

Swan Falls Implementation Group Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 24, 2026; 1:00 p.m.

IDWR Conference Room

1. Introductions were skipped:

2&3. AADF Update and Swan Falls Forecast Update: (Ethan Geisler)

Discussion of current flow at the Murphy Gage. We are getting very close to the minimum flows of 5600 cfs. We dropped below on the 21st but use a three day average to take out the fluctuations. Last time flows dropped below the 5600 CFS was back in 2015.

Discussion of last year vs. this year. Snowpack was better in March last year so there was a buffer last year.

Discussion of the 2026 Winter Forecast from the Technical Working Group. Look at the various components that contribute to the water levels. Review of the March 2026 Weather Stats from Glen Ferry. We are setting record highs – did a comparison to 2015. We don't have the low elevation snowpack this year.

The technical working group has set a meeting in April (if flows drop below minimum) and again in the middle of May (spring forecast tool).

Raybould: Bruneau is a wild card issue if melt is good, we might be okay, but will be tight.

Pugrud: what does the tool say about July? The lowest, worst case scenario is the 10th percentile. Will rerun again in May. The May run will provide a better indication of the summertime flow outlook for Swan Falls.

4. Trust Water Right Database Update (Shilynn Novak)

Water Allocation Bureau – Analyst 3. Water rights junior to SF Agreement are considered Trust Water unless identified by the SRBA court as A list water rights. A list water rights are junior to the agreement but benefit from subordination of the Idaho Power rights at Swan Falls regardless of whether or not minimum flows are met. B list water rights have priority dates senior to the Swan Falls Agreement but only benefit from subordination when the minimum Swan Falls are met. Senior water rights are also considered to be trust water except enlargement rights.

Discussion of water uses and a 2025 summary of changes on actions taken on trust water rights.

S. Pugrud asked about 3 new water rights (given the Director's moratorium). The new permit information will be made available at the May meeting.

J. Vega asked about water rights not established. S. Novak did not capture them in the 4,110 total. Only final permits are in the total. S. Pugrud asked if we know how many permits are out there that are not yet complete that will be trust water. S. Novak said they wait to determine if it is licensed by doing the field work to see if permit has been put to use. If so, move toward a licensed water right. S. Pugrud wanted to know how many permits are issued and the volume. S. Novak will pull those numbers. Want to know the number of permits that affect Swan Falls as they get licensed. How many permits do we have that are unlicensed and what is the impact of the permitted trust water rights?

5. Update on Question No. 5 from the Technical Working Group (Jennifer Sukow and Ethan Geisler)

At what level does the aquifer need to be held at in order to maintain the minimum flows (3,900 cfs) at the Murphy Gage with a reasonable chance of not going below?

Quick recap of questions 1-4.

The time period looked at is June through July. Broke into two questions. The aquifer side and the non-ESPA flow side. What are the non-ESPA flows and the components of that analysis? The main contributors are the tributaries, return flows from North and South side and District 2 consumptive use. We have the data to calculate the annual Non-ESPA flow and the consumptive demand flow back to 2002. The net of the Non-ESPA and Consumptive Demand by year was ranked and exceedance were developed for the period of record (back to 2002). These exceedances were then used to evaluate the levels of risk for 1) a single drought year and 2) multiple, successive drought years. In good water years the system sees higher run-off and sustained flow numbers, in dry years not a lot of flow and consumptive demand is often higher. The SFTWG then reviewed a chart of Non-ESPA flow and consumptive demand percent exceedance, the ranked Net Contribution by Year and % Exceedance.

To predict the July ESPA discharge, the SFTWG 1) developed a correlation between the 37 wells used for monitoring water levels within the ESPA and a subset (16) of the monitoring wells located between Kimberly to King Hill and 2) evaluated residual difference from observed versus predicted reach gains using the fall measurements from the monitoring wells.

Combining the prediction of July ESPA discharge with the net non-ESPA contribution provides view of the risk of a potential violation of meeting the Swan Falls minimum flow at different levels of exceedance resulting in ranges of net risk at each level. This same approach was then used to evaluate the changes in water level under a multi-year drought scenario.

Discussion regarding possible curtailment of trust water rights. You can't regulate trust water looking in the rearview mirror. Need to plan ahead to manage trust water with the least amount of disruption. The point was made that the chart showed 90% exceedance. Everyone needs to look at the full memo and the committee needs to determine what their tolerance level is.

Discuss more in depth at a future meeting after reviewing the memo.

6. Swan Falls Dashboard Tool (Mackenzie Case)

GIS team working on an online dashboard for all things Swan Falls and have a final draft to show the committee.

There is a Water Rights section and permits section in the new tool. The application is not yet live but a good look at what will be available once the tool is live. Looking to go live this summer once the committee gives a thumbs-up. Will send link to committee to test and provide final decision at next meeting.

7. Swan Falls Framing Questions

Questions that can be submitted to the attorney general for review. Questions related to the IDWR Director's authorities and responsibilities regarding administration of trust water rights. Distribute questions and invite comments and questions at the next meeting. Questions need to fit into two question format. Need a final draft by the next meeting. 10 working days to review.

8. Next Meeting

The technical working group meeting is on May 14. The committee will meet on May 26 at 1:30 p.m.

Adjourn