

Meeting Notes
Big Wood River Ground Water Management Area Advisory Committee
Blaine County Community Campus, Hailey, Idaho
July 17, 2024

IDWR Southern Region Manager Corey Skinner called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM by taking Advisory Committee roll call, introducing IDWR personnel, Idaho Water Resource Board members, and Idaho State Legislators in attendance. A list of attendees is included at the conclusion of these notes.

The first order of business was to open the floor for public comment, and IDWR Deputy Director Shelley Keen advised the attendees that the Advisory Committee was looking to improve the time efficiency of the meetings. Keri York, representing the NGOs, reminded the Advisory Committee of the suggestions regarding environmental concerns that were presented in the group's May 5, 2024, letter, and asked that the suggestions in the letter – mainly increased stream flows for the benefit of habitat and ecosystems -- be implemented into the plan. Michael Gibson, of Trout Unlimited, then spoke and voiced agreement with Ms. York's request, and stated that the plan should include language that addresses trout and their habitat. Larry Schoen was next, with several suggestions, the main point being that water table in the Wood River Valley is declining and that it should be managed for aquifer health.

Next on the agenda was the Conservation, Infrastructure, and Efficiency Fund (CIEF) report from Larry Schoen. He noted that the fund account currently totaled \$540,773.25. He also said that funding had been committed to several projects and the committee had received proposals for other projects. There was discussion about the placement of CIEF project funding applications and contact information on the IDWR public website, and it was decided to move forward with that idea.

The fourth item on the agenda was a Management Plan Compliance Update for the 2024 season. Water District 37 Watermaster Sunny Healey provided stream flow charts at various sites throughout the Wood River and Camas Creek drainages. The Station 10 stream flow on the Little Wood River temporarily dipped below 32 cfs three times in the June-July period, but the four-day moving average stayed above 32 cfs, ruling out the need for additional consumptive use reductions for the time being. The flows at both Station 10 and Station 54 have begun to rise, possibly due to return flows and the non-use of water during hay cutting.

Pat McMahon reported that the CIEF Committee and Galena GWD had made acquisitions of about 2,855 acre-feet of storage water at \$40 per acre-foot. Additionally, the fallowed acres for the year were still a little short of the goals in the Galena GWD and the South Valley GWD.

The fifth agenda item was the Technical Working Group report from Mike McVay. Mr. McVay told the Committee that ground water pumping in the Big Wood River aquifer impacted flows in the Big Wood River and Silver Creek and that that ground water pumping in the Camas Prairie aquifer had impacts on flows of Camas Creek and inflows into Magic Reservoir. Mr. McVay noted that whether the Wood River aquifer shows a declining trend is dependent on the period selected for evaluation. Ground water levels in the BWRGWMA declined from the 1970s until the 1990s, when the moratorium was put in place, and have mostly stabilized since then. He said that full curtailment of ground water diversions would have the

most immediate impact on flows in Silver Creek, with less immediate impact on flows in the Big Wood River.

Mr. McVay compared the impacts of ground water pumping in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer to those in the BWRGWMA and stated that the impacts in the Big Wood are quicker and that the Big Wood aquifer doesn't retain water as well as the ESPA. Another item of note that he mentioned was that the carryover of the effects of curtailment from one season to the next was quite small. Building up storage in the BWRGWMA aquifer is less achievable than in the ESPA.

Mr. McVay confirmed, when asked by Shelley Keen, that the most efficient way to overcome stream flow deficiencies would be to deliver storage water directly to the affected reach. Measures that conserve water in the aquifer are less efficient because their impacts are spread out over time and across multiple streams and stream reaches. Shelley Keen asked the Advisory Committee if it thought some combination of stream flow targets and placing and monitoring of several sentinel wells in the lower valley would be a better way to trigger management actions than stream flow alone.

A break was taken from 12:21 PM until the meeting was resumed at 12:39 PM.

The sixth agenda item was to hear reports from the Subcommittee Groups, and Cooper Brossy reported that the Management Plan Goals group has come up with some ideas, but nothing concrete yet. Shelley Keen said that the Enforcement group had not called a meeting, so no progress was made. Larry Schoen said that his group, the CIEF subcommittee, gave its presentation at the last meeting, and noted that much of the funding for fallowing/reduced pumping was furnished by CIEF.

Corey Skinner told the Advisory Committee that the Camas Prairie group would be meeting for the first time on July 25, and also said that Camas Prairie Water Resource Study team would be holding an open house on September 11, and that Amy Steimke is the IDWR lead on the study.

Shelley Keen led the Flow Target/Storage Water Acquisition group report and said the group has met a couple of times. Pat McMahon has met with storage water suppliers and there has been discussion in the Advisory Committee about possibly obtaining long-term contracts for the storage water. Justin Stevenson told the Advisory Committee that the group discussed whether a target flow on the Big Wood could cover 1888 priority rights, which were cut in most years in the past. Nick Westendorf noted that a target flow of a combined 53 cfs in Willow Creek, the Big Wood River, and Camas Creek on the Big Wood side would cover water with 4/1/1885 priorities and senior rights delivered below Magic Reservoir.

The Forecasting Methods/Models group has not met at this point and Kendra Kaiser was scheduled to give a presentation at this meeting, but had scheduling conflicts and could not attend. She will instead give her presentation at a special Advisory Committee meeting on July 30.

Shelley Keen gave the report for the Season of Use/Fallowing/Pumping Reductions group and said that the group had met with Mike McVay. Mr. Keen suggested that the group discuss whether there should be reduced emphasis on season of use because the amount of water pumped probably has a greater impact. A discussion on fallowing followed, with Pat Purdy noting that it was difficult to establish a cover crop on fallowed acres without being allowed to irrigate. Carl Pendelton noted that the Advisory Committee

needed to redefine fallowing because fallowed acres currently cannot be watered with ground water or surface water.

Item seven on the agenda was new business and Sharon Lee asked what was being done in the area of water accounting. Shelley Keen replied that preliminary work was being done in Microsoft Excel to establish the accounting procedures, but fully functional accounting is not likely for a couple of years.

Corey Skinner told the group that the Director of IDWR had issued amended moratoriums in the BWRGWMA and in the ESPAGWMA. The main focus of modification to the previous moratoriums was in the areas of municipal purposes and domestic uses from community water systems

Public comment was again requested and Larry Schoen stated that it was an interesting meeting, but he was confused by information presented by the TWG. He also asserted that the management plan should be flexible on a yearly basis.

The final agenda item was to set the next meeting of the Advisory Committee for August 21, 2024, from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM at the Lincoln County Community Center in Shoshone.

Corey Skinner adjourned the meeting at 1:49 PM.

**Big Wood River Ground Water Management Area Advisory Committee Meeting
July 17, 2024, Attendance**

Advisory Committee

Corey Allen
Cooper Brossy
Rod Hubsmith
Sharon Lee
Pat McMahan
Justin Stevenson
Carl Pendleton
Pat Purdy
Nick Westendorf
Ron Taylor (Idaho State Senator representing District 26)

IDWR Staff

Shelley Keen
Corey Skinner
Corey King
Jim Bitzenburg
Neely Miller (via Zoom)
Mike McVey (via Zoom)

IWRB Members

Pat McMahan
Brian Olmstead (via Zoom)

Members of the Public

Sunny Healey
Larry Schoen
Keri York
Dave Shaw (via Zoom)
Zach Hill (via Zoom)
Kent Fletcher (via Zoom)
Chase Hendricks (via Zoom)
Heather O'Leary (via Zoom)
Eric Miller (via Zoom)
Mitch Fleming (representing Camas Prairie water users in place of Bill Simon)
Chris Johnson (via Zoom)
Ned Burns (Idaho State Representative representing District 26)
Michael Gibson
Greg Sullivan (via Zoom)
Jana Reeder
Derek Holon (via Zoom)
Tim Luke (via Zoom)
...and others via Zoom and in-person