

## **Meeting Notes**

### **Big Wood River Ground Water management Area Advisory Committee**

#### **Lincoln County Community Center, Shoshone, Idaho**

**October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

IDWR Southern Region Manager Corey Skinner called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and took Advisory Committee attendance. He introduced IDWR personnel, Idaho Water Resource Board personnel, the newest members of the advisory committee, Judd McMahon and Mitch Fleming, as well as Idaho State Legislators in attendance. A list of attendees is included at the conclusion of these notes.

The second agenda item was public comment. Larry Schoen opened the discussion, expressing concern that committee seats had reportedly been filled without prior notice. Corey Skinner clarified that committee appointments are made at the discretion of the IDWR Director, including the determination of committee size, and that the Director ultimately decides on the appointment of new members. Mr. Schoen remained concerned and referenced a letter he had received from the Director, noting that it contained language indicating that the committee seats would not be filled. He requested that it be formally noted in the record that he believed his interests were not being adequately represented. Brian Olmstead raised a question regarding representation from organizations within the Big Wood River Ground Water Management Area (BWRGWMA). Tim Luke and Corey Skinner responded, providing clarification specifically regarding Galena Ground Water District (GGWD) representation.

The next agenda item was IDWR updates. Brian Ragan of IDWR, presented on Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) Curtailment and Common Groundwater Supply Expansion. Following the presentation, Mr. Ragan addressed several questions from the public and explained the potential implications if areas with existing Groundwater Management Plans (GWMPs) were incorporated into the ESPA. Brian Olmstead commented that it would be beneficial for this group of water users to avoid inclusion in the ESPA. Cooper Brossy inquired about the public hearings regarding the expansion of tributary basins into the ESPA, specifically how the Director and the process were managed. Mr. Ragan provided responses to all questions. Pat Purdy emphasized the importance of maintaining the current management plan. Representative Jack Nelsen added that the expertise present in the room can serve as a guiding force for the broader ESPA, highlighting how water users can effectively manage resources without state intervention.

Corey Skinner then discussed recent legislative changes to Idaho Code sections 42-111 and 42-227. Following the presentation, Pat Purdy and members of the public commented that they felt the new language was ambitious in terms of how the Department would enforce these changes. Larry Schoen explained implications of the new language for Blaine County, drawing on his experience with the Planning and Zoning Commission. Senator Ron Taylor provided additional clarification on specific definitions within sections 42-111 and 42-227. Representative Jack Nelsen noted that the legislature would likely continue refining the language and mentioned that enforcement could potentially be supported using LIDAR technology.

Corey Skinner then discussed IDWR's Strategic Plan and then Corey King discussed a pending measurement order for Water District 37. Mr. King explained that the implementation of the measurement order is expected to begin in the near future.

The next agenda item was an update on 2025 Management Plan Baseline Management Actions. Corey Skinner gave an update on fallowed acres. GGWD reported a goal of fallowing 209 acres for the 2025 season, which was verified by IDWR review. South Valley Ground Water District (SVGWD) proposed fallowing 1,126.8 acres for the 2025 season. However, IDWR review indicated only 960.3 acres were fallowed within SVGWD. GGWD confirmed that all fallowed acres were located within its district boundaries. SVGWD representatives expressed concern regarding the fallowing verification results and indicated that they would follow up with members. GGWD's fallowing incentive program was discussed along with fallowing enforcement, and possible fallowing verification acknowledgement.

Corey Skinner then moved to the next subitem, which addressed season-of-use limits. Justin Stevenson began the discussion by noting that the irrigation season had gone well overall, with only a few reminder phone calls being made to members. Pat Purdy raised his own concerns that the North Valley area was not in compliance with the GWMP. In response, Judd McMahon stated that notices to curtail irrigation water had been issued and follow-up phone calls were made to ensure compliance. Larry Schoen asked a similar question regarding the Hailey area, to which Brian Yeager confirmed that notices had also been sent there.

Corey Skinner proceeded to the next subitem, which focused on flow rates at Station 10. He briefly reviewed the criteria for Station 10 and referenced the related presentation on flow rate data before turning the discussion over to the committee. Justin Stevenson began by addressing concerns regarding low water levels at Station 10. He explained that advance email notifications had been sent to water users, warning that levels were projected to be low for the season. Three notifications were issued, with initial requests for users to reduce pumping by 20%, followed by a final request for a 50% reduction. Pat Purdy then shared presentations and graphs related to flows at Station 10. He expressed concern that the current management plan is not functioning as intended and noted that senior water users are primarily contributing to efforts to maintain adequate levels. Mr. Purdy acknowledged that, based on the data, groundwater pumping is commonly assumed to be a contributing factor to declining water levels. He also discussed that approximately 90,000 acre-feet of water measured at the Hailey gauge appears to be "disappearing", suggesting that accelerated growth in the area may be a contributing cause. Pat Purdy then presented data showing that the SVGWD pumping average had decreased by approximately 50%, noting that water availability is insufficient to maintain the 32 cfs average.

Corey Skinner inquired about the 2025 pumping data for SVGWD, but Pat confirmed that the data had not yet been collected. Mr. Skinner also asked whether any additional efforts had been made to further reduce pumping, to which Pat responded that such efforts were made. Cooper Brossy joined the discussion, recommending that mitigation planning occur earlier in the year and be addressed during the February committee meeting. At this point, Mr. Brossy and Carl Pendleton reviewed data from Stations 10 and 54, explaining that several spikes and drops in the readings were due to maintenance activities and system shutoffs. Rod Hubsmith continued the conversation, noting the influence that Magic Reservoir has on Station 54. Nick Westendorf requested additional clarification regarding fluctuations in the graph data, and Pat Purdy explained that the variations were caused by low water levels and limited availability. He also commented that the basin models appear to be highly inaccurate. Justin Stevenson then asked Sunny Healey

how water use reductions were implemented in her district, referencing Station 54 data. Ms. Healey explained the process and noted that the priority date cuts would have been more severe if not for the use of 161 (exchange) water. Cooper Brossy revisited the topic of fallowing, noting that it serves as a tool to increase water availability for users. Justin Stevenson emphasized the need for improved forecasting and suggested implementing a “sliding scale,” referencing Table 1 from the presentation. Pat Purdy agreed with Mr. Stevenson’s recommendation and further proposed that the Conservation, Infrastructure, and Efficiency Fund (CIEF) consider purchasing water from Little Wood Reservoir to augment flows at Station 10, with the potential to compensate users for fallowed acreage.

Corey Skinner asked the committee to clarify the impact resulting from the recent forecast. Carl Pendelton and Cooper Brossy explained that the lack of runoff in April and May “bottomed out” Magic Reservoir. Mr. Skinner then inquired about expectations for Magic Reservoir next year. Cooper Brossy stated that adequate water levels would require both good snowpack and potentially the purchase of storage water. Both Cooper Brossy and Justin Stevenson noted the need for improved forecasting tools moving forward. Larry Schoen expressed his view that groundwater pumpers are largely responsible for the current situation and suggested that drought declarations should be reconsidered or modified.

Corey Skinner called for a break in the meeting at 12:10 p.m. and called the meeting back to order at 12:23 p.m.

Larry Schoen covered the next agenda item regarding the Conservation, Infrastructure, and Efficiency Fund (CIEF) update. He informed the committee that the CIEF had met five times and had elected new officers. Mr. Schoen then presented the financial statement, explaining how total funds were allocated across different accounts to track both sources and expenditures. Expenditures included multiple projects, such as the Baseline Bypass Canal Lining Project, the Picabo Pipeline Project (as explained by Pat Purdy), and storage water acquisition, which included 2,000 acre-feet at \$50 per acre-foot. Mr. Schoen also discussed pending projects, including the Sluice Ditch Project and additional work on the Baseline Bypass Canal Lining Project. Carl Pendelton addressed cloud seeding, noting that state funds will be allocated from the CIEF to Water District 37 (WD37), which will then be billed by Idaho Power for the associated expenditures. Larry Schoen expressed concern regarding the allocation and billing process to WD37 and questioned its overall efficiency. Sunny Healey responded, explaining that a bill had been received for 2024 and that efforts are underway to secure funding for cloud seeding in advance. Rod Hubsmith inquired about the contractors involved in CIEF projects, and Justin Stevenson and Pat Purdy provided clarification.

Corey Skinner moved to the sixth agenda item, the 2025–2027 Action Items Review, at 12:41 p.m. Mike McVay of IDWR, and representing the Technical Working Group (TWG), distributed packets to committee members detailing the group’s progress. He gave an update on the TWG’s review of the A1A Model. Mr. McVay described the “skeleton model” framework, which serves as the foundation for the new A1A Model. He emphasized that, while the model carries significant uncertainty, it could still be useful as a “sliding scale” tool. Cooper Brossy noted that the model could provide better predictive capability, rather than being discarded entirely. Mike McVay then moved on to the next Action Item, discussing the TWG’s review of updating surface water monitoring processes and locations. He highlighted IDWR’s Hydrology Section’s role in providing recommendations for future projects, including bathymetry studies of Magic Reservoir. Carl Pendelton and Cooper Brossy inquired about the importance of Magic Reservoir bathymetry. Mike McVay and Tim Luke explained

that it provides a comprehensive understanding of the system, including water gains and losses. Further discussion followed regarding the appropriateness and necessity of the remaining recommendations. Pat Purdy noted the high number of pumpers north of Bellevue compared to those near Magic Reservoir, emphasizing that SVGWD should not be held responsible for pumping occurring outside its district.

Tim Luke then discussed two additional Action Items, focusing on the basis for the 32 cfs limit and discussing “exchange rights.” Larry Schoen asked questions regarding the origin of these limits. Cooper Brossy then provided historical context for the “exchange rights” and explained how the 32 cfs figure was established.

Corey Skinner noted that due to time constraints all the items on the day’s agenda would not be able to be covered and the remaining items would be covered at the next meeting. Discussion ensued regarding scheduling the next meeting for early December and it was confirmed that Shoshone would serve as the meeting venue. Pat Purdy expressed his interest in presenting potential modifications to Table 1 at the next meeting. Larry Schoen requested that it be noted in the minutes that he feels he is being treated unconstitutionally and called for greater equity in committee discussions and decisions that are happening because of the actions taken at said meetings.

The meeting was then adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

**Big Wood River Ground Water Management Area Advisory Committee Meeting  
October 29, 2025, Attendance**

**Advisory Committee**

Corey Allen  
Cooper Brossy  
Rod Hubsmith  
Judd McMahan  
Justin Stevenson  
Carl Pendleton  
Pat Purdy  
Mitch Fleming  
Nick Westendorf  
Brian Yeager (via Zoom)  
Senator Ron Taylor (Ex-officio)  
Representative Jack Nelsen (Ex-officio)

**IDWR Staff**

Corey Skinner  
Corey King  
Kaden Hensley  
Mike McVay  
Tim Luke  
Brian Ragan (via Zoom)  
Steve Viskosky (via Zoom)

**IWRB Members**

Brian Olmstead  
Pat McMahan (Via Zoom)

**Members of the Public**

Sunny Healey  
Chris Bromley (via Zoom)  
Larry Schoen  
Eric Miller (via Zoom)  
Marybeth Collins (via Zoom)  
Dave Shaw (via Zoom)  
Norm Semanko (via Zoom)  
Zach Hill (via Zoom)  
Kendra Kaiser (via Zoom)  
Michael Lawrence (via Zoom)  
...and others via Zoom and in-person