early engagement with federal, state, tribal, and local partners. Inclusion on the RWS Priority List does not constitute a funding commitment, but elevates a project for consideration, supports coordination, and enables the Board to advocate for funding and technical resources (federal and state).

This document outlines the requirements and considerations for project sponsors seeking inclusion on the RWS Priority List. Inclusion on the RWS List is not a funding commitment, but rather a recognition that the project has the potential to help achieve water sustainability or address a regional water related issue.

### I. Regional Water Sustainability Priority List Eligibility Criteria:

Projects added to the RWS Priority List provide regional scale benefits and meaningfully contribute to long-term water sustainability in Idaho. These projects generally fall into the following categories:

- **Aquifer Stabilization**  
Projects that help reverse declining groundwater trends, improve aquifer storage, and strengthen long-term water reliability.
- **Regional Water Supply and Water Management**  
Projects that support long-term water planning or management through analysis, improved regional data collection, modeling, forecasting, or basin-wide evaluations that improve understanding of water availability, trends, infrastructure needs, hydrologic interactions, or future demands.
- **Infrastructure Modernization and Rehabilitation**  
Upgrades or replacement of aging storage, diversion, and delivery systems that impact multiple users, or address infrastructure at risk of failure with regional consequences.
- **Surface Water Storage and Operational Improvements**  
Projects that enhance reservoir capacity, optimize operations, improve system connectivity, or enable more effective management of surface and groundwater resources. This includes the development of new surface water storage, protection of existing storage assets, and enhancement of statewide storage capacity, consistent with legislative direction in House Joint Memorial No. 14 (2026), the Idaho State Water Plan, and IWRB strategic priorities for long-term water supply reliability and resilience.
- **Multi-Benefit and Integrated Water Management Projects**  
Projects affecting a regional area involving multiple partners or districts that improve drought resilience, protect existing water rights, support hydropower, improve water quality, or provide other regional water management benefits.

**Eligible Entities:**

Entities eligible to submit a request include:

- Irrigation Districts, Irrigation Boards of Control, Canal Companies, and Water Districts
- Drainage Districts, Flood Control Districts, Groundwater Districts, and Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Municipal Irrigation Districts (Title 50, Chapter 18, Idaho Code)
- Regional Water Supply Organizations
- State agencies, tribes, and municipalities.

**Eligible Geographic Area:**

Statewide.

**Eligible Projects / Programs:**

Projects or programs must provide regional scale water sustainability benefits.

To qualify, a project must meet all of the following:

- Address a significant regional water sustainability issue, such as declining groundwater

levels, surface-groundwater interaction challenges, enhancement of water supply, drought resilience, aging or inadequate delivery or storage systems, infrastructure deficiencies that pose demonstrable safety risk, or anticipated water supply conflicts.

- The primary purpose of the project must provide benefits that extend beyond a single entity and improve water management at the basin or regional level.
- Align with the sustainability goals outlined in the Idaho State Water Plan, including active stewardship, protection of existing water rights, and support for future water needs.

**Ineligible Projects:**

Municipal drinking water or wastewater system improvements, and projects whose primary purpose is to serve or benefit only a single entity, do **not** qualify for inclusion on the List.

**II. Required Proposals Materials**

Sponsors requesting inclusion on the RWS Priority List must submit a written request containing the following:

**1. Cover Letter**

- Project name, sponsor, and geographic area
- Brief project summary
- Sponsor contact information

**2. Project Background**

- Description of existing infrastructure or system
- Identify regional water supply issues, deficiencies, risks, or declining trends
- Objectives and anticipated benefits

**3. Sponsor Description**

- Organization type, governance structure, and operational background
- Service area and population served (if applicable)
- Revenue sources and financial capacity to complete the project
- Overview of current operations relevant to the project

**4. Project Description**

- Narrative project / program overview
- Map showing project location and regional context
- Conceptual design or plan, if available
- Known permitting requirements

- Environmental considerations

**5. Additional Information (If Available)**

- Preliminary cost estimates and budget
- Potential funding sources
- Proposed project schedule

**6. Required Demonstrations (Critical for Evaluation)**

Proposals **must clearly address** the following:

- **Define the regional issue**  
Identify the basin-wide or regional water sustainability challenge being addressed, including whether it represents a long-standing or emerging issue.
- **Explain how the project addresses the regional issue**  
Describe the mechanism (e.g., managed recharge, infrastructure or operational improvements, construction of new infrastructure, etc.)
- **Demonstrate regional support**  
Provide evidence such as letters, MOUs, partnerships, or stakeholder endorsements.
- **Identify and quantify impact(s) to the regional issue**  
Include metrics such as water savings, recharge volumes, impact to groundwater levels, heightened reliability, improved safety, economic, or environmental conditions, or other measurable outcomes.
- **Identify and quantify all potential impacts (positive and negative)**  
Impacts to groundwater and surface water, hydrologic impacts locally and regionally, alignment with regional settlement agreements, operational changes, construction disturbance, and/or long-term benefit.

**III. IWRB Considerations**

The IWRB takes into account a wide range of factors when considering potential projects for the RWS Priority List. Projects that are not chosen to be on the RWS Priority list may be eligible for other IWRB programs. The IWRB is guided by direction from the Governor and Idaho Legislature through funding allocations and related directives, including:

- Projects that support and forward the [Idaho State Water Plan](#).
- Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 137 (2016) – directs the IWRB address statewide aquifer stabilization and sustainability projects and studies in key basins within the state.
- House Concurrent Resolution No. 7 (2023) – directs the IWRB to establish a long-term plan that identifies future projects intended to protect, improve, and secure the state’s

water resources for the benefit of the citizens of the state and for future generations.

- Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 110 (2025) – recognizes the need to continue activities by water users and the IWRB to improve Snake River reach gains between Blackfoot and the Minidoka Dam to support the 2024 Stipulated Mitigation Plan.
- House Joint Memorial No. 14 (2026) - supports the development of new reservoirs through research on the feasibility, planning, and design for the raising of current dams and the development of new dams to create 750,000 acre-feet of new water storage.

Additional prioritization factors that may affect prioritizations of projects include:

- Ability to resolve long-standing or emerging water supply challenges
- Magnitude and regional scale of benefits
- Contribution to aquifer stabilization or groundwater recovery
- Protection of existing water rights and consideration of benefits to hydropower, fish and wildlife, recreation, and water quality
- Anticipation of future water demands, including municipal, agricultural, or industrial development
- Modernization or improvement of aging water infrastructure
- Development of new surface water storage, protection of existing storage assets, and enhancement of statewide surface water storage capacity

#### **IV. IWRB Support – what type of support can the IWRB provide?**

##### **Funding Support**

- Eligibility for IWRB funding programs for planning, design, or implementation phases
- Cost-share participation determined on a case-by-case basis, considering project scope, regional benefit, and sponsor capacity
- Potential for phased funding (e.g., feasibility, design, construction)
- Inclusion on the RWS Priority List may improve competitiveness for state and federal funding opportunities

##### **Advocacy and Funding Coordination**

- Advocacy for state and federal funding, including coordination with agencies such as the Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Support for legislative awareness and potential appropriations aligned with statewide water priorities
- Inclusion in broader state water resource initiatives or funding strategies

##### **Technical Assistance**

- Support for hydrologic analysis, modeling, and data evaluation
- Assistance with feasibility studies and alternatives analysis
- Coordination and integration with statewide data and monitoring efforts
- Facilitation of interagency technical collaboration

#### **Project Development and Coordination**

- Assistance refining project scope, phasing, and alternatives
- Support in identifying and coordinating regional partners
- Convening stakeholders to advance multi-entity or basin-wide solutions

#### **V. Additions to the RWS Priority List:**

The IWRB may add projects to the RWS Priority List at its discretion. Project sponsors may submit a request at any time.

IWRB staff will work with the Project Sponsor to ensure the application is complete and the project meets the eligibility criteria. A complete application will be presented to the IWRB for consideration.

#### **Submittal Instructions**

Requests must be submitted electronically to:

[IWRB-Info@idwr.idaho.gov](mailto:IWRB-Info@idwr.idaho.gov)