



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDWR sends early notice to Snake River water users with Trust Water Rights, indicating that minimum flows at Murphy may drop below 3,900 cfs this summer, potentially leading to curtailment action

BOISE – (June 2, 2026) – In a forecast for Snake River water flows, officials with the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) are predicting that there is a chance that river flows may fall below the minimum flow of 3,900 cubic feet per second at the Murphy gage this summer.

In conjunction with the forecast, IDWR is sending out a notice to all water users who have Trust Water Rights, reminding them that they could be subject to curtailment if Snake River flows fall below 3,900 cfs this summer, officials said. The notice encourages Trust Water Users to plan ahead, and be aware of the online tools and resources available to them.

“The purpose of this letter is to remind water users that water rights or permits that divert Trust Water may be curtailed when water flows in the Snake River at the Murphy gage fall below established minimum stream flows of 5,600 cfs during the non-irrigation season in the winter and 3,900 cfs during the summer irrigation season,” IDWR’s Water Administration Bureau Chief Nick Miller said in June 1st letter to Trust Water Users.

“Importantly, the flow at the Murphy Gage fell below the minimum for six days in late March of this year during the non-irrigation season,” Miller said. “The Department recently issued a Spring Forecast for flows at the Murphy Gage, which predicts flow rates may fall below the minimum stream flow of 3,900 cfs in late June/early July of this year. As a result, your water right(s) may need to be curtailed.”

“Trust Water Rights” refer to a legal framework established by the 1984 Swan Falls Settlement in Idaho. This agreement resolved a major conflict between Idaho Power Company and the State of Idaho regarding how to balance the Snake River’s water use for agricultural development and other uses versus Idaho Power’s use for hydroelectric generation.

“Trust Water Rights” refer to water rights issued after the 1984 Swan Falls Settlement and are subject to maintaining the required minimum flows at the Murphy Gage. The water rights may be in the Snake River or in tributary aquifers.

According to IDWR’s database, there are more than 4,000 Trust Water Rights. The June 1st letter was mailed to all of the approximately 3,300 owners of Trust Water rights and their representatives.

If Snake River flows drop below 3,900 cfs at the Murphy gage, that would be the first time that has occurred during the irrigation season since the Swan Falls Settlement occurred in 1984.

Background:

Allocation of Water: The State, via IDWR, has the authority to allocate this "Trust Water" for future beneficial uses (such as agricultural, municipal, and commercial development) in accordance with Idaho law.

Curtailment Risk: Trust Water Rights have a built-in provision indicating that if water levels in the Snake River drop below the minimum stream flows at the Murphy gage, these rights can be curtailed under state law to restore the minimum flows for hydropower generation and downstream needs.

Term Reviews: To ensure the allocated water remains in the public interest and is being used efficiently, many Trust Water Rights are issued with term conditions that require them to be reviewed by IDWR typically every five to 20 years.

For background information on the Swan Falls Settlement, go to this link on the IDWR website:

<https://idwr.idaho.gov/settlements/swan-falls-settlement/>

Water users can track flows, review legal parameters, and see exact usage areas utilizing the [IDWR Swan Falls Settlement Interactive Map](#).

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