NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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IWRB approves funds to explore a new pipeline to increase water flows to Clearwater Fish Hatchery and Dworshak National Fish Hatchery

BOISE – (Nov. 16, 2026) – The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) voted to approve $650,000 in funding to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to explore options for a new water-supply pipeline that would benefit the production of imperiled Chinook salmon and steelhead at the Clearwater Fish Hatchery and Dworshak National Fish Hatchery (hatcheries).

Officials with the Idaho Governor's Office of Species, Minerals & Energy, Coordination and Idaho Department of Fish and Game requested the funds from IWRB to increase water flows from the Clearwater River to the fish hatcheries to benefit and expand fish production.

Clearwater Fish Hatchery and Dworshak National Fish Hatchery are the two largest public fish hatcheries in the state. The hatcheries have a combined production target of 5.8 million juvenile Chinook salmon and 2.9 million juvenile steelhead, officials said. Dworshak also produces 1 million juvenile coho salmon.

On average, one-third of the Spring Chinook salmon and steelhead returning to Idaho annually as adults are attributable to these two facilities, officials said.

Improving the water supply to Clearwater and Dworshak Fish hatcheries was recommended by Gov. Brad Little's Salmon Workgroup and is included on the IWRB's Regional Water Sustainability Priority list in District 1. Increased water supply provides redundancy for aging infrastructure, increases Chinook salmon production capacity to return approximately 15,740 additional adults annually, reduces disease exposure for Steelhead and optimizes operational efficiency at Clearwater Fish Hatchery and Dworshak National Fish Hatchery, officials said.

In other action, IWRB staff reported that the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) managed recharge program is under way for the winter of 2026-27. Last week, the total diversion rate was 550 cubic feet per second (cfs), with the North Side Canal Co. recharging about 450 cfs, Twin Falls Canal Co. 51 cfs, and the Southwest Irrigation District 46 cfs.

Currently, the IWRB 15-year average for ESPA managed recharge is 245,514 acre-feet of water. This winter, knowing there will be no surplus flood-control water releases expected from the Upper Snake Reservoir system, Matt Anders, Planning and Projects Section Supervisor for IWRB,

estimated that the IWRB may recharge about 145,000 acre-feet of water into the ESPA, relying on the Magic Valley irrigation partners for all of the recharge flows.

In other action, the IWRB approved low-interest loans to the following:

- Last Chance Canal Co., Ltd, received a new loan for $420,000 to repair and replace portions of its existing canal infrastructure. The loan carries a 5.5% interest rate over a 10-year term.
- Drainage District No. 6 (District) received a new loan for $385,074 to rebuild and modernize an existing pump station used by the District to drain approximately 5,500 acres of farmland in the Kootenai River Valley. The loan carries a 5.5% interest rate over a 10-year term.
- North Side Canal Co. requested a $500,000 increase to an existing $5M million loan for its $7 million canal rehabilitation project. The loan has an interest rate of 4.38%.

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