



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDWR hydrologists provide update on water volume in Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer, spring flows, reach gains and impact of managed recharge activities

BOISE – (Aug. 26, 2026) – Hydrologists with the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) provided an update to the Idaho Water Resource Board Aquifer Stabilization Committee on Wednesday on the change in water storage in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), natural spring flows that discharge from the aquifer, and the impact of managed aquifer recharge on the ESPA.

The water volume in the ESPA had no change from 2024-2025, and this year, it had a net reduction of 600,000 acre-feet water, based on the water measurement of 329 monitoring wells prior to the 2026 irrigation season, according to Mike McVay, IDWR hydrogeologist.

Meanwhile, spring flows that discharge from the ESPA at Thousand Springs and in the Blackfoot-to-Minidoka Reach are expected to decline in 2026.

On the positive side of the water ledger, modeling results of the IWRB's Managed Aquifer Recharge Program, aquifer-recharge activities by the Coalition of Cities and groundwater districts in the ESPA region, and groundwater pumping reductions are showing a combined net storage gain to the ESPA in the amount of 2.8 million acre-feet of water, said Alex Moody, technical hydrogeologist for IDWR.

"We are definitely moderating the decline with the Board's aquifer-recharge program, pumping reductions by the groundwater districts and private recharge," Moody said.

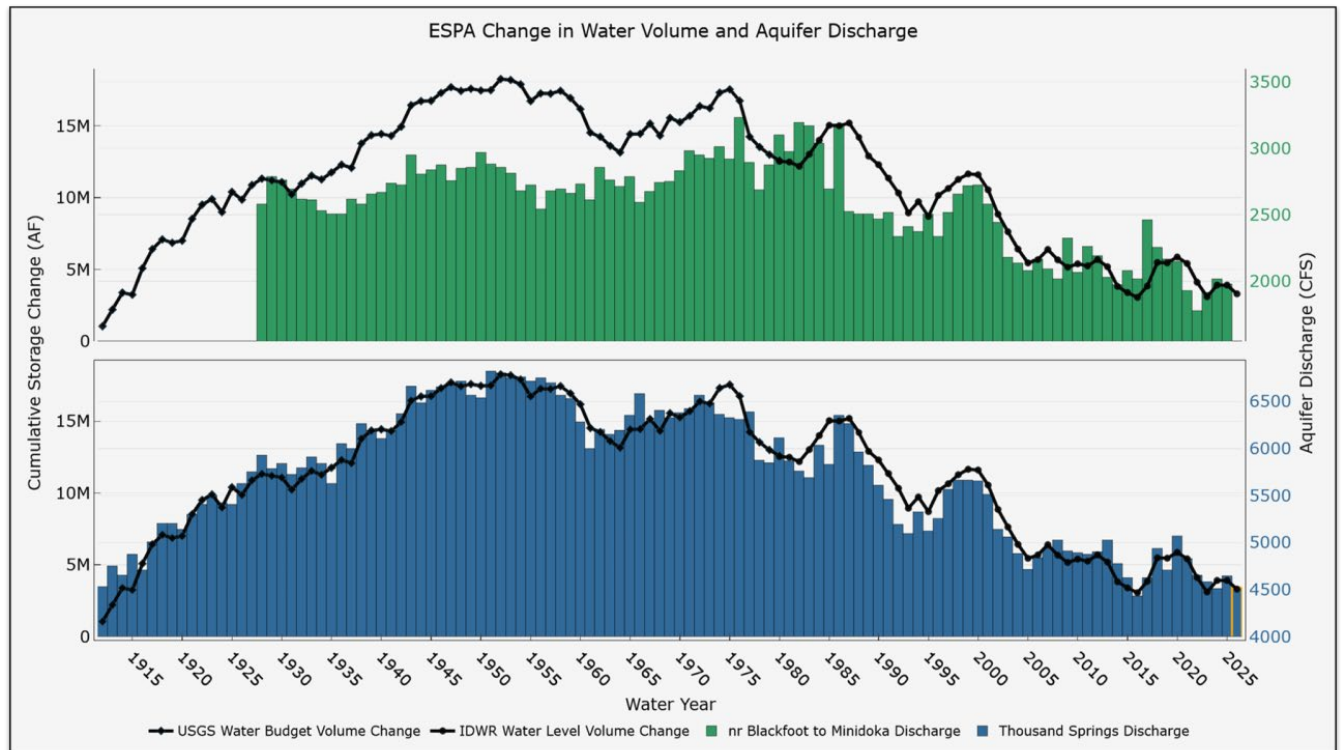
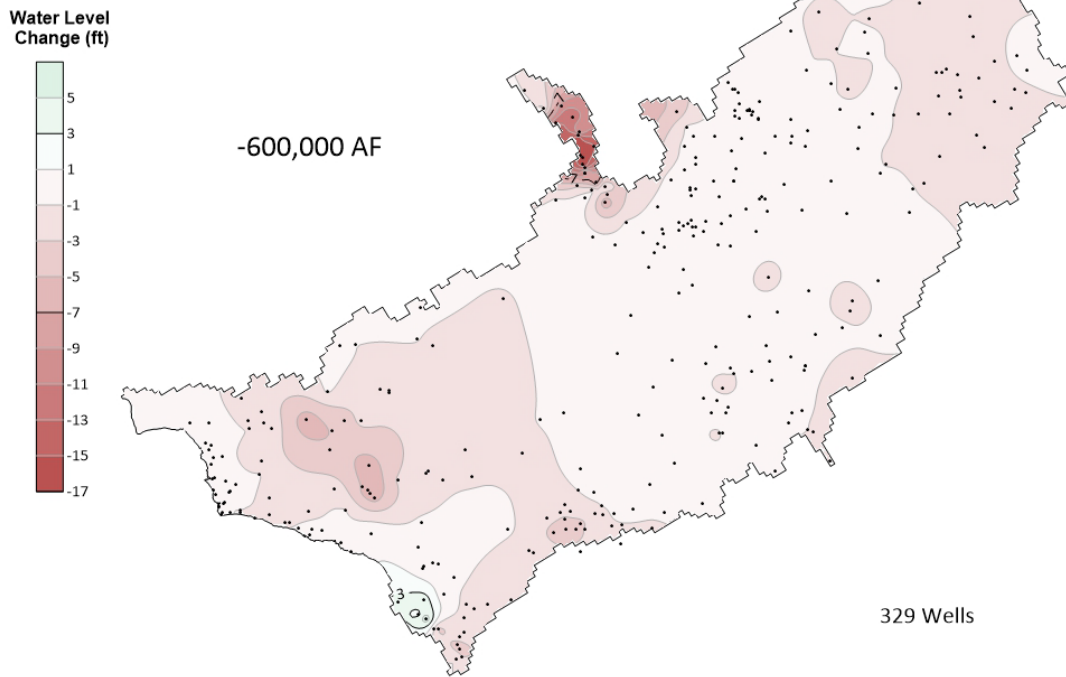
Over the last 10 years, the aquifer-recharge activities from all parties are showing positive impacts in the ESPA, Moody said, with 53% of the Board's recharge flows still being retained in the aquifer, 25% retained from private recharge, and 47% retained by pumping reductions.

Overall, the ESPA constantly "leaks" at many locations along the Snake River so the aquifer gains can be "fleeting," McVay said.

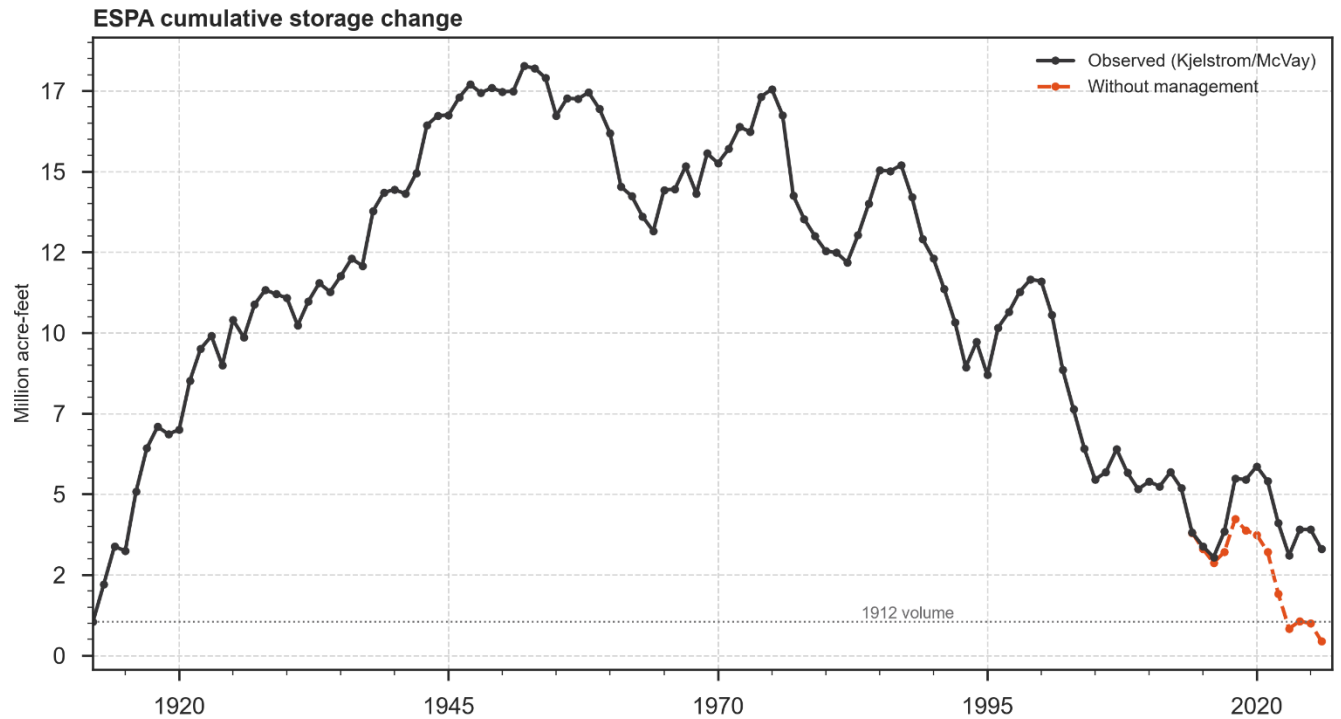
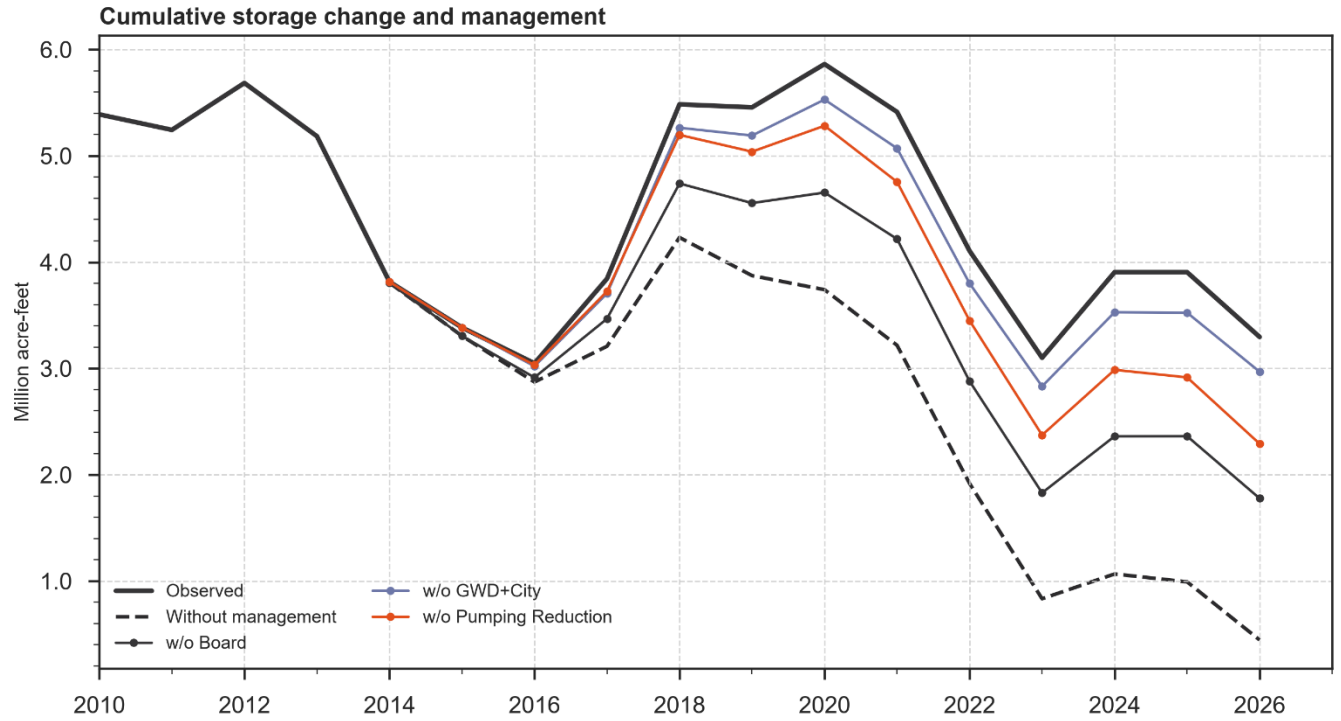
"We need to stay the course with aquifer recharge, pumping reductions and our other initiatives to manage the ESPA, or we will be seeing our aquifer volume going down much lower than it is now," said Brian Patton, IDWR Deputy Director and Executive Officer for the IWRB.

Key graphics shared by IDWR during the presentation on Wednesday:

ESPA Water Level Change - Spring 2025 To Spring 2026 with Wells Locations



ESPA aquifer-recharge contributions and groundwater district pumping reductions are shown below:



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