

Meeting Minutes
Big Wood River Ground Water Management Area Advisory Committee
Blaine County Community Campus
June 30, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM by IDWR Regional Operations Bureau Chief Shelley Keen, who took roll call and introduced Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) personnel. Some committee members participated via Zoom video conference. See the attached list of attendees.

The first order of business was a presentation by Larry Schoen regarding the Conservation, Infrastructure, and Efficiency Fund. Mr. Schoen reported that the fund currently holds \$464,966.00, with another \$96,683.00 in matching funds provided by the Idaho Water Resource Board for a total of \$561,649.00. Mr. Schoen proposed the idea of placing the Grant Award Criteria and other application information relating to the funding of water savings projects on the IDWR public website. Tim Luke will work to place the information on the IDWR website.

Water District 37 Watermaster Sunny Healey reported on water supply conditions. She noted that the Big Wood River peaked on May 23, and Magic Reservoir is full, with outflows approximately equal to inflows. Ms. Healey said that conditions this year are similar to those in water year 2019. No priority cuts have been made, nor were any anticipated, in the near future. Carl Pendelton said this year's runoff has been spread over a longer period of time, where the 2019 runoff was much more rapid. Cooper Brossy mentioned that in 2019 the first priority cuts were made in August.

Justin Stevenson gave an update on fallowed acres in the South Valley Ground Water District (SVGWD). SVGWD is 207 acres short of the required 1,500 acres/year. Pat McMahon said that the Galena Ground Water District will see 200 acres fallowed on the Eccles property adjacent to the Hailey airport and about 16-20 acres still fallowed from 2022. He noted that participation in fallowing irrigated acres was not good. Mr. Stevenson told the group that a season of use reduction exemption existed for seed potatoes and pasture and the SVGWD would like to see the exemption extended to other crops, such as new seeding hay and cover crops.

After a short break, the meeting was called back to order. Tim Luke told the group that IDWR hasn't had staff available to implement a water right accounting program for Water District 37, but he noted that the Department will have a staff member devoted full time to the process in the fall, with a prototype model potentially available by next spring. Mr. Luke also stated that some has begun on the Camas Prairie ground water study. IDWR will drill a couple of wells in the near future to determine aquifer lithology and characteristics. Discussion ensued about the lack of communication from the USGS or IDWR and the fact that the study will be completed after 2024 and the expiration of the current BWRGWMA Management Plan term. Further discussion ensued about arranging a meeting in the Fairfield area later this year in which USGS and IDWR staff may give a presentation to area ground water users about the study, including overview, scope, timeline, and costs. A suggestion was made to invite the Camas County commissioners. Tim Luke agreed to carry this recommendation back to pertinent IDWR and USGS staff.

Pat McMahon reported that he has had discussions with Cooper Brossy to look into the possibility of purchasing storage water from the Snake River system to supply Big and Little Wood senior water right holders. No purchases have been made because the price is quite high at this point in the season (\$120/acre-foot according to Mr. McMahon). A discussion on the subject of purchasing storage water then took place, with questions of price, availability, and whether the water is even needed, highlighting the conversation. The general consensus of the Committee was to postpone a decision on purchasing storage water until it was determined how much would actually be needed, and at that point, hopefully make the purchases at a lower price. Idaho Water Resource Board member Brian Olmstead questioned if American Falls Reservoir District 2 (AFRD2) storage water could be leased to supply the senior priority water right holders. Kent Fletcher stated that if AFRD2 supplied water to a third party, the rental pool rules would cause AFRD2 to become the "last to fill" the next year, causing the Reservoir District water users to be shorted that year. Chris Bromley stated that the price and availability of Snake River storage water will be influenced by the Director's July injury analysis and that the meeting to decide whether or not to purchase storage water should be made after the Director's mid-season adjustment order. Tim Luke suggested a date around July 20 for the meeting to make the decision whether or not to obtain storage water. Shelley Keen noted that there should be unanimous support for any decision to recommend a deviation from the baseline commitments in the management plan.

Mr. Luke and Mr. Keen both suggested that the Committee should be preparing for extending the management plan beyond 2024. Mr. Keen expressed a desire for the management plan after 2024 to be similar to the current plan, with some possible minor adjustments, rather than a comprehensive rewrite. Mr. Luke and Mr. Keen recommended that each group within the Advisory Committee document its ideas for a long-term management plan. Pat Purdy asked if the Department would have data available to help with the planning. Mr. Luke and Mr. Keen said that they anticipate that there will be continuity with the efforts that have gone into the current plan, and that the Wood River Valley Ground Water Flow Model is available to all parties.

The date of the next Advisory Committee meeting was discussed, but a firm date was not established. Shelley Keen adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

**Big Wood River Ground Water Management Area Advisory Committee Meeting
June 30, 2023, Attendance**

Advisory Committee

Cooper Brossy
Pat McMahon
Carl Pendleton
Sharon Lee
Rod Hubsmith
Brian Yeager (via Zoom)
Justin Stevenson
Pat Purdy
Bill Simon (via ZOOM)
Nick Westendorf (via ZOOM)
Chris Bromley for Corey Allen
Sen Ron Taylor (Ex-Officio)
Rep Jack Nelsen (Ex-Officio)

IDWR Staff

Shelley Keen
Tim Luke
Jim Bitzenburg

IWRB Members

Brian Olmstead

Members of the Public

Kevin Lakey
Sunny Healey
Larry Schoen
Keri York (via Zoom)
Kent Fletcher (Vis Zoom)
Judd McMahon
Mary Beth Collins
Chase Hendricks (via Zoom)
several others not listed (via Zoom)