



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Idaho Water Resource Board approves 10 flood-management grants, approves funds to explore changes in management of Ririe Reservoir**

TWIN FALLS – (July 27, 2021) – The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) approved 10 flood-management grants statewide totaling \$980,936, while also receiving an annual update about Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) volumes, spring discharge to the Snake River, and accomplishments made by Idaho ground water users to reduce pumping from the aquifer, during its regular bimonthly meeting, held in Twin Falls.

Mike McVay, a hydrogeologist for the Idaho Department of Water Resources, reported that the ESPA water volume dropped by an estimated 550,000 acre-feet in the last year. Despite the decline, the net change for ESPA water volume over the last five years is still a positive increase of 2.3 million acre-feet of water due to aquifer recharge and other water management practices implemented by the state and water users, McVay said.

“We have to persevere through dry years – that’s hard,” McVay said. “But we have to keep moving forward with the program, and make the most of the wet years to recharge the aquifer.”

Overall, ESPA water levels have risen since 2016, McVay said. The Board has been working to restore the ESPA to sustainable levels with an aquifer-recharge program that seeks to send an annual average of 250,000 acre-feet of water into the ESPA during the winter months. A 2015 settlement agreement between the Surface Water Coalition and the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators requires reduction in consumptive use of the ESPA by 240,000 acre-foot per year, and the Coalition of Cities is reducing consumptive use from the ESPA by 7,650 acre-feet per year.

Without the contributions of those programs, the ESPA would be 1.2 million acre-feet drier than it is now, IDWR officials said. Some of the key natural springs in the Thousand Springs complex such as Box Canyon are continuing to show an upward trend, which is a positive sign of results from aquifer-recharge activities, officials said.

Three of the largest Flood-Management grants (\$200,000 each) were awarded to the North Side Canal Company, Reid Canal Company, and Clearwater Soil & Water Conservation District. A 50 percent match is required for all projects.

Other flood management grant projects approved include: Flood District 9 in Bellevue, \$111,508; Nez Perce County and NPSWCD – Streambank project, \$100,000; Lewis Soil and Water Conservation District,

two projects, \$71,910 and \$36,062; Flood District 17 - \$6,375; Clearwater SWCD - \$37,475. See more detail in the project summaries (attached).

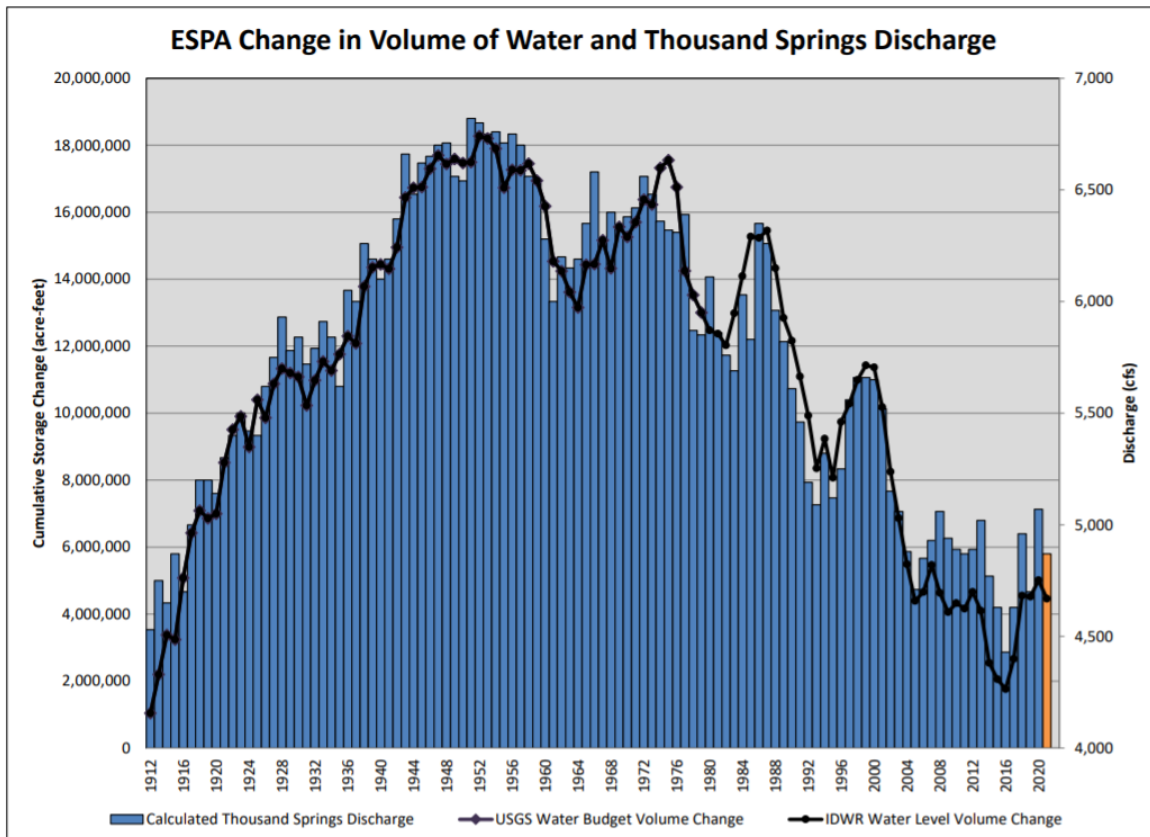
The Board also approved spending \$1.47 million to evaluate a change in the operation of Ririe Reservoir in Eastern Idaho to improve water supply storage. By law, Ririe Reservoir must evacuate storage water in the fall to make room for 50,000 acre-feet of flood control space from Nov. 1 – Feb. 28, no matter how much storage water exists, officials said.

The Board will partner with Mitigation, Inc. to complete studies and projects necessary to change the Ririe Reservoir flood control rule curves without interfering with the project’s authorized purposes, including flood control, officials said. The Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation will do the studies.

In other action, the Board approved funding for a statewide climatology assessment to determine if there may be additional areas where the Board could engage in cloud-seeding activities. The study comes in response to state legislation encouraging the Board to explore locations across the state that may benefit from cloud-seeding activities in addition to the Boise, Big Wood and Upper Snake River Basins. The board also approved funding for a pilot cloud-seeding program in the Bear River Basin in the 2021-22 winter season, which includes operation of an aircraft to begin seeding in the Bear River Basin and provide additional seeding in the Upper Snake River Basin, if opportunities arise.

The Board also approved a \$200,000, 15-year loan to the Bennington Irrigation Company. Bennington seeks to replace an aging pipeline and concrete flume at a total cost of \$257,000.

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Source: IDWR