



AGENDA

IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD

Brad Little
Governor

Jeff Raybould
Chairman
St. Anthony
At Large

Jo Ann Cole-Hansen
Vice Chair
Lewiston
At Large

Dean Stevenson
Secretary
Paul
District 3

Dale Van Stone
Hope
District 1

Albert Barker
Boise
District 2

Brian Olmstead
Twin Falls
At Large

Marcus Gibbs
Grace
District 4

Patrick McMahon
Sun Valley
At Large

Special Board Meeting No. 4-26

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
10:00 a.m. (MT) / 9:00 a.m. (PT)

Water Center
Conference Rooms 602 B – D
322 E. Front St.
BOISE

Livestream available at <https://www.youtube.com/@iwrp>

1. Roll Call
2. Public Comment
3. Upper Snake River Basin Study*
4. Non-Action Items for Discussion
5. Next Meeting and Adjourn

* Action Item: A vote regarding this item may be made at this meeting. Identifying an item as an action item on the agenda does not require a vote to be taken on the item. **Americans with Disabilities:** The meeting will be held in person and online. If you require special accommodations to attend, participate in, or understand the meeting, please make advance arrangements by contacting Department staff by email milin.ream@idwr.idaho.gov or by phone at (208) 287-4800.

Memorandum

To: Idaho Water Resource Board

From: Staff

Date: March 4, 2026

Re: Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Program - Upper Snake River Basin Study Proposal



REQUESTED ACTION: Approval of the Upper Snake River Basin Study Proposal

Background:

Water users in the Upper Snake River Basin expressed interest in pursuing a Basin Study through the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) WaterSMART program. On **September 12, 2025**, Reclamation and Minidoka Irrigation District representatives presented the program to the IWRB. Following the presentation, the IWRB directed the Chair and staff to prepare and submit a Letter of Interest (LOI). The LOI and stakeholder support letters were submitted to the WaterSMART program on **October 14, 2025**.

On **November 21, 2025**, IWRB received official notice that the LOI was recommended for further consideration. Reclamation provided a Notice to Interested Parties outlining the next steps, including development of a joint proposal (maximum 15 pages) for a Plan of Study or Basin Study. The Plan of Study must include:

1. Introduction and Basin Study design
2. Study management plan
3. Basin Study tasks
4. Milestones, schedule, and costs

Cost-share partners must contribute at least 50% of total costs as cash or in-kind services. Reclamation share may only be used for in-kind work performed by Reclamation staff.

On **January 16, 2026**, staff hosted a virtual Upper Snake River Basin Study Stakeholder meeting to provide an overview of the proposal concept and solicited feedback from stakeholders. On **February 5, 2026**, staff presented a draft proposal to the IWRB Storage Committee. Between February 5 and February 13, 2026, staff reviewed written comments received from stakeholders (attached) and incorporated those comments as appropriate.

Update:

On February 23 and 24, 2026, Staff and Reclamation met for two half-day workshops to develop the proposal's task list, timeline, and budget. The full proposal, including the task list, timeline, and budget are attached for review and approval. The deadline to submit the proposal is **March 9, 2026**.

Attachments

- 1) Upper Snake River Basin Study Proposal Draft
- 2) Stakeholder feedback

Upper Snake River Basin WaterSMART Basin Study Proposal Idaho Water Resource Board

Image Source: Bureau of Land Management, 2014



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

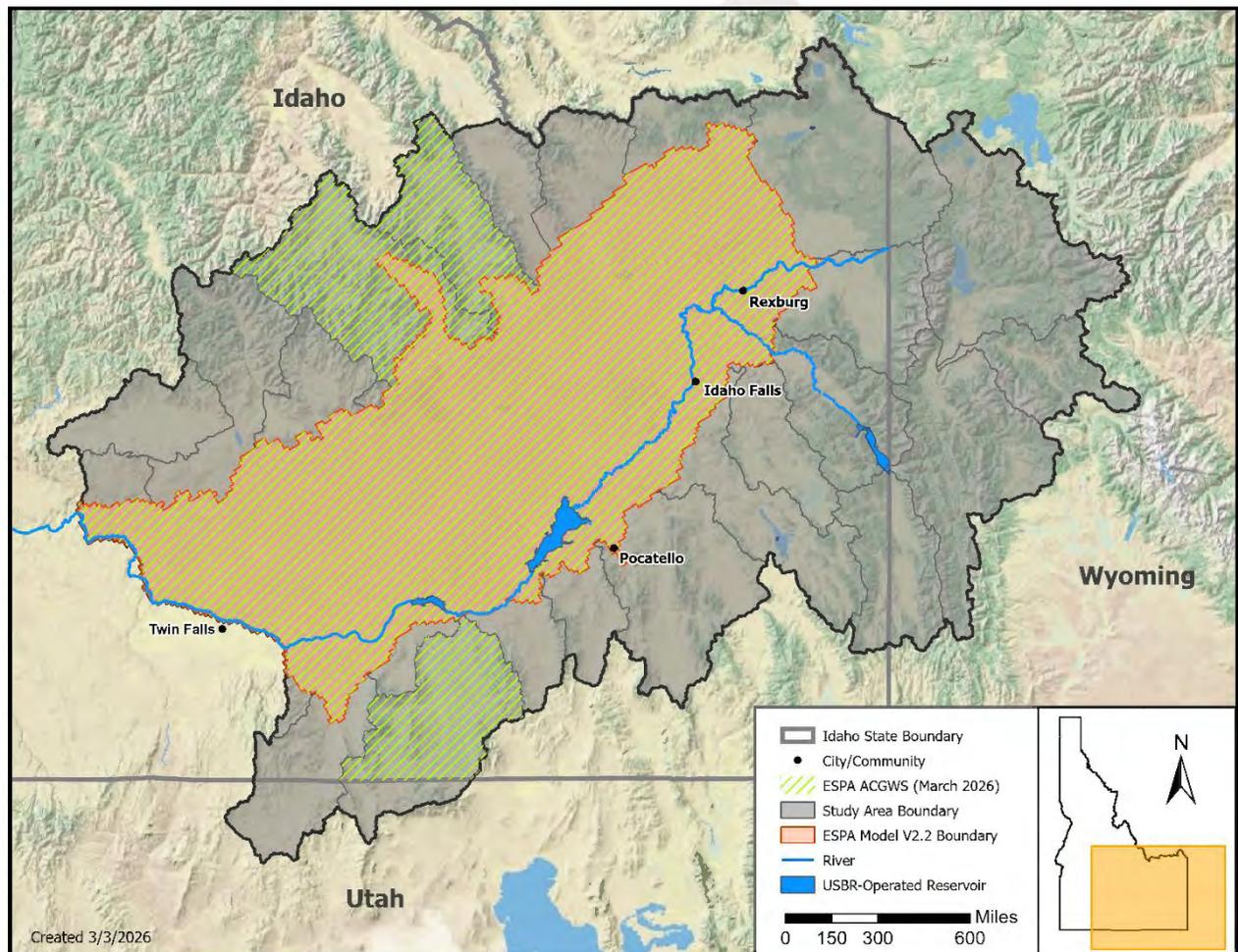
TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. PROJECT INFORMATION	
Location of Study Area and Geographic Boundaries.....	1
Total Cost of Study.....	1
Cost-share Partners Contact Information.....	2
Reclamation Regional Contacts.....	2
B. STUDY ABSTRACT.....	2
C. EVALUATION CRITERIA	
1. The extent and consequences of existing or anticipated imbalances in water supply and demand.....	3
2. The extent to which the proposal describes and provides support for the study proponent’s ability to address the following elements of a Basin Study within the timeframe required.	
a. Projections of water supply and demand within the basin, including an assessment of risks to the water supply relating to climate change as defined in section 9503(b)(2) of the SECURE Water Act.....	7
b. Analysis of how existing water and power infrastructure and operations will perform in the face of changing water realities, such as population increases and climate change, as well as other impacts identified within section 9503(b)(3) of the SECURE Water ACT as appropriate.....	7
c. Development of appropriate adaptation and mitigation strategies to meet future water demands.....	8
d. A trade-off analysis of the strategies identified and findings as appropriate, including an analysis of all proposed alternatives in terms of their relative cost, environmental impact, risk (probability of not accomplishing the desired/expected outcome), stakeholder response, or other attributes common to the alternatives.....	9
3. The strength of any nexus between the Basin Study and a Reclamation project or activity, and the extent to which Federal involvement is needed due to the nature and complexity of the issues involved.....	10
4. The availability and quality of existing data and models applicable to the proposed study, and the ability of the Basin Study partners to assess future imbalances in water supply and demand.....	11
5. The level of support for the Basin Study and diversity of stakeholders that will be involved.....	13
6. The extent to which the proposed study will employ an integrated watershed planning and management approach.....	13
D. STUDY OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE	14
E. APPENDIX A - MAP OF STUDY AREA	16
F. APPENDIX B - REFERENCES	17
G. APPENDIX C - LETTERS OF SUPPORT	19

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Location of Study Area and Geographic Boundaries

The proposed study area encompasses the Upper Snake River Basin (USRB) above Milner Dam, including the mainstem Snake River and all tributary basins upstream of Milner Dam, and the entirety of the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) to its western terminus at King Hill. The USRB includes complex interactions between surface water diversions, the ESPA, and an extensive network of canals, laterals, wells, and storage reservoirs. A more detailed map of the study area is located in Appendix A.



Total Cost of Study

The estimated total cost of the proposed Upper Snake River Basin Study (Basin Study) is \$4.65 million. The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) is requesting \$1.65 million in cost-share funding from the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) WaterSMART Program and will contribute \$3.0 million in non-federal funding toward completion of the study. The estimated timeline to complete the project is approximately four years.

Cost-Share Partners and Contact Information

The IWRB will be the cost-share partner responsible for the Basin Study. Contact information: Idaho Water Resource Board, Jeff Raybould, Chairman; Amy Cassel, Project Manager 208-742-0656, amy.cassel@idwr.idaho.gov

Reclamation Regional Contacts

Jami Andersen, Snake River Area Office Project Manager, 470 Roger Avenue, Heyburn, Idaho 83336 208-430-0569 Jandersen@usbr.gov

B. STUDY ABSTRACT

Study Scope

The Upper Snake River Basin Study will encompass the Snake River Basin upstream of Milner Dam, including the ESPA and associated surface water systems, reservoirs, and infrastructure. The study area represents a highly interconnected hydrologic system where surface water and groundwater are conjunctively managed to support irrigation, municipal, industrial, environmental, and hydropower uses. The Basin Study will assess current and future conditions and identify management strategies to address basin-wide water supply and demand imbalances.

Study Approach

The Basin Study will employ an integrated watershed planning and management approach, leveraging existing technical resources such as Reclamation's RiverWare water management model, the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Model (ESPAM), and Idaho's water rights accounting systems. The approach includes:

- Compiling and assessing current water supply and demand conditions.
- Projecting future conditions under climate variability and population growth scenarios.
- Evaluating system performance and reliability under changing hydrologic realities.
- Identifying and screening structural and non-structural adaptation strategies, including optimization of existing storage and potential new or expanded surface water storage.
- Conduct trade-off analyses to evaluate how each solution impacts the distribution, timing, volume, and flow of water in the Upper Snake River Basin, with consideration given to the level of stakeholder support, the relative cost (when available), and the potential environmental impacts.

Study Objective

The primary objective is to identify current and future imbalances between water supply and demand and develop strategies to improve system reliability, enhance drought resilience, and support conjunctive management without increasing consumptive use. Specific goals include:

- Inventory and assessment of existing storage and operations, including usable capacity, physical condition, and operating constraints.
- Identification of inefficiencies and unrealized capacity in existing infrastructure.

- Screening of new or expanded storage opportunities and operational strategies.
- Development of adaptation measures to address climate variability, population growth, and existing and long-term water supply challenges.

Use of Study Results

The Basin Study will provide a technical foundation for future planning and investment decisions. Results will inform appraisal studies, feasibility studies, pilot projects, and coordinated state and federal actions that aim to:

- Increase effective storage and operational flexibility.
- Reduce seasonal, existing, and long-term water imbalances.
- Support aquifer stabilization and alternatives to administrative curtailment.
- Enhance drought resilience while maintaining compliance with legal and environmental obligations.

C. EVALUATION CRITERIA

CRITERIA 1. The extent and consequences of existing or anticipated imbalances in water supply and demand.

Importance of Region to Idaho & Nationally

The Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) and Upper Snake River system are critical to Idaho and the nation, supporting roughly two million acres of irrigated agriculture that contribute about \$10 billion annually to the state’s Gross Domestic Product (1). The ESPA provides the sole or principal source of drinking water for dozens of cities and most rural residents across eastern Idaho, supplying municipal systems and supporting local industries. In addition to agriculture and municipal needs, the aquifer and river system sustain hydropower generation, fisheries, wildlife habitats, and recreation, underpinning economic and ecological resilience. Together, these functions make the region a linchpin for Idaho’s economy and a vital contributor to national food, water, and energy security.

Water Supply – Current Supply Conditions

Status of the Region

In the USRB, groundwater and surface water are hydraulically connected, with the ESPA contributing a substantial share of the baseflow to the Snake River and its associated springs. Changes in aquifer storage directly affect surface water flows, and groundwater and surface water in the region are conjunctively managed, allowing senior surface water right holders to seek administrative protection from material injury caused by junior groundwater pumping. Declining aquifer levels have reduced discharge from ESPA springs to the Snake River, decreasing available supplies for canal companies and irrigation districts in the Magic Valley region of south-central Idaho, centered around Twin Falls. Although these water users hold storage space in Reclamation reservoirs, reduced flows to the ESPA springs have created significant management challenges. Declining spring flows have intensified conflicts between senior and junior water right holders and prompted repeated requests for administrative action, including conjunctive management delivery calls such as the Surface Water Coalition Delivery Call. (2).

With new appropriations largely unavailable due to the fully appropriated status of the basin, the state has implemented a moratorium on new water rights, first in 1992 and most recently expanded in 2022 to include tributary basins (3). The moratorium now covers nearly 22 million acres, about 41% of Idaho’s land area. The ESPA Area of Common Groundwater Supply (ACGWS), which governs areas where groundwater and surface water use affect ESPA and Snake River supplies needed by senior water users, is also actively expanding to tributary basins (4). Although new consumptive appropriations are largely unavailable, water users often rely on permanent water right transfers or temporary rentals through the Idaho Water Supply Bank (natural flow) and Rental Pools (reservoir storage). Moreover, physical water still exists in the system and water available during periods of excess flow, such as reservoir flood releases, can be captured in new storage facilities or through managed aquifer recharge. These approaches allow for increased water availability, highlighting both the opportunities and the complexities of managing water in a fully appropriated and conjunctively managed basin.

Demand Shortfalls

In the early 20th-century, incidental recharge resulting from seepage loss through unlined canals and irrigation practices such as flood irrigation, increased aquifer storage and spring discharge to the Snake River. Since the 1950s, however, improved efficiency and increased groundwater pumping have reduced incidental recharge, leading to declining aquifer levels and discharge from groundwater springs. Climate variability (including drought), reduced snowpack, and earlier runoff have compounded these challenges. ESPA storage has decreased by approximately 14 million acre-feet since its peak in the 1950s, and spring flows at Thousand Springs have subsequently fallen by about 30% (Figure 1).

The ESPA Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan (ESPA CAMP) set a goal of achieving a net annual water budget gain of 600,000 acre-feet annually to stabilize and improve stream flows, aquifer levels, and river flows across the Eastern Snake Plain (1). An Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) evaluation of 2016–2023 conditions found that existing management actions largely offset projected declines, resulting in near break-even conditions. The evaluation estimated that without current management actions a water budget decrease of 705,000 acre-feet *per year* would have been observed while the actual estimated change was a drop of only 50,000 acre-feet total (5). Despite this progress, current demand still exceeds supply.

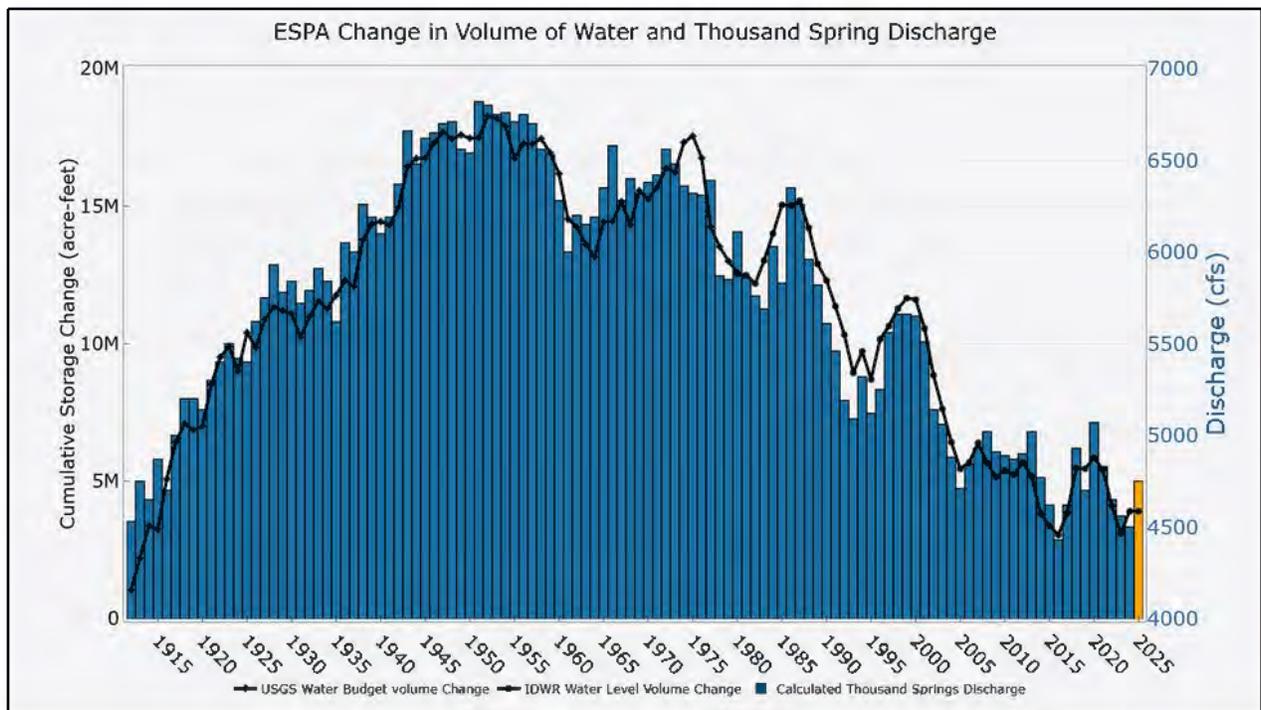


Figure 1. ESPA storage volume change and Thousand Springs discharge, 1912-2025. Source: IDWR

Due to the declines in groundwater storage and surface water flows, surface water storage has become increasingly relied upon to meet demands. The USRB includes seven major reservoirs with a combined capacity of about four million acre-feet. In water year 2025, reservoirs dropped from 93% full to 24% by mid-October (6), highlighting the growing reliance on storage even in non-extreme drought years.

Frequency of Water Shortages

The USRB has experienced recurring drought and water shortages since the early 2000s, with state drought declarations in the USRB most recently in 2021. Even outside of formally declared droughts, much of the USRB frequently experiences below-average supply due to reduced snowpack, earlier runoff, and declining aquifer contributions (7).

These conditions increase curtailment risk for junior water right holders. The 2024 Stipulated Mitigation Plan between the Surface Water Coalition (SWC) and participating groundwater districts now codifies substantial groundwater conservation obligations, collectively 205,000 acre-feet annually, requiring districts to reduce diversions and implement managed aquifer recharge to offset impacts to senior surface water rights (8). While mitigation plans can prevent full curtailment, they require ongoing annual demand reductions regardless of hydrologic conditions, resulting in supply limitations even in average years. The long-standing Snake River Moratorium reflects a persistent imbalance between supply and demand that is expected to continue without long-term management actions and additional supply.

Water Supply – Future Supply Conditions

Population and industrial growth in the USRB have averaged about 1.7% annually and are expected to continue at a similar rate, increasing demand for municipal, industrial, and domestic water (9, 10). While

efficiency improvements have reduced diversions, they have also decreased incidental recharge that historically supported ESPA storage and Snake River flows. At the same time, climate-driven changes in snowpack, runoff timing, temperature, and soil moisture are increasing uncertainty and reducing water availability during peak demand periods. These factors are expected to further strain an already limited and increasingly unreliable water supply, compounding the impacts of expanded administration under the Snake River Moratorium and ACGWS.

Demands by Beneficial Use

USGS data show that irrigation accounts for 86% of Idaho's water use, followed by aquaculture (11%), public supply (1.6%), and domestic use (0.4%) (11). These uses dominate water demand in the USRB but are not the only uses important to the region.

Agriculture: Agriculture uses roughly 85–90% of water in the USRB. Mitigation agreements, such as the 2024 Settlement Agreement and Stipulated Mitigation Plan, require conservation and acquisition of storage water, effectively reducing annual groundwater use by about 11% (2). These reductions reflect a recognized, unmet need of approximately 205,000 acre-feet to offset impacts to senior surface water rights, ensuring compliance with legal obligations even in average or wet years. Earlier runoff, hotter summers, and declines in groundwater storage and subsequent surface water flows have increased reliance on surface water storage. Failure to meet irrigation demands under these conditions risks curtailment, economic losses, and increased conflict.

Municipal and Domestic: Population growth has prompted greater scrutiny of domestic water use and subdivision development, as well as increased conflict over de minimis water rights. Additionally, municipalities are not exempt from curtailment and participate in mitigation plans requiring annual demand reductions. Continued population growth is expected to further increase demand, and an inability to provide additional water supply could limit community growth, intensify water user conflicts, and drive additional policy changes related to domestic water use.

Industrial: Although industrial use is a small percentage of total demand, it is closely tied to agriculture and regional economic output. Water limitations could constrain industrial growth and employment opportunities.

Tribal: The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes hold senior water rights essential for irrigation activities on the Fort Hall Reservation, cultural practices, ecosystems, and participation in water markets. Shortfalls would affect tribal resources and reduce storage water available for groundwater use mitigation.

Environmental: Adequate flows are critical for aquatic species, water quality, and ecosystem health. Reductions in streamflow increase risks of higher temperatures, degraded habitat, and regulatory consequences if flow obligations are not met.

Recreational: Rivers and reservoirs in the USRB support over 250,000 summer visitors annually (12). Lower flows and reservoir levels would reduce recreation and related economic activity.

Power Generation: Hydropower provides 43% of Idaho's in-state electricity generation and contributes to low energy costs (13). Insufficient water supplies would increase energy costs for Idaho residents, heighten reliance on external energy sources, and increase reliance on energy sources that have greater environmental impacts. Flows from the ESPA, delivered through the Thousand Springs, are critical for

meeting the minimum flow requirements established under the Swan Falls Agreement to support downstream hydropower. Declining ESPA levels reduce these flows, risking noncompliance with the Swan Falls Agreement and constraining hydropower generation capacity.

CRITERIA 2. The extent to which the proposal describes and provides support for the study proponent’s ability to address the following elements of a Basin Study within the timeframe required. (25 Points)

a) Projections of water supply and demand within the basin, including an assessment of risks to the water supply relating to climate change as defined in section 9503(b)(2) of the SECURE Water Act.

The USRB faces significant changes in snowpack and streamflow amidst a warming climate. Over the next 50-80 years, Snow Water Equivalency (SWE), a key measure of snowpack, is expected to peak sooner in the year compared to historical averages. Consequently, the last day of snow cover – and thus snowmelt – could occur up to 10-50 days sooner, depending on the region. A shifting and decreasing snowpack will drive an earlier and more aggressive peak runoff season, resulting in peak runoff occurring in May instead of June (14). These changes will have drastic impacts on surface water storage practices, with most irrigation needs beginning after peak runoff. Understanding changes in future water supply characteristics, and how this will respond to increasing demand, requires more research.

Future projections indicate that evapotranspiration (ET) rates may increase, driven by warmer seasonal conditions and changes in runoff timing, creating new challenges for water demand and irrigation requirements. ET is the combined process of water evaporation from soil and surfaces and transpiration from plants. Future climate projections indicate increased evapotranspiration from irrigated fields and evaporation from rivers, canals, and reservoirs (15). In the USRB, where most irrigating occurs in Eastern Idaho, average summer ET losses (using grass as a proxy) are projected to increase by approximately three inches compared to historical (1971-2000) averages. Similar losses are expected in spring and fall (14). Even without population growth considerations, this rise in ET ensures that water demand for irrigation will continue to rise, especially in hotter summer months when streamflow will be declining.

b) Analysis of how existing water and power infrastructure and operations will perform in the face of changing water realities, such as population increases and climate change, as well as other impacts identified within section 9503(b)(3) of the SECURE Water Act as appropriate.

Groundwater and hydropower in Idaho are closely linked through the ESPA. Water in the USRB, through incidental and managed recharge and tributary underflow, sustains the ESPA, which extends from north of St. Anthony to Thousand Springs. At Thousand Springs, aquifer discharge is directly proportional to aquifer levels, making groundwater storage essential for maintaining river flow. Downstream of Milner Dam, the minimum required flow in the Snake River is zero cubic feet per second (cfs), so river flow between Milner and King Hill depends largely on contributions from the ESPA. These spring-fed gains support multiple downstream uses, including downstream hydropower generation, aquaculture facilities, and compliance with minimum flow obligations at the Murphy USGS Gaging station below Swan Falls

Dam (16). As climate change and population growth alter both water availability and demand, careful management of the surface water-groundwater system is essential to maintain Idaho's water and energy systems.

Balancing groundwater and hydropower water needs amid population growth and climate variability will require enhanced surface water storage solutions and operational flexibility to meet competing demands. Population increases and higher ET losses will increase water irrigation needs and downstream hydropower requirements to meet overall demand. Summer irrigation-driven electricity demand is projected to grow, even as streamflow available for hydropower becomes increasingly constrained (15).

Dam operations may be affected by projected climate and hydrological changes. Earlier and more rapid snowmelt and rainfall will deliver water to reservoirs before it can be safely stored, requiring operators to carefully manage flood control, storage, and discharge. Spring floods in the spring are common, and faster, earlier runoff will exacerbate this issue. Because a portion of the storage must be reserved for emergency flood control, earlier peak runoffs will force additional releases, effectively reducing water available later in the season. Earlier runoff also causes reservoirs to fill sooner, extending the summer discharge period. Combined with reduced natural snowmelt in the early summer, increased ET, and increased demand, these dynamics intensify pressure to maintain adequate surface storage water for the entire irrigation season (15). Strategizing storage opportunities will therefore be essential to provide continuous and predictable flows throughout the summer and early fall.

Changes in snowpack levels and runoff timing will affect recreation, aquatic ecosystems, and water quality. Lower summer reservoir levels and river flows will create warmer water conditions, stress cold-water aquatic species and increasing harmful algal blooms, and impacting recreation and tourism opportunities such as boating, swimming, and fishing. Altered flows and water temperatures can disrupt reservoir seasonal stratification and destratification, concentrating contaminants at the water surface or at reservoir outflow points, further impacting downstream species (15). These ecological and recreational impacts highlight the need for adaptive storage strategies to protect human and environmental uses.

c) Development of appropriate adaptation and mitigation strategies to meet future water demands.

The IWRB and its partners have developed diverse mitigation strategies to manage Idaho's water resources to preserve existing water rights and enable economic growth for the future. Existing programs have slowed aquifer decline but are insufficient to fully resolve current and long-term supply-demand imbalances, underscoring the need for Basin Study evaluation of existing management strategies and storage opportunities.

Existing Management Strategies

Managed Recharge: Managing aquifer levels is crucial to maintain adequate flows in the lower Snake River. The ESPA CAMP, published in 2009, established a long-term framework for aquifer stabilization, including a target of 150,000-250,000 acre-feet of annual aquifer recharge (1). As of 2025, this target has been exceeded and pursuant to legislative direction under Senate Concurrent Resolution 110 (SCR110), the recharge objective is being increased to 350,000 acre-feet per year (17). The IWRB continues to

carefully monitor aquifer levels and recharge performance to ensure stabilization objectives are achieved and to maintain flows necessary for downstream water supply and hydropower generation..

Demand Reduction: To resolve delivery calls and avoid curtailment, water users entered into settlement agreements culminating in the 2024 Settlement Agreement and Stipulated Mitigation Plan. Under this agreement, participating groundwater districts committed to a total mitigation obligation of 205,000 acre-feet annually, achieved through a combination of groundwater demand reductions, secured storage water from the Upper Snake Rental Pool, and managed recharge (8). This conservation requirement reflects a water supply shortfall that must be offset each year to prevent material injury to senior surface water rights. The agreement also requires enhanced diversion measurement and reporting and allows additional groundwater users to join as the state expands the area subject to the delivery call, thereby broadening compliance coverage and stabilizing administration.

State-funded Grant Programs: IWRB awards grants for projects to convert groundwater use to surface water use, reducing pumping impacts to the ESPA and supporting long-term aquifer stabilization. Over the last few years, IWRB has awarded over \$32 million in funds for conversion projects (18, 19). Other state-funded grant programs assist with delivery system operational efficiency improvements and enhancing measurement and monitoring to improve efficiency and administrative certainty. Importantly, funded projects must be structured so they do not reduce incidental recharge to the ESPA; conversions and efficiency improvements are evaluated to ensure that aquifer stabilization goals are not undermined by unintended reductions in return flows.

Cloud Seeding: IWRB, along with Idaho Power Company and other stakeholders, invests approximately \$1.8 million annually in cloud seeding operations in the USRB. With an annual water supply benefit of about 9%, these efforts are estimated to produce over 500,000 acre-feet of water per year (20). Cloud seeding operations continue to expand due to the relatively low cost per acre-foot of water produced.

Monitoring and Modeling: Models used for planning and water use administration, such as the ESPA Groundwater Model (ESPAM) and the Water Right Accounting Program, support by IWRB and other organizations to support aquifer management, surface water analysis, and water right administration. These models are continually updated and refined to accurately predict key hydrologic variables. IWRB has also awarded over \$800,000 in grant funds for telemetry and monitoring projects within the USRB (21), enhancing real-time data collection and improving model inputs for more informed water management decisions.

Additional Alternatives - Existing and New Storage Opportunities

Surface Water Storage: The Basin Study will inventory and assess existing storage and operations, and screen new or expanded storage opportunities, building on the results of Reclamation's *Henrys Fork Basin Study* (22), the *Minidoka Dam Raise Special Study* (23), and other available studies. Examples of potential alternatives include raises or new construction at Minidoka Dam, American Falls Dam and Reservoir, Jackson Lake, and Teton Dam.

- d) A trade-off analysis of the strategies identified and findings as appropriate, including an analysis of all proposed alternatives in terms of their relative cost, environmental impact, risk (probability of not accomplishing the desired/expected outcome), stakeholder response, or other attributes common to the alternatives.**

A comparison of all proposed alternatives will evaluate how each solution impacts the distribution, timing, volume, and flow of water in the USRB. For each solution, the trade-off analysis may also consider the level of stakeholder support, relative costs (when available), and potential environmental impacts. This will entail an analysis of quantitative and qualitative results with corresponding summary tables, statistics, and figures (as applicable). A shortlist of promising alternatives will be defined and will be reviewed for accuracy and credibility. The analysis will serve as a foundation for future planning and investment decisions. This may include appraisal studies, feasibility studies, pilot projects, and coordinated state and federal actions.

CRITERIA 3. The strength of any nexus between the Basin Study and a Reclamation project or activity, and the extent to which Federal involvement is needed due to the nature and complexity of the issues involved. (15 Points)

Reclamation’s Baseline Upper Snake River Basin RiverWare Model

The Water Management team at the Columbia-Pacific Northwest Regional (CPN) office has developed and used USRB water management models for planning since the 1970’s. The modernized, operations-based model currently used began its first phase of development as early as 2010. Since then, operations-based model of the USRB consistently developed and improved with advancements in technology, science, and data availability. Currently, Reclamation holds a recently updated baseline RiverWare model of the USRB. This model simulates the major features of the USRB, including major reservoirs and reaches, current operational logic (flood release management, reservoir balancing, flow augmentation releases, minimum releases), surface water irrigation deliveries, groundwater pumping, and groundwater flows due to irrigation.

Reclamation Technical Capability

As the primary developers of the existing USRB baseline RiverWare model, the CPN Water Management team holds the valuable technical skills and institutional knowledge necessary to provide comprehensive, thorough, and accurate updates to the existing model. These skills include:

- A comprehensive understanding of the model development process.
- Technical expertise with essential software in the modeling process (Python, Pisces, SQLite, MODSIM, and RiverWare).
- Access to all historic versions and uses of USRB water management models.
- Experience modeling managed hydrologic systems across the Columbia Pacific Northwest.
- Experience and tools necessary to develop theoretical future water supply for potential climate and hydrologic conditions.

Reclamation Projects in the Upper Snake River Basin

The baseline USRB model simulates Reclamation owned and operated dams upstream of Brownlee Dam, including American Falls Dam, Anderson Ranch Dam, Arrowrock Dam, Black Canyon Diversion Dam, Boise River Diversion Dam, Cascade Dam, Deadwood Dam, Island Park Dam, Minidoka Dam, Palisades Dam, and Ririe Dam. As such, Reclamation is positioned to work closely with Upper Snake dam and reservoir operators to evaluate and improve operations logic.

Multi-agency and Multijurisdictional Collaboration

Reclamation collaborates across a variety of agencies and jurisdictions. This includes collaboration with Federal Agencies (Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Bonneville Power Administration), State agencies (Idaho Department of Water Resources, Wyoming State Engineers Office, Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality), water districts (Water District 1, 63, & 65), tribal governments (Nez Perce, Shoshone-Bannock), and private irrigation companies across Idaho. Reclamation's position to collaborate across agencies will be critical for basin study efforts. Flow Augmentation efforts will require coordination partners such as the Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA, and tribes. Additionally, Reclamation may help facilitate coordination between the state of Idaho and state Wyoming as needed for this project due to a significant portion of USRB's headwaters originating in northwestern Wyoming.

National Significance

It is the mission of the Bureau of Reclamation to assist in meeting water demand in the West. In doing so, Reclamation aims to reliably deliver water for irrigation, environmental compliance, municipal use, and private industry. As such, studying and planning water resource management in the USRB has been and continues to be of critical importance to the Bureau of Reclamation.

CRITERIA 4. The availability and quality of existing data and models applicable to the proposed study, and the ability of the Basin Study partners to assess future imbalances in water supply and demand. (15 Points)

The Upper Snake River Basin Study will leverage existing, well-established models and extensive datasets requiring minimal new model development or data collection. IDWR, IWRB, and Reclamation collectively maintain the necessary technical tools and data infrastructure to assess water supply in the region. These models and data have supported numerous aquifer management analyses, surface water analysis, and water rights administration, including conjunctive management within the ESPA.

Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Model (ESPAM v2.2)

ESPAM is a MODFLOW-based groundwater flow model developed and maintained by IDWR in collaboration with the Eastern Snake Hydrologic Modeling Committee. The model simulates groundwater and surface water interactions throughout the ESPA and quantifies the effects of recharge and

groundwater pumping on the river reaches and springs along the Snake River. ESPAM is currently used to support water rights administration, conjunctive management decisions, and to evaluate managed aquifer recharge sites. The model calibration period for ESPAM v2.2 spanned water years 1981 through 2018. Water budget data required to calculate monthly aquifer recharge and groundwater withdrawals have been compiled for this time span. Field observations of aquifer water levels, discharge to river reaches and springs, and surface water returns have also been compiled for this time span. IDWR is currently updating these data through water year 2023 for recalibration of the next version of ESPAM.

Upper Snake River Basin RiverWare Model

Reclamation maintains a baseline water management model encompassing the Snake River Basin above Brownlee Reservoir as described in CRITERIA 3. IDWR maintains a Snake River Basin RiverWare model that is originally based on a version of Reclamation's RiverWare model. Recent enhancements by IDWR include improved diversion demand logic, updated IWRB groundwater managed recharge logic, and updated groundwater response functions. The groundwater response functions in IDWR's model are updated to reflect ESPAM v2.2. Reclamation and Basin Study partners will collaborate to update Reclamation's baseline model with jointly defined assumptions, logic, and data.

Water Right Accounting Program (WRA)

IDWR and Water District 1 maintain a water right accounting program that tracks water right priorities, diversions, storage use, and beneficial use across the USRB. The program implements the prior appropriation doctrine to distribute natural flow and storage water daily throughout the year in the Upper Snake. Real-time and historical diversion data from diversions, along with streamflow measurements from USGS gaging stations and reservoir operations data from Reclamation, are incorporated into the computerized water right accounting program to calculate reach gains, determine available natural flow, and allocate water according to priority dates.

Spring and Return Flow Monitoring Network

IDWR operates a 115-station hydrologic monitoring network measuring streams, springs, and irrigation return flows at critical locations throughout the ESPA and USRB. Real-time data are publicly available through IDWR's Aqua Info web portal and is used to monitor flows, calibrate hydrologic models, and inform administration.

Groundwater Level Data

IDWR staff routinely manually measure groundwater levels in approximately 650 wells across the USRB twice a year; about 300 of which are equipped with continuous monitoring data loggers. In collaboration with Reclamation, USGS, private consultants, and other entities, over 1,300 wells have been measured recently in the USRB, and that data is available in IDWR's comprehensive groundwater level database. The groundwater level data that IDWR collects and serves is used to evaluate groundwater availability for new water uses, identify areas requiring administrative action such as groundwater management designations, and support specific planning, modeling, and managed recharge projects. IDWR's network includes dedicated monitoring wells installed by IDWR to address data gaps identified during model development, and dedicated monitoring wells installed to support managed recharge projects.

CRITERIA 5. The level of support for the Basin Study and diversity of stakeholders that will be involved. (10 Points)

Diverse stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of the Basin Study. The proposal contemplates three distinct stakeholder groups for the Basin Study: a Technical Committee, an Executive Committee, and a Basin Study Work Group. The Technical Committee will consist of technical staff from IDWR and Reclamation, including potential consultants. The Executive Committee will be comprised of IWRB and Reclamation staff and will focus on how best to communicate with all stakeholders and interested parties. The focus of the Executive Committee will be a communication plan that sets the study up for success. Finally, the Basin Study Work Group will be inclusive to anyone with a vested interest in the Basin Study. The IWRB anticipates contracting a third-party technical consultant to facilitate the three stakeholder groups. Stakeholder letters of support that have been received to date are located in Appendix C.

CRITERIA 6. The extent to which the proposed study will employ an integrated watershed planning and management approach. (5 Points)

The IWRB leads basin planning through the State Water Plan and basin-specific Comprehensive Basin Plans, which inventory and assess water resources and establish goals and strategies for managing surface and groundwater as a system rather than as isolated parts. These plans are shaped through data collection, public input, and statewide water policy goals. Plans typically start with resource inventories that compile hydrology, water use, infrastructure, ecology, and economic data across the basin.

Idaho State Water Plan: The 2012 update to the State Water Plan established ten policies for the Snake River Basin (24). Policy 4 outlines streamflow and water resource management, including minimum streamflow objectives (4A), the Milner Zero minimum average daily flow (4B), reallocation of Snake River trust water between Milner and Murphy (4C), conjunctive management of the ESPA and the Snake River (4D), and the development of new surface water storage (4E). Policies 4F through 4J address water use and protection for agriculture, DCMI (domestic, commercial, municipal, and industrial), hydropower, navigation, fish and wildlife, recreation, and scenic values.

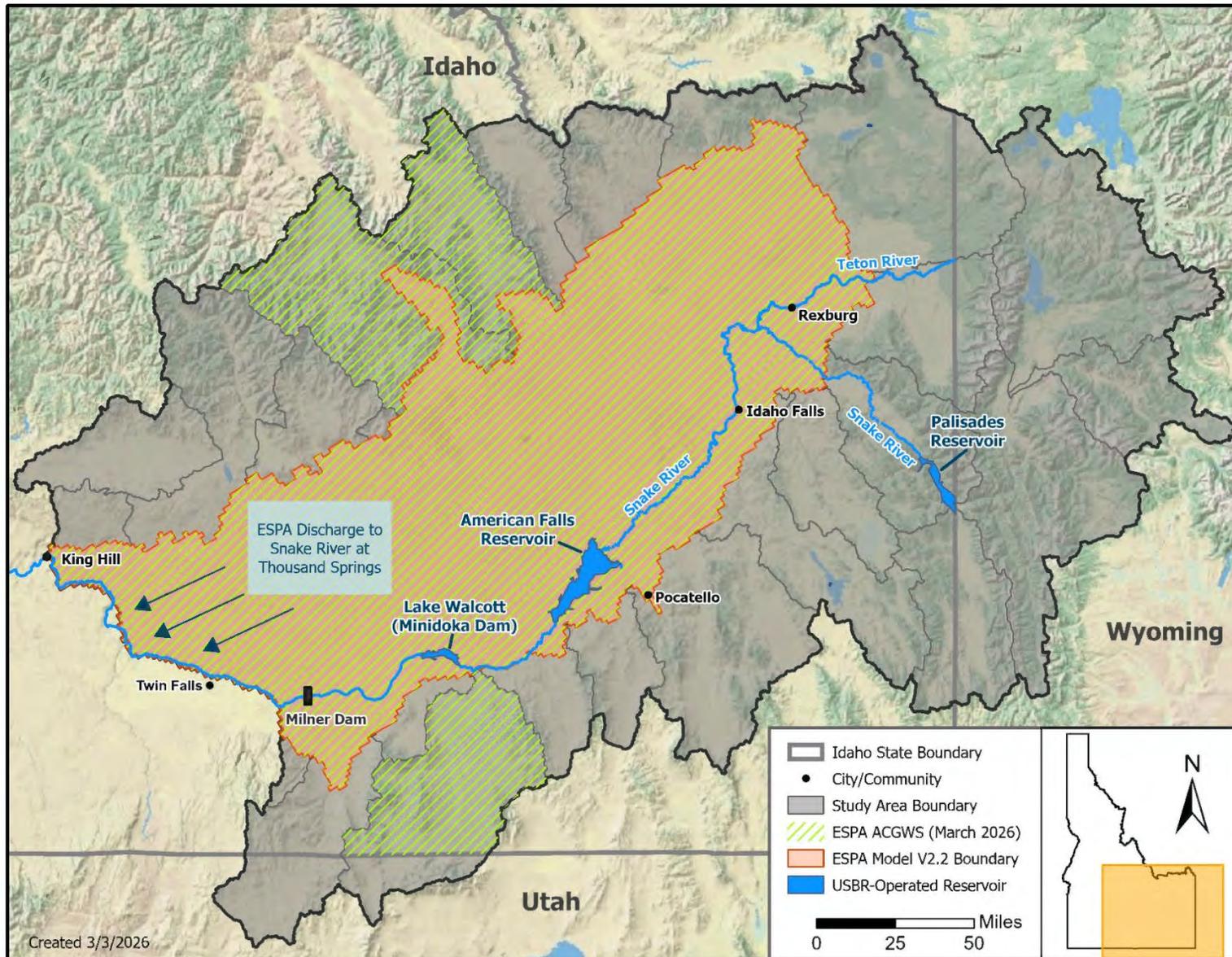
ESPA CAMP: In 2006, the Idaho Legislature adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 136, which requested the IWRB to develop the ESPA CAMP. In January 2009, the IWRB adopted the goal of the ESPA CAMP, which is to “sustain the economic viability and social and environmental health of the Eastern Snake Plain by adaptively managing the balance between water use and supplies,” (1). The ESPA CAMP defined five objectives: 1) increase predictability for water users by managing for a reliable supply; 2) create alternatives to administrative curtailment; 3) manage overall demand for water within the ESPA; 4) increase recharge to the aquifer; and 5) reduce withdrawals from the aquifer. The ESPA CAMP established a long-term program for stabilizing and recovering the ESPA.

D. STUDY OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE*

Task	Description	Deliverable(s)	Responsible Party	Timeline	Budget - Reclamation	Budget - IWRB
1	Project Management	---	---	Duration of Study	\$ 355,000	\$ 505,000
1.1	Facilitator/Technical Coordinator		IWRB			
1.2	Project Managers		Reclamation, IWRB			
2	Outreach and Public Facing Information	---	---	Duration of Study	\$ -	\$ 80,000
2.1	Develop and maintain public facing webpage.	Basin Study webpage.	IWRB, IDWR			
2.2	Compile and publish basin study information and meeting information.	Publically available Basin Study documents.	IWRB, IDWR			
2.3	Hold stakeholder meetings.	Meetings.	IWRB, IDWR			
3	Plan of Study	---	---	July 2026 - December 2026	\$ 160,000	\$ 225,000
3.1	Write Plan of Study.	Plan of Study.	Reclamation, IWRB, IDWR			
4	Develop Baseline Model (Current Supply and Demand Model)	---	---	October 2026 - March 2028	\$ 375,000	\$ 385,000
4.1	Define groundwater, irrigation, and managed recharge assumptions. Project partners will collaborate to develop the corresponding datasets, equations, and logic.	Table list of definitions and assumptions. Develop datasets, equations, and logic.	Reclamation, IDWR			
4.2	Define and update model period.	Updated model period.	Reclamation, IDWR			
4.3	Define and develop baseline ("current") water supply.	Baseline water supply dataset.	Reclamation, IDWR			
4.4	Define and develop baseline ("current") water demand.	Baseline water demand dataset.	IWRB, IDWR			
4.5	Incorporate updated assumptions, logic, and data into baseline model.	Baseline model.	Reclamation			
5	Future Supply and Demand	---	---	October 2026 - March 2028	\$ 160,000	\$ 380,000
5.1	Define future water supply and demand.	Table list of definitions and assumptions.	Reclamation, IWRB, IDWR			
5.2	Develop future supply scenarios and datasets.	Future supply datasets for each scenario.	Reclamation			
5.3	Develop future demand scenarios and datasets.	Future demand datasets for each scenario.	IWRB, IDWR			
6	Understand Imbalances	---	---	April 2028 - March 2029	\$ 160,000	\$ 150,000
6.1	Simulate baseline (current supply and demand).	Baseline (current supply and demand) results.	Reclamation			
6.2	Simulate future supply and demand scenarios.	Future supply and demand scenarios results.	Reclamation			
6.3	Evaluate current and future imbalances.	Analysis of system imbalances (including distribution, timing, volume, and flow) under current and future scenarios.	Reclamation, IDWR			

Task	Description	Deliverable(s)	Responsible Party	Timeline	Budget - Reclamation	Budget - IWRB
7	Define, Simulate, and Evaluate Solutions	---	---	December 2029 - June 2030	\$ 280,000	\$ 1,135,000
7.1	Solution 1: Managed Recharge Evaluate max managed recharge buildout.	Defined solution(s), list of scenarios, model implementation plan, supporting evidence, and corresponding datasets.	IWRB, IDWR			
7.2	Solution 2: Groundwater Demand Reduction Evaluate 2024 demand reduction.	Defined solution(s), list of scenarios, model implementation plan, supporting evidence, and corresponding datasets.	IWRB, IDWR			
7.3	Solution 3: System Efficiencies Evaluate groundwater to surface water conversions and canal efficiencies.	Defined solution(s), list of scenarios, model implementation plan, supporting evidence, and corresponding datasets.	IWRB, IDWR			
7.4	Solution 4: Surface Water Storage Evaluate new surface water storage at approximately 5 locations.	Defined solution(s), list of scenarios, model implementation plan, supporting evidence, and corresponding datasets.	IWRB, IDWR			
7.5	Solution 5: Sensitivity Test(s) Evaluate how sensitive system hydrology is to changes in supply, demand, and operational requirements.	Defined solution(s), list of scenarios, model implementation plan, supporting evidence, and corresponding datasets.	Reclamation, IWRB, IDWR			
7.6	Simulate Solutions Run model scenarios for each Solution using partner provided datasets and logic.	Results for each Solution simulated with every Future Supply and Demand scenario.	Reclamation			
7.7	Conduct trade-off analysis Evaluate how each solution impacts the distribution, timing, volume, and flow of water in the Upper Snake River Basin. Additionally, evaluate the level of stakeholder support, the relative cost (when available), the potential environmental impacts.	Analysis of results with corresponding summary tables, statistics, and figures as applicable. High level trade-off analysis of the simulated Solutions.	Reclamation, IWRB, IDWR			
8	Review and Report Findings	---	---	April 2030 - September 2030	\$ 160,000	\$ 140,000
8.1	Incorporate technical reports into a consolidated Draft Basin Study Report.	Draft Basin Study Report.	Reclamation, IWRB, IDWR			
8.2	Draft Basin Study Report Technical Review.	Review of Draft Basin Study Report.	Reclamation, IDWR			
8.3	Prepare and publish Final Basin Study Report.	Final Basin Study Report.	Reclamation, IWRB, IDWR			
*The tasks and timeline in this section are subject to further evaluation and may be adjusted during the Basin Study process.			Sub-Total:	July 2026 - September 2030	\$ 1,650,000	\$ 3,000,000

E. APPENDIX A - MAP OF STUDY AREA



F. APPENDIX B – REFERENCES

- (1) Idaho Water Resource Board. (2009). Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan. In Idaho Department of Water Resources. <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/iwr/2008/20080129-ESPA-CAMP.pdf>
- (2) Idaho Department of Water Resources (n.d.). 2024 Surface Water Coalition Delivery Call. Idaho Department of Water Resources. Retrieved March 2026, from <https://idwr.idaho.gov/legal-actions/delivery-call-actions/swc/2024-surface-water-coalition-delivery-call/>
- (3) Idaho Department of Water Resources. (n.d.-b). Moratorium Orders. Idaho Department of Water Resources. Retrieved February 2026, from <https://idwr.idaho.gov/legal-actions/orders/moratorium-orders/>
- (4) Idaho Department of Water Resources. (n.d.-a). Administrative Actions. Idaho Department of Water Resources. Retrieved February 2026, from <https://idwr.idaho.gov/legal-actions/administrative-actions/>
- (5) Sukow, J., 2024. Estimated Management Action Volumes for a Range of ESPA Storage Volume Goals, Idaho Department of Water Resources, presented to the ESPA Ground Water Management Area Management Plan Advisory Committee on July 17, 2024, and August 2, 2024, 12 p.
- (6) Idaho Water District No. 01. (2025). Water District 1 Report - November 5th, 2025.
- (7) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (n.d.). Historical Drought Conditions in Idaho. Drought.gov. <https://www.drought.gov/states/idaho#historical-conditions>
- (8) Idaho Department of Water Resources (2024). Surface Water Coalition Mitigation Plan Actions: Ground Water Districts. Idaho Department of Water Resources. Retrieved March 2026, from <https://idwr.idaho.gov/legal-actions/mitigation-plan-actions/swc/gwd/>.
- (9) Bageant, L., & University of Idaho. (2025). Population Change in Idaho. In University of Idaho. <https://verso.uidaho.edu/esploro/outputs/996803444101851#file-0>
- (10) Trull, J. (2023, February 17). Occupational and Industry Projections. Idaho Labor Market Information. <https://lmi.idaho.gov/data-tools/occupational-industry-projections/>
- (11) Murray, E. M., & USGS. (2018). Idaho Water Use, 2015. In USGS. <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2018/3036/fs20183036.pdf>
- (12) Bureau of Land Management. (2022). Project / Unit: Upper Snake/South Fork Snake River Special Recreation Area (SRMA) and Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Project Data Sheet. In U.S. Department of the Interior (p. 1). <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/blm-2022-lwcf-pdss-508.pdf>
- (13) Idaho Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources. (2025). 2025 Idaho Energy & Mineral Landscape. In Idaho Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources. <https://oemr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025-Idaho-Energy-and-Mineral-Landscape.pdf>
- (14) University of California Merced, Pacific Northwest Climate Impacts Research Consortium (A NOAA RISA Team), USDA Northwest Plains Climate Hub, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, & Northwest Climate Adaptation Science Center. (n.d.). Climate Mapper | Climate Toolbox. Climate Toolbox. <https://climatetoolbox.org/tool/Climate-Mapper>
- (15) Humes, K., Walters, R., Ryu, J., Mahler, R., & Woodruff, C. (2021). Idaho Climate-Economy Impacts Assessment. In University of Idaho. <https://objects.lib.uidaho.edu/mcclure-center/iceia-water-report-2021.pdf>

- (16) Idaho Department of Water Resources. (2012). Overview of the Swan Falls Settlement. In Idaho Department of Water Resources. <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/legal/swan-falls-settlement/20120715-Overview-of-Swan-Falls-Settlement.pdf>
- (17) Idaho Water Resource Board Resolution No. 53-2025; Resolution to Adopt Changes, (2025). <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/iwr/2025a/Board-Meeting-14-25-Resolutions-20251120-21-Before-the-Idaho-Water-Resource-Board.pdf>
- (18) Idaho Water Resource Board Resolution No. 62-2024; Resolution to Award Funds, (2024). <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/iwr/2024/62-2024RESOLUTIONGWtoSurfaceWaterGrantAwards.pdf>
- (19) Idaho Water Resource Board Resolution 39-2025; Resolution to Award Funds, (2025). <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/iwr/2025a/Board-Meeting-12-25-Resolutions.pdf>
- (20) Idaho Power Company. (n.d.). Idaho Collaborative Cloud Seeding Program 2023-24 Winter Season End of Season Report. In Idaho Department of Water Resources. <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/iwr/CloudSeeding/Winter-2023-24-Idaho-Collaborative-Cloud-Seeding-Program-End-Of-Year-Final-Report-.pdf>
- (21) Idaho Water Resource Board Resolution 44-2025; Resolution to Award Funding, (2025). <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/iwr/2025a/Board-Meeting-13-25-Resolutions-20251120-21-Before-the-Idaho-Water-Resource-Board.pdf>
- (22) U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation, & Idaho Water Resource Board. (2015). Henrys Fork Basin Study Final Report. In U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation. <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/bsp/docs/finalreport/HenrysFork/HenrysForkBasinStudyReport.pdf>
- (23) “Statewide Surface Water Storage Project Studies Presentation to the Treasure Valley CAMP Advisory Committee Legislative Direction,” 2010. <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/iwr/2010/20100610-Treasure-Valley-CAMP-Storage-Studies.pdf>.
- (24) “Idaho State Water Plan.” Idaho Department of Water Resources, November 2012. <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/iwr/2012/2012-State-Water-Plan.pdf>.

G. APPENDIX C – LETTERS OF SUPPORT



September 3, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

RE: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer:

On behalf of the Burley Irrigation District (BID) and its Board of Directors, I am writing to express our strong support for the proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

The focus area for this study encompasses the Snake River Basin upstream of Milner Dam, including the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), a hydrologic system of major importance in the western United States. Water from this basin underpins farming, city and industrial growth, ecosystem health, and overall economic strength in Idaho and parts of Wyoming. Because the region faces intertwined challenges—such as maintaining aquifer levels, adapting to climate shifts, and meeting changing water needs—this Basin Study offers a much-needed framework for coordinated, long-term solutions.

The Burley Irrigation District and its Board of Directors fully support this project and believe it will be instrumental in identifying solutions that protect and sustain Idaho's water future. In particular, BID would love to see efforts focused on keeping Idaho's water in Idaho through the development of additional storage and similar projects. These efforts not only strengthen BID's ability to serve its water users but also enhance the overall health of the ESPA and the communities it supports.

We strongly support the leadership behind this effort and are prepared to contribute where possible—whether by providing data, engaging stakeholders, participating in technical review,

or supporting outreach activities. BID recognizes that collaborative input will be key to developing practical and science-based solutions, and we are committed to doing our part.

We urge the Bureau of Reclamation to approve the Letter of Interest and move forward as a partner in this important endeavor.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Don Terry

General Manager

Burley Irrigation District

208.678.2511



1725 Riverton RD · PO Box 1268 · Blackfoot, ID 83221 · (208) 684-9634

September 4, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, ID 83706-1234

Re: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer,

I am writing to you as the Manager of the Bingham Ground Water District (BGWD) in strong support of the proposal to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

BGWD is comprised of over 148,000 acres of irrigated cropland as well as municipal and industrial interests which rely on groundwater from the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) as their primary, and often sole, source of water.

The ESPA has been determined to be conjunctive to the Snake River with intermingled seepage from the river to the aquifer as well as spring flows from the aquifer back to the river. This conjunctive nature has been the source of significant disputes between surface and groundwater users over the past decades. Notwithstanding the disputes, the ESPA provides a unique and significant natural resource in regulating water supplies in the Upper Snake River Basin by storing water during pluvial times and releasing water during dry times. This Basin Study will be a significant step towards overcoming conflicts among water users by better understanding how, where, and when surface and groundwater interact and how such interactions can be incorporated into the overall management of the Upper Snake River in ways that provide maximum flexibility for innovative water conservation tools.

BGWD is not only supportive of this effort, but we are also prepared to assist in data collection and other on-the-ground efforts to benefit the study. We are located in the heart of the Upper Snake Basin and our staff and equipment can be available to help as needed.

We urge the Bureau of Reclamation to approve the Letter of Interest and partner in this important endeavor. Thank you for your support in the continuous effort to study and improve water resource management in the Upper Snake River Basin, which is vital to widely diverse interests throughout the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Jackson", written over a horizontal line.

Alan Jackson
District Manager
Bingham Ground Water District



September 4, 2025

Roland Springer

Acting Regional Director

United States Bureau of Reclamation

Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region

1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100

Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

RE: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer:

On behalf of The Eastern Idaho Water Rights Coalition, we are writing to express our strong support for the proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

The proposed study area encompasses the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam, including the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), and represents a critical hydrologic region supporting agriculture, municipal uses, environmental needs, and economic vitality across Idaho and parts of Wyoming.

The Eastern Idaho Water Rights Coalition represents cities, groundwater districts, irrigation districts, canal companies, private industry, and developers across Eastern Idaho. We have a vested interest in ensuring the long-term health of the Basin's water resources and believe this study will be essential in shaping practical, science-based water management solutions for the future.

We support the leadership in this effort and are prepared to conduct educational seminars, use our extensive email network, and website to promote activities to educate the public on the study.

We urge the Bureau of Reclamation to approve the Letter of Interest and partner in this important endeavor. Thank you for your consideration of this critical study.

Sincerely,

Roger Warner, President

Keith Esplin, Executive Director

Eastern Idaho Water Rights Coalition



September 4th, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region 1150 N. Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

RE: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer:

On behalf of the Henry's Fork Foundation, we are writing to express our strong support for the proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

The proposed study area encompasses the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam, including the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), and represents a critical hydrologic region supporting agriculture, municipal uses, environmental needs, and economic vitality across Idaho and parts of Wyoming. The complex and interrelated water challenges in this region (particularly concerning aquifer sustainability, changing climate conditions, and evolving water demands) require the kind of integrated and collaborative approach that this Basin Study would provide.

The Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Ashton, Idaho and represents 2,750 members who cherish the Henry's Fork and South Fork of the Snake River. Founded in 1984, HFF's mission is to conserve, protect, and restore the unique fisheries, wildlife, and aesthetic qualities of the Henry's Fork and connected watersheds. To accomplish our mission, we work collaboratively with state and federal government agencies, universities, hydroelectric power companies, local businesses, guides and outfitters, individual farmers and ranchers, irrigation districts, and other watershed stakeholders, through programs in science and technology, education, outreach, and stewardship. More information regarding our mission and programs can be found at www.henrysfork.org. We have a vested interest in ensuring the long-term health of the Basin's water resources and believe this study will be essential in shaping practical, science-based water management solutions for the future of agriculture, fisheries, and communities.

We support the leadership in this effort and are prepared to contribute scientific research, data and analysis through our suite of data and modeling web applications, hosting of Basin Study meetings through the Henry's Fork Watershed Council, professional review of draft documents, and collaboration with agency, university, and nongovernmental partners. We are especially well equipped to collaborate in development of a Basin wide water budget and assessment of water management alternatives.

We urge the Bureau of Reclamation to approve the Letter of Interest and partner in this important endeavor. Thank you for your consideration of this critical study, which will benefit a broad and diverse group of water users across the Basin.

Sincerely,



Brandon Hoffner
Executive Director
bhoffner@henrysfork.org
208-270-6677



Dr. Rob Van Kirk
Science & Technology Director
rob@henrysfork.org
208-652-3567



September 4, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

RE: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer:

On behalf of the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators, I write to express our strong support for the proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation on a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

The study area, covering the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam and the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), is a critical hydrologic region supporting agriculture, municipalities, industry, the environment, and the economy in Idaho and parts of Wyoming. Addressing challenges such as aquifer sustainability, climate variability, and changing water demands requires the integrated and science-based approach that this Basin Study will provide.

The Idaho Ground Water Appropriators represents groundwater users on the ESPA, irrigating roughly one million acres. As such, we have a direct interest in sustaining the Basin's water resources and believe this study is essential to developing practical, durable management strategies.

We urge the Bureau of Reclamation to approve the Letter of Interest and advance this important initiative. IGWA is committed to active participation and support of the Basin Study and stands ready to contribute to its success.

Thank you for your consideration of this effort, which will benefit the diverse community of water users across the Upper Snake River Basin.

Sincerely,

Bob Turner
Executive Director
Idaho Ground Water Appropriators
Bob.igwa@gmail.com



August 29, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia–Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

RE: Letter of Support - WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer:

On behalf of Idaho State University (ISU), I write to express our support, in conjunction with the Letter of Interest (LOI) submitted to the Bureau of Reclamation, for a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin. Basin studies are collaborative, cost-shared efforts that evaluate: a) water supply and demand, b) identify adaptation strategies to address imbalances, and c) provide information/ data to effectively manage water supplies within the region. These activities align closely with ISU's mission to serve Idaho and strengthen its economy.

ISU recognizes that the LOI's proposed study area above Milner Dam and inclusive of all tributaries, as well as the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), is a complex hydrologic system. Southeast Idaho's communities, agricultural producers, industries, and ecosystems depend on a resilient Upper Snake–ESPA system. With over three million acres of irrigated agriculture in the proposed study area, it supports billions of dollars in economic activity, contributing a substantial share of irrigation supply and all the municipal drinking water. *This underscores why a modern, science-based assessment is both critical and prudent.*

ISU faculty have completed various studies in the region, with an understanding of the complexity. There are inseparable connections between the surface waters, infrastructure operations, and groundwater. To better understand and manage this complex and consequential system, it is important to properly evaluate and quantify water flows, storage, recharge, spring water discharge, and weather-driven variability. ISU supports this study and looks forward to being part of the study team. Specifically, we will contribute interdisciplinary expertise and applied research capacity across several academic departments:

- Biology - aquatic and riparian ecology; habitat and flow-ecology relationships; ecohydrology and water-quality/biota linkages.
- Civil & Environmental Engineering - hydrologic and hydraulic modeling; infrastructure reliability and modernization; water quality and treatment; operations analysis.
- Economics, Social & Policy Sciences - economic and trade-off analysis (cost–benefit, multi-criteria decision analysis); community and stakeholder engagement (participatory modeling, surveys, and workshops); social interactions with water and water systems (equity, resilience, and behavioral dimensions); governance and institutional analysis; risk communication and outreach.
- Geosciences – groundwater/surface water interactions; aquifer recharge and discharge characterization; geospatial analysis and remote sensing; climate and hydrology scenario assessment.

Office of the Vice President for Research & Economic Development

921 South 8th Ave., Stop 8130 | Pocatello, ID 83209-8130 | (208) 282-5907 | isu.edu/research | or@isu.edu

ISU faculty regularly collaborate with state and local partners and can assist with data synthesis, model development, and evaluation of adaptive management strategies consistent with the WaterSMART Basin Study process (e.g., scenario planning, climate and hydrology analyses, and decision-support tools).

Idaho's public research university mission includes educating and preparing the region's youth and adults to meet critical workforce needs. This Basin Study offers an opportunity to involve students directly in data collection, modeling, monitoring network design, and community engagement. Through these efforts, ISU will help develop a skilled local workforce ready to implement the study's recommendations, thereby supporting long-term water stewardship, adaptive management, and community resilience after the study is complete.

We support the collaborative framework needed to bring state, local, Tribal, academic, and stakeholder partners together to co-develop practical solutions. Thank you for considering the Upper Snake River Basin for a WaterSMART Basin Study. ISU stands ready to involve our faculty expertise, student talent, and research infrastructure to help the region develop reliable, science-based pathways for water security in Southeast Idaho and the broader basin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Martin Blair".

Martin E. Blair, PhD
Vice President for Research & Economic Development
martinblair@isu.edu



101 S. Capitol Blvd. STE 1205 Boise, ID 83702
P: 208-344-6690 E: iwua@iwua.org W: iwua.org

September 8, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

RE: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer:

On behalf of the Idaho Water Users Association, I am writing to express our support for the Idaho Water Resource Board's proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

IWUA is a non-profit organization representing approximately 300 canal companies, irrigation districts, ground water districts, municipal and public water suppliers, hydroelectric companies, aquaculture interests, agri-businesses, professional firms and individuals throughout Idaho. Our purpose is to promote, aid and assist in the development, control, conservation, preservation and utilization of Idaho's water resources.

The proposed study area encompasses the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam, including the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), and represents a critical hydrologic region supporting agriculture, municipal uses, environmental needs, and economic vitality across Idaho and parts of Wyoming. The complex and interrelated water challenges in this region (particularly concerning aquifer sustainability, changing climate conditions, and evolving water demands) require the kind of integrated and collaborative approach that this Basin Study would provide.

IWUA members have a vested interest in ensuring the long-term health of the Snake River Basin. This study will be a critical piece of their efforts to shape practical, science-based water management solutions for the future. We support the leadership in this effort and will engage throughout the process.

We urge the Bureau of Reclamation to approve the Letter of Interest and partner in this important endeavor. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Arrington", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Arrington
Executive Director & General Counsel

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

Re: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer,

On behalf of Lazy Triple Creek Ranch in Madison County, Idaho, I am writing to express our support for the Idaho Water Resource Study.

We have a vested interest in the long-term health of the Basin's water resources and support this study as an important step toward practical water management solutions.

We understand this will be a five-year study. We have no objection to this study proceeding, but our belief is planning should not be an impediment to action.

In addition to this study, we would like to see a way forward for landowners such as ourselves to construct necessary water reservoirs on our property.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Henry A. McKinnell

Owner

Lazy Triple Creek Ranch, Newdale, Idaho

Hank@lazytriplecreek.com

(917) 821-7210

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer,

On behalf of my constituents in Southeast Idaho and as a legislator deeply engaged in the Keep Idaho Water movement, we are writing to express my strong support for the proposal to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin in partnership with the Idaho Water Resource Board.

The study area, which includes the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam and the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), is the heart of Idaho’s water system. It sustains agriculture, municipal growth, energy development, environmental needs, and the economic vitality of our state. These resources are under increasing pressure from aquifer decline, climate variability, and growing demand. An integrated, science-based Basin Study is essential to give Idaho the tools we need to prepare for the future.

As a co-sponsor of Senate Joint Memorial 101 (Keep Idaho Water), we have worked to elevate the urgency of expanding Idaho’s surface water storage capacity and strengthening aquifer recharge. This study represents a critical next step in developing a comprehensive water vision for our state. The Idaho Water Resource Board is uniquely positioned to serve as Idaho’s lead partner in this effort. Their sponsorship demonstrates the state’s deep commitment to collaborative, science-driven solutions, and underscores the range of partners engaged in securing Idaho’s water future. By partnering with the Board on this Basin Study, Reclamation can help ensure that Idaho has the information and tools necessary to sustain agriculture, communities, and industry for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of Idaho’s most critical resource, our water.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cook Idaho State Senator, District 32	Van Burtenshaw Idaho State Senator, District 31
Wendy Horman Idaho State Representative, District 32	Rod Furniss Idaho State Representative, District 31
Stephanie Mickelsen Idaho State Representative, District 32	Jerald Raymond Idaho State Representative, District 31

Continued on next page...

Julie VanOrden Idaho State Senator District 30	Dave Lent Idaho State Senator, District 33
Ben Fuhriman Idaho State Representative, District 30	Barbra Ehart Idaho State Representative, District 33
David Cannon Idaho State Representative, District 30	Marco Erickson Idaho State Representative, District 33
Mark Harris Idaho State Senator, District 35	Doug Ricks Idaho State Senator District 34
Josh Wheeler Idaho State Representative, District 35	Brit Raybould Idaho State Representative, District 34
Kevin Andrus Idaho State Representative, District 35	Jon Weber Idaho State Representative, District 34
Kelly Anthon President Pro Tempore Idaho State Senator, District 27	Jim Guthrie Idaho State Senator, District 28
Dustin Manwaring Idaho State Representative, District 29	Richard Cheatum Idaho State Representative, District 28
Clay Handy Idaho State Representative, District 27	



5294 E 3610 N, Murtaugh, ID 83344
208-432-5560
milner@safelink.net

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

Re: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer,

On behalf of Milner Irrigation District, I am writing to express our support for the Idaho Water Resource Board's (IWRB) proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

The study area includes the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam and the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), a region that supports agriculture, municipalities, environmental resources, and economic activities across Idaho and parts of Wyoming. This Basin Study will provide a coordinated, science-based approach to address challenges such as aquifer sustainability, understanding changes in water demand for the region, and ensuring adequate water storage for the needs of the region.

Milner Irrigation District represents Idaho farmers and community members producing economically important crops on 13,548 acres of land. Milner Irrigation holds water rights in both the American Falls and Palisades reservoirs. We have a vested interest in the long-term health of the Basin's water resources and support this study as an important step toward practical water management solutions.

We support the IWRB's leadership and are prepared to support any research efforts through data, expertise, and/or manpower. The district is also willing to support and engage in other ways as needs are identified. We urge Reclamation to approve the IWRB's Letter of Interest and partner in this effort.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kenley Nebeker
Manager
Milner Irrigation District
208-731-8790



MINIDOKA IRRIGATION DISTRICT

98 WEST 50 SOUTH

RUPERT, ID 83350

(208) 436-3188

www.minidokairrigationdistrict.org

"M.I.D. IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER"

4 September 2025

Roland Springer

Acting Regional Director

United States Bureau of Reclamation

Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region

1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100

Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

Re: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer,

On behalf of the Minidoka Irrigation District, I am writing to express our strong support for a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin in partnership with the Idaho Water Resource Board. As a surface water management district serving producers in Rupert and the surrounding area, MID understands the pressures facing our water resources. Declining aquifers, climate shifts, and growing demand have created challenges that no single entity can solve on its own. A Basin Study is an essential step in bringing science, data, and practical solutions to bear on these issues.

Minidoka Irrigation District has supported this project from its earliest conception. We recognized from the beginning that the Upper Snake River Basin faces challenges that demand proactive, collaborative solutions. Since then, we have consistently engaged in the discussions, planning, and coalition-building needed to bring this proposal forward. Our Board and our producers remain dedicated to seeing this effort through, because the stakes are too high to do otherwise. We view this study not as a one-time effort, but as part of a broader, long-term commitment to securing Idaho's water future. That commitment will not waver. Whether conditions are favorable or difficult, whether in years of plenty or in years of drought, MID is steadfast in working with our partners to ensure that irrigators have access to the water they need to support agriculture and rural communities.

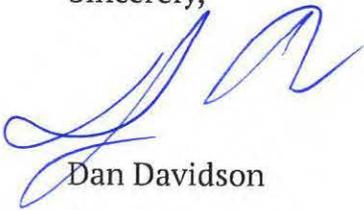
We have the utmost confidence in the Idaho Water Resource Board's ability to manage this project. The Board has long served as the voice of Idaho's water users and managers, and they are uniquely equipped to coordinate among the many stakeholders who have already rallied in support. The breadth of this coalition, from agricultural producers to conservation groups, from local water districts to universities, demonstrates that Idaho is united in addressing this challenge. The IWRB's leadership ensures that this Basin Study will not sit on a shelf. It will become a working tool to guide decisions, inform operations, and create strategies that balance the needs of agriculture, municipalities, industry, and the environment.

Reclamation has been, and continues to be, a valuable partner in Idaho's water management. This study represents another opportunity to combine Reclamation's resources and technical expertise with Idaho's deep local commitment. Together, we can generate science-based solutions that are both practical and durable, solutions that recognize the realities of managing water on the ground while planning for the future.

The time to act is now. Securing Idaho's water is not only about meeting today's needs; it is about leaving a legacy of stability and opportunity for the generations that will follow. The grassroots effort behind this Basin Study proves that people from all walks of life, even those who may not always see eye to eye, understand the urgency of this work. Minidoka Irrigation District is proud to stand with the Idaho Water Resource Board and our partners across the Basin. We are committed to seeing this study through, no matter the challenges ahead. Idaho's water is the foundation of our communities, our economy, and our way of life. Protecting it is a responsibility we embrace fully.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued partnership in this vital undertaking.

Sincerely,



Dan Davidson

Manager

Minidoka Irrigation District



MURDOCK FARMS, INC

IDAHO FAMILY FARM SINCE 1889

1473 W HOFF RD
BLACKFOOT, ID 83221
208-280-4707

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

September 1, 2025

RE: Letter of Support - WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Mr. Springer,

Murdock Farms strongly supports the Idaho Water Board's request that the Bureau of Reclamation conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

A new study needs to be completed in this area to update developments that have occurred in Idaho over the past ten years. As the B.O.R. is well aware, Idaho faces many water challenges due to surface water demands. The last study was done in 2015 and focused only on the Henry's Fork Basin. We need this new Basin Study to focus on all areas above the Milner Dam of the Snake River. This latest study also needs to include the current public opinion, which I believe has changed about surface water storage reservoirs and dams; in my opinion, they are much stronger in support of such projects.

Murdock Farms is at the center of the water issue. We use ESPA water for our crops and have been personally impacted by the water restrictions. Decisions made in this study will directly affect our farm's future. Murdock Farms is one of Idaho's oldest family farms. We have been growing Idaho Potatoes since 1889. My ancestors helped develop many of the earliest canals in the Blackfoot area. My father came home from World War II and purchased our farm farther west from the original farmstead. Surface water irrigation was not readily available, and we switched to groundwater for irrigation. This is why I am so involved in helping to resolve the water crisis.

I have been working with the Idaho State Water Board on many issues and recommend them as a viable working partner in this process. I will continue to work and do whatever I can to inform the public and gather support for more surface water storage reservoirs.

Please approve the Board's Letter of Interest and help Idaho progress this project.

Thank you for your time.

Brian Murdock, Murdock Farms

Skiingdad65@yahoo.com

208-680-4707



NORTH SIDE CANAL COMPANY, LTD.

731 GOLF COURSE ROAD • JEROME IDAHO 83338 • (208)324-2319 • FAX (208)324-8906

September 2, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

RE: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer:

On behalf of North Side Canal Company (NSCC), I am writing to express our strong support for the Idaho Water Resource Board's (IWRB) proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

The proposed study area encompasses the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam, including the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), and represents a critical hydrologic region supporting agriculture, municipal uses, environmental needs, and economic vitality across Idaho and parts of Wyoming. The complex and interrelated water challenges in this region (particularly concerning aquifer sustainability, changing climate conditions, and evolving water demands) require the kind of integrated and collaborative approach that this Basin Study would provide.

NSCC represents 155,000 acres of irrigated farmland on the north side of the Snake River between Hazelton and King Hill. The company's water supply is composed of contracted storage space in Jackson Lake, Palisades Reservoir, and American Falls Reservoir along with natural flow water rights on the Snake River. NSCC has a vested interest in ensuring the long-term health of the Basin's water resources and believe this study will be essential in shaping practical, science-based water management solutions for the future.

We support the IWRB's leadership in this effort and are prepared to participate in the study effort should it move forward.

We urge the Bureau of Reclamation to approve the IWRB's Letter of Interest and partner in this important endeavor. Thank you for your consideration of this critical study, which will benefit a broad and diverse group of water users across the Basin.

Sincerely,

Alan W. Hansten
General Manager
North Side Canal Company

September 10, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

Re: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer,

On behalf of Snake River Headwaters Watershed Group (SRHWG), the steering committee is writing to express our support for the Idaho Water Resource Board's (IWRB) proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

The study area includes the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam and the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), a region that supports agriculture, municipalities, environmental resources, and economic activities across Idaho and parts of Wyoming. A coordinated, science-based approach is urgently needed to address challenges such as rising water demand, changing climate, and ecosystem health. These are precisely the issues the SRHWG is working to address within the headwaters, and we recognize the value of extending this effort across the broader Basin.

The SRHWG unites more than 250 members and over 100 organizations—including water users, landowners, nonprofits, scientists, and public agencies—to ensure a resilient and healthy Snake River Headwaters ecosystem with clean, ample water for current and future generations. Located in Wyoming, the Snake River Headwaters form the source waters for the entire Basin, making our work directly relevant to downstream communities and ecosystems. Supported through Reclamation's WaterSMART program, we provide a trusted, inclusive forum for dialogue, education, and problem-solving around watershed challenges. Our place-based, collaborative approach has demonstrated the importance of working across jurisdictions and interests—experience that will be valuable to this Basin Study.

The SRHWG steering committee is committed to working closely with Reclamation and participating stakeholders to develop alternatives that fulfill the purpose of the study. Specifically, we are prepared to:

- Contribute review and technical input from our network of experts and practitioners;
- Share lessons learned from headwaters projects relevant to the Basin Study; and
- Elevate public awareness of the Basin Study through our convenings and communication channels, ensuring opportunities for broad and meaningful engagement.

We urge Reclamation to approve the Idaho Water Resource Board's Letter of Interest and advance this important partnership. This Basin Study represents a critical step toward developing practical, collaborative, and science-based water management solutions across the Upper Snake River Basin.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Snake River Headwaters Watershed Group, Steering Committee:

Aaron Pruzan, Owner, Rendezvous River Sports

Brent E. Ewers, Director of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute and WyACT, University of Wyoming

Clay Moorhead, American Rivers National Board, Resource Council of the Grand Teton National Park Foundation, and Advisory Board of Trout Unlimited's Snake River Headwaters Initiative

David Lee, Water Resources Specialist, Teton Conservation District

Jeff VanOrden, Committee of Nine

Leslie Steen, Wyoming State Director, Trout Unlimited

Orion Hatch, Executive Director, Snake River Fund

Simeon Caskey, Physical Scientist, Grand Teton National Park



TWIN FALLS CANAL COMPANY

357 6TH AVE WEST
POST OFFICE BOX 326
TWIN FALLS, IDAHO 83303-0326



September 8, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

Re: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer,

On behalf of The Twin Falls Canal Company, I am writing to express our support for the Idaho Water Resource Board's (IWRB) proposal to partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

The study area includes the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam and the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), a region that supports agriculture, municipalities, environmental resources, and economic activities across Idaho and parts of Wyoming. This Basin Study will provide a coordinated, science-based approach to address challenges that all Water Users in the State of Idaho are currently facing. With the declining health of the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer, the recent Efforts by The Water Resource board to expand and enhance recharge opportunities, and the overall supply vs. demand struggle that we have endured and expect to continue to endure, it is essential that we leave no stone unturned as we explore all possible opportunities.

The Twin Falls Canal Company represents senior water right holders in the Twin Falls Area where we divert approximately 1.1 billion acre feet of water out of the Snake River at Milner Dam and deliver it to approximately 200,000 acres of prime agricultural land. We have a vested interest in the long-term health of the Basin's water resources and support this study as an important step toward practical water management solutions.

We support the IWRB's leadership and are prepared to contribute or engage in any way we can to advance the efforts to conduct this much needed Basin Study. We urge Reclamation to approve the IWRB's Letter of Interest and partner in this effort.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jay Barlogi
General Manager
Twin Falls Canal Company
jbarlogi@tfcanal.com



September 4, 2025

Roland Springer
Acting Regional Director
United States Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

RE: Letter of Support – WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin

Dear Mr. Springer:

On behalf of Trout Unlimited, I am writing to express our strong support for the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a WaterSMART Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin.

Our understanding is that the proposed study area encompasses the Snake River Basin above Milner Dam, including the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), and represents a critical hydrologic region supporting agriculture, municipal uses, environmental needs, and economic vitality across Idaho and parts of Wyoming. The complex and interrelated water challenges in this region (particularly concerning aquifer sustainability, changing climate conditions, and evolving water demands) require the kind of integrated and collaborative approach that this Basin Study would provide.

Trout Unlimited (TU) is the leading coldwater conservation organization with over 350,000 members and supporters, and in Idaho and Wyoming alone, TU has over 4,500 members. The upper reaches of the Snake River in Wyoming and Idaho are home to one of the last native cutthroat strongholds in North America and contain destination, world class fisheries that are vital to the local economies. With continued collaboration, innovation and science-based water management, TU believes that the needs of fish and wildlife resources can be met alongside those of other water users. Two ongoing examples of TU's collaborative work within the Upper Snake River Basin are its assistance with the formation of and participation in the Salt River Watershed Group and the Snake River Headwaters Watershed Group – both funded by Reclamation WaterSMART grants.

TU would work closely with Reclamation and other participating stakeholders in the Basin Study to develop alternatives to fulfill the purposes of the Basin Study. TU would provide review and input, as well as elevate public awareness of the Basin Study process and opportunities for public review and involvement. TU has a vested interest in ensuring the long-term health of the Basin's water resources and believes this study will be essential in shaping practical, science-based water management solutions for the future.

Every River Needs A Champion

We urge the Bureau of Reclamation to approve the Letter of Interest and partner in this important endeavor. Thank you for your consideration of this critical study, which will benefit a broad and diverse group of water users across the Basin.

Sincerely,

Erin Plue

Erin Plue, Idaho State Director
910 W. Main St. Suite 342
Boise, Idaho 83702
erin.plue@tu.org

Leslie

Leslie Steen, Wyoming State Director
960 Alpine Lane #5, PO Box 5002
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
leslie.steen@tu.org

Every River Needs A Champion



Amy Cassel
Project Manager
Planning and Water Projects Bureau
Idaho Department of Water Resources

Delivered via email to Amy.Cassel@idwr.idaho.gov

February 11, 2026

Re: Comments on Draft Upper Snake River Basin WaterSMART Basin Study Proposal

Dear Ms. Cassel,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft proposal for the Upper Snake River Basin WaterSMART Basin Study. American Rivers appreciates the initiative shown by the Idaho Department of Water Resources and the Idaho Water Resource Board in advancing a basin-wide planning effort focused on long-term water reliability and drought resilience. A well-designed, forward-looking basin study can be an important tool to help Idaho navigate increasing hydrologic variability, growing demand, supply constraints, and the negative impacts of insufficient flows on aquatic health.

About American Rivers

Since 1973, American Rivers has worked to protect wild rivers, restore damaged rivers, and conserve clean water for people and nature. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., and supported by more than 355,000 members, supporters, and volunteers nationwide, American Rivers is the most trusted and influential river conservation organization in the United States. We maintain offices in every region of the country, including the Northern Rockies, where our members and supporters live, work, and recreate throughout the Snake River watershed.

American Rivers is supportive of conducting the proposed Basin Study and provides the following comments and observations regarding the draft Study proposal.

The Upper Snake River Basin is one of the most operationally and hydrologically complex river systems in the West, with deep interdependence between surface water, groundwater, storage reservoirs, and aquifer conditions. A comprehensive, science- and data-driven assessment can help decision-makers identify strategies that are practical, cost-effective, and durable under a wide range of future conditions.

Because this study is likely to shape major policy and investment discussions going forward, it is essential that its scope remain broad, its analysis balanced, and its evaluation framework

grounded in comparative effectiveness and risk. In particular, the study should emphasize strategies that can be implemented more quickly, at lower cost, and with fewer social, environmental, and legal conflicts — such as water use efficiency, improved management and changes of existing infrastructure, operational flexibility, and expanded managed aquifer recharge. In 2015, IDWR and the Bureau of Reclamation successfully utilized this approach with the Henrys Fork Basin Study.

Value of a Broad, Portfolio-Based Approach

The draft proposal correctly recognizes that the basin is fully appropriated, that aquifer storage and spring flows have declined significantly from historic levels, and that climate-driven shifts in runoff timing and evapotranspiration will increase stress on the system. These realities argue strongly for a portfolio approach — not a single-strategy solution set.

The most useful outcome of this Basin Study will be a clear, side-by-side evaluation of multiple strategy categories, including:

- Water use efficiency and conservation
- Operational improvements and modifications to existing storage and conveyance systems
- Increased management flexibility and water transaction tools
- Managed aquifer recharge expansion and optimization
- Infrastructure modernization and measurement improvements

These strategies tend to be faster to deploy, more economically efficient per acre-foot, and more adaptable over time than large new structural projects. They also generally present fewer permitting, financing, and social acceptance barriers.

The study should be structured so that these approaches are not treated as secondary notions but instead are evaluated with the same analytical rigor as any capital-intensive infrastructure concepts.

Efficiency and Demand Management Should Be Central, Not Peripheral

The proposal references demand reduction programs, groundwater mitigation agreements, measurement improvements, and state grant programs that support conversions and modernization. These are important building blocks and should be elevated within the study framework.

Across the West, efficiency and demand management investments have repeatedly proven to be among the most cost-effective ways to improve system reliability and drought resilience. When paired with strong accounting and governance, they can reduce conflict, stretch existing supplies, and improve operational outcomes without the financial and environmental burdens associated with major new construction.

The Basin Study should include robust scenario modeling that tests how different levels of efficiency adoption, infrastructure modernization, and improved delivery management affect basin-wide reliability, curtailment risk, aquifer conditions, and late-season flows. Decision-makers will benefit from clearly seeing how far these measures can go, how quickly benefits accrue, and how costs compare to other strategies.

Managed Aquifer Recharge Deserves Expanded Place in Basin Study

The proposal highlights the progress Idaho has made under the ESPA management framework and notes that recharge targets are increasing. Given the central role of the aquifer in stabilizing river flows and supporting both groundwater and surface water users, managed recharge should be treated as a primary strategy category within the study — not simply a supporting measure.

Recharge is, in effect, storage using a natural underground reservoir that avoids many of the losses and impacts associated with surface impoundments. Expanding recharge capacity, improving timing flexibility, and optimizing recharge site performance may offer some of the highest return-on-investment opportunities available in the basin.

The study should include detailed evaluation of recharge expansion pathways, including conveyance constraints, seasonal water availability, infrastructure needs, and comparative cost per acre-foot. It should also examine how recharge interacts with changing runoff timing under climate scenarios. This level of analysis will help clarify where recharge investments can produce the greatest basin-wide benefit.

Caution Regarding Large New Storage Projects

The proposal indicates that the study will screen potential new or expanded surface storage projects alongside other strategies. While it is appropriate for a basin study to examine a wide range of concepts, it is important to be clear-eyed about the practical realities surrounding large new dam or reservoir proposals.

Major new storage projects in this basin would likely be highly controversial, extremely expensive, slow to permit and construct, and legally and politically difficult to implement. They would almost certainly face significant environmental review requirements, public opposition, and litigation risk. They also tend to have long planning-to-operation timelines that do little to address near- and mid-term supply challenges.

For these reasons, the study should treat large new storage concepts as high-uncertainty, high-risk options and evaluate them accordingly within the tradeoff framework. They should not be implicitly framed as primary or preferred solutions to future scarcity. Instead, they should be compared transparently against alternatives that can be implemented incrementally, produce faster benefits, and carry lower downside risk.

A disciplined alternatives analysis — grounded in cost, timeline, reliability, environmental impact, and implementation risk — will better serve Idaho leaders than an approach that assumes large structural expansion is the central path forward.

Environmental and River Function Metrics Improve Decision Quality

The proposal acknowledges risks to water quality, temperature, fisheries, and recreation under lower flow and warmer conditions. We recommend that the study incorporate explicit performance indicators tied to river health and flow conditions in its scenario testing.

Including metrics related to late-season flows, temperature, spring discharge trends, and reservoir and flow level impacts on recreation and aquatic health will ensure that tradeoffs are visible and quantified. Strong decisions depend on understanding system-wide consequences, not just supply volumes.

Process Transparency and Usability

Because this study will likely inform major policy and funding discussions, transparency in modeling assumptions, scenario design, and screening criteria will be essential. Stakeholders and decision-makers should be able to understand how conclusions are reached and how sensitive results are to key assumptions.

Clear documentation, accessible summaries, and structured stakeholder review points will increase confidence in the final product and make it more usable in real-world decision settings.

Conclusion

American Rivers supports proceeding with the Upper Snake River Basin WaterSMART Basin Study. The basin faces real and growing water management challenges, and coordinated technical analysis is warranted.

To deliver maximum value, the study should maintain a broad and balanced scope, prioritize efficiency, operational improvements, flexibility, and aquifer recharge, and apply rigorous comparative analysis across all strategy categories. Approaches that are cost-effective, faster to implement, and less conflict-prone are most likely to help Idaho address future water scarcity in a practical and durable way.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about our comments and the observations that we have shared here with you. I can be reached at jhayes@americanrivers.org.



Justin Hayes
Conservation Director
Northern Rockies Region
American Rivers



February 13, 2026

Amy Cassel
Project Manager
Planning and Water Projects Bureau
Idaho Department of Water Resources
Amy.Cassel@idwr.idaho.gov

Re: Comments on Proposal to Pursue Upper Snake River Basin WaterSMART Basin Study

Dear Ms. Cassel,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft proposal to pursue a Basin Study for the Upper Snake River Basin through the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program. The Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) appreciates that the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) and the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) are committed to finding solutions to long-term water availability and drought resilience. GYC supports innovative solutions that will benefit ecological systems and people in our region. The proposed Upper Snake River Basin WaterSMART Basin study appears to be a logical next step to accomplishing these goals.

About the Greater Yellowstone Coalition

GYC is a regional conservation organization with a field office in Driggs, Idaho. From our headquarters in Bozeman, Montana and five field offices strategically placed in Idaho, Wyoming, and on the Wind River Indian Reservation, we create opportunities to work with all people to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) now, and for future generations. For more than 40 years, GYC and our 100,000 supporters from across the country have advocated for a science-driven, collaboration-focused, and forward-thinking approach to keeping lands wild, rivers free-flowing, and iconic wildlife moving throughout a connected and vibrant landscape.

The proposed study area of the Upper Snake River Basin (USRB) includes the headwaters of the Snake River, with origins deep in the heart of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The southeast, east, northeast, and northern boundaries of both the USRB and the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer all exist within regions of the GYE where GYC actively conducts conservation work with local communities, landowners, agencies, and Tribes. As such, GYC has a strong interest in ensuring that the USRB proposal reflects both ecological realities and community values.

The Study Approach and Objectives

GYC supports IDWR's intention to leverage existing technical tools such as the RiverWare model and Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Model (ESPAM). Building upon trusted analytical frameworks, rather than

reinventing them, will help ensure efficiency, transparency, and credibility. We also support the sound approaches of projecting future conditions under climate variability and population growth scenarios, compiling and assessing current water supply and demand conditions, and conducting trade-off analyses of alternatives based on environmental impact, risk, cost, and stakeholder interests. These components are essential in developing resilient strategies that balance ecological, agricultural, municipal, and industrial needs, particularly in the Upper Basin, where stream health and ecological integrity are foundational to the local economies and quality of life.

GYC, however, strongly cautions against disproportionate emphasis on “screening new or expanded storage opportunities,” especially in the form of dam construction. Major surface storage projects are highly controversial, expensive, slow to permit, fraught with legal challenges, ecologically disruptive, and politically divisive. They carry significant uncertainty and come with high economic and ecological risks. They will face significant environmental review and public opposition. We encourage the Basin Study to prioritize and focus on innovation instead of imitation for solutions.

Groundwater Aquifer Recharge

With an emphasis on innovation, GYC believes managed aquifer recharge warrants primary consideration and expanded place in the Basin Study. In theory, and if implemented to the necessary extent in the headwaters of the Upper Basin, this practice could also provide long term, dependable, legal water delivery for water rights holders invested in the former Teton Dam – hence creating the opportunity for a permanent decommission of the dam and new opportunity for conservation of the river corridor. We echo the perspective and comments submitted by American Rivers on this topic:

Given the central role of the aquifer in stabilizing river flows and supporting both groundwater and surface water users, managed recharge should be treated as a primary strategy category within the study — not simply a supporting measure.

Recharge is, in effect, storage using a natural underground reservoir that avoids many of the losses and impacts associated with surface impoundments. Expanding recharge capacity, improving timing flexibility, and optimizing recharge site performance may offer some of the highest return-on-investment opportunities available in the basin.

The study should include detailed evaluation of recharge expansion pathways, including conveyance constraints, seasonal water availability, infrastructure needs, and comparative cost per acre-foot. It should also examine how recharge interacts with changing runoff timing under climate scenarios. This level of analysis will help clarify where recharge investments can produce the greatest basin-wide benefit. (Justin Hayes, American Rivers, February 11, 2026)

Tribal Engagement

GYC is committed to supporting and elevating tribal sovereignty and tribal treaty rights in our region. We have Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribal members on our staff, and we work closely and regularly with tribes across the GYE on natural resources issues that frequently intersect with state and

federal decision-making. A consistent and clear message we hear from Tribal partners is the importance of consultation that is early, meaningful, and often.

The Basin Study proposal acknowledges that the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes hold senior water rights that are essential for cultural practices, ecosystem stewardship, and participation in water markets. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes also have off-reservation treaty rights that must be fully respected. GYC strongly encourages the Basin Study to include the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes as an integral partner throughout the Basin Study process, not merely as a consulted stakeholder, but as a sovereign government with co-equal interests in the basin's future.

Conclusion

The Greater Yellowstone Coalition supports the Idaho Department of Water Resources proceeding with the Upper Snake River Basin WaterSMART Basin Study. There is no doubt the basin faces real threats to water availability and stream health. We believe a coordinated technical analysis will benefit a path forward to long-term solutions.

We respectfully urge the Department to prioritize innovative, cost-effective, and ecologically sound strategies; to ensure robust modeling and transparent trade-off analysis; and to engage Tribal governments as full partners in the process.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. We look forward to continued engagement as this important work moves forward.

Respectfully,



Matt Lucia
Idaho Conservation Manager



Sierra Harris
Climate and Water Conservation Manager

FW: Upper Snake Basin Study Proposal schedule update

From Cassel, Amy <Amy.Cassel@idwr.idaho.gov>

Date Tue 2/17/2026 9:28 AM

To Kienholz, Mackenzie <Mackenzie.Kienholz@idwr.idaho.gov>; Benjamin Camp <benjamin.camp@idwr.idaho.gov>

Cc Hipke, Wesley <Wesley.Hipke@idwr.idaho.gov>

FYI – IDPO has a number of comments, ect.

From: Davis, Kresta <KDavis2@idahopower.com>

Sent: Friday, February 13, 2026 4:04 PM

To: Cassel, Amy <Amy.Cassel@idwr.idaho.gov>

Subject: RE: Upper Snake Basin Study Proposal schedule update

CAUTION: This email originated outside the State of Idaho network. Verify links and attachments BEFORE you click or open, even if you recognize and/or trust the sender. Contact your agency service desk with any concerns.

Good afternoon, Amy.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Upper Snake Basin Study proposal. Below are comments and suggested edits for consideration.

1. Section C. Evaluation Criteria – Criteria 1 *Demands by Beneficial Use Power Generation* – Idaho Power believes that it is important to note that insufficient water supplies would increase the cost of energy for Idaho residence.
2. Section C. Evaluation Criteria – Criteria 2 Part b) – Idaho Power believes that it is important to clarify that although the Swan Falls Agreement does define a minimum flow at Swan Falls, the agreement (nor the reference provided) does not state that it requires a “steady” flow from the Thousand Springs. Idaho Power believes that it would be clearer to make the following change *“For example, there are multiple hydropower plants located along the Snake River that rely on flows generated from upstream reservoir releases as well as spring flows from the area known as Thousand Springs to meet the energy needs of customers.”*

In addition to the reliance on the Thousand Springs for hydropower generation, the spring discharge also benefits other water uses that should be highlighted in this section. For this reason, Idaho Power requests the following also be added *“Further, these spring discharges from the ESPA are the source of clean, cool water which benefit water quality in the Snake River for a number of endangered species, as well as wildlife and recreation. These springs are also the home to some of the largest aquaculture facilities in the world adding significant value to Idaho’s economy.”*

The statement in the next paragraph, “while downstream hydropower requirements remain constant” is incorrect and contrary to the statements made earlier in the document. Along with increased water demand for irrigation, the demand for hydropower generation is also growing in southern Idaho. As such, Idaho Power requests that this language be corrected and replaced with the following *“Both population growth and ET losses will drive higher irrigation water needs and downstream hydropower requirements to meet overall demand. Consequently, irrigation-driven summer electricity demand is projected to increase, while at the same time, streamflow available for hydropower production will be threatened.”*

3. Section C. Evaluation Criteria – Criteria 5 – Idaho Power believes that it is worth noting that the letters of support from stakeholders should be considered a subset of stakeholders and does not represent all stakeholders with a vested interest and does not represent all of those that may expect to participate in the Basin Study Work Group.
4. Section E – Please note that the numbering within the list of reference materials does not align with the numbering within the body of the proposal. It also seems that some references listed are not cited within the body of the proposal.

Please reach out with any questions.

Best,

Kresta Davis

Environmental Manager

Idaho Power | Environmental Affairs | Water Policy

Office 208-388-2602 | Mobile 208-890-1690

idahopower.com

From: Clark, Cynthia Bridge <Cynthia.Clark@idwr.idaho.gov>

Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 1:43 PM

To: Davis, Kresta <KDavis2@idahopower.com>; Cassel, Amy <Amy.Cassel@idwr.idaho.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Upper Snake Basin Study Proposal schedule update

Hi Kresta,

I got your voice message about the opportunity to provide comments on the draft proposal for a Basin Study in the Upper Snake. Comments can be emailed directly to Project Manager Amy Cassel (copied). We are collecting comments through EOB Friday, February 13, 2026.

A copy of the draft proposal is available on the IWRB's website:

[IWRB Water Storage Committee Meeting No. 1-26 | Meeting Materials | February 5, 2026](#)

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Thank you,
Cynthia

Cynthia Bridge Clark, P.E. | Planning & Projects Bureau Chief

cynthia.clark@idwr.idaho.gov | 208-287-4817 (o)



From: Cassel, Amy <Amy.Cassel@idwr.idaho.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 5:38 PM

To: projectmanager@minidokairrigationdistrict.org; abid@pmt.org; aaron.fmid@myidahomail.com; americanfalls.aberdeen.gwd@gmail.com; office@ascanal.org; awh@northsidecanal.com; ablue@usbr.gov; alanj@binghamgroundwater.com; bob.igwa@gmail.com; bjgwdistrict@gmail.com; skiingdad65@yahoo.com;

bstevens@usbr.gov; brucesavage@isu.edu; csibbett@usbr.gov; Chandler, Craig <Craig.Chandler@idwr.idaho.gov>; manager@minidokairrigationdistrict.org; dchild@usbr.gov; desteve@pmt.org; manager@burleyirrigation.org; hmckinnell@gmail.com; JAndersen@usbr.gov; jaxon@waterwellconsultants.com; jbarlogi@tfcanal.com; vanordenj@gmail.com; jcgwd1@gmail.com; JMJohnson@usbr.gov; JRank@usbr.gov; kathy.lynch@tu.org; keithesplinh2o@gmail.com; Senator Kevin Cook <kcook@senate.idaho.gov>; KChristensen@usbr.gov; laraherway@gmail.com; mvgwd@hotmail.com; tlw@northsidecanal.com; msloan@usbr.gov; michael.comeskey@wsp.com; michael.gibson@tu.org; mhilliard@usbr.gov; milner@safelink.net; nsgwd@safelink.net; paul@iwua.org; secretarytreasurer@minidokairrigationdistrict.org; rbliss@usbr.gov; rfosness@usbr.gov; godsey@isu.edu; simeon_caskey@nps.gov; svgwd@svskylan.net; steve@lazytriplecreek.com; taohuang@isu.edu; jhayes@americanrivers.org; dstoker@anchorqea.com; Bryan.Horsburgh@hdrinc.com; Abby Bitzenburg <abitzenburg@parsonsbehle.com>; Mark.Fountain@stantec.com; Michael.Fuss@stantec.com; TJ Budge <tj@racineolson.com>; will@tetonwater.org
Cc: Clark, Cynthia Bridge <Cynthia.Clark@idwr.idaho.gov>; brianolmstead1452@gmail.com; jeff@raybouldbros.com; abarker@martenlaw.com; Cole-Hansen, Jo Ann <JoAnn.ColeHansen@idwr.idaho.gov>
Subject: Upper Snake Basin Study Proposal schedule update

Dear Stakeholders,

I want to share an update regarding the Basin Study proposal and schedule.

- We will review the draft proposal tomorrow during the IWRB Storage Committee meeting.
- The draft will be posted and available to view/download after the meeting.
- The deadline to submit written comments will be extended to **February 13, 2026**.

Thank you,



Amy Cassel
Project Manager
Planning and Water Projects Bureau
Phone: 208.742.0656 ♦ Mobile: 208.577.1565

IDAHO POWER LEGAL DISCLAIMER

This transmission may contain information that is privileged, confidential and/or exempt from disclosure under applicable law. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any disclosure, copying, distribution, or use of the information contained herein (including any reliance thereon) is STRICTLY PROHIBITED. If you received this transmission in error, please immediately contact the sender and destroy the material in its entirety, whether in electronic or hard copy format. Thank you.

From: [TJ Budge](#)
To: [Cassel, Amy](#)
Cc: [Lara Herway](#)
Subject: RE: Schedule update - Upper Snake River Basin Study proposal
Date: Monday, February 9, 2026 5:30:21 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

CAUTION: This email originated outside the State of Idaho network. Verify links and attachments BEFORE you click or open, even if you recognize and/or trust the sender. Contact your agency service desk with any concerns.

Hi Amy,

Excellent work on the Basin Study proposal! Very well done. I have just one suggestion/request.

One of IGWA's primary desires is for the Basin Study to evaluate ways to more strategically and effectively manage available water supplies to keep everyone in business. The Study Approach on page 2 supports this, stating that the Study "will employ an integrated watershed planning and management approach, leveraging existing resources such as Reclamation's RiverWare operations model, the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Model (ESPAM), and Idaho's water right accounting systems."

I would love to see this incorporated more acutely into the Evaluation Criteria with a statement that the Basin Study will evaluate coordinated use of existing watershed management tools and identify strategies for strategically and effectively managing available resources to preserve existing water rights, maintain food production, and enable economic growth. Or something along those lines. This would fit well in Criteria 2, subsection c). It would also fit well in Criteria 4.

Thanks,

T.J. Budge

RACINE OLSON

201 E. Center St. | P.O. Box 1391 | Pocatello, Idaho 83204

Office: (208) 232-6101 | Direct: (208) 478-3467 | Cell: (208) 705-0826 | racineolson.com

Assistant: Tessa Sparrow | Direct: (208) 478-3444 | tessa@racineolson.com

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE - This email and its attachments may contain information that is confidential, privileged, or otherwise protected from disclosure. If you believe this email may have been sent to you in error, please notify me immediately.

From: Cassel, Amy <Amy.Cassel@idwr.idaho.gov>

Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 2:17 PM

To: projectmanager@minidokairrigationdistrict.org; abid@pmt.org; aaron.fmid@myidahomail.com; americanfalls.aberdeen.gwd@gmail.com; office@ascanal.org; awh@northsidecanal.com; ablue@usbr.gov; alanj@binghamgroundwater.com; bob.igwa@gmail.com; bjgwdistrict@gmail.com; skiingdad65@yahoo.com; bstevens@usbr.gov; brucesavage@isu.edu; csibbett@usbr.gov; Chandler, Craig <Craig.Chandler@idwr.idaho.gov>; manager@minidokairrigationdistrict.org; dchild@usbr.gov; desteve@pmt.org; manager@burleyirrigation.org; hmckinnell@gmail.com; JAndersen@usbr.gov; Jaxon Higgs <jaxon@waterwellconsultants.com>; jbarlogi@tfcanal.com; vanordenj@gmail.com; jcgwd1@gmail.com; JMJohnson@usbr.gov; JRank@usbr.gov; kathy.lynch@tu.org; keithesplinh2o@gmail.com; Senator Kevin Cook <kcook@senate.idaho.gov>; KChristensen@usbr.gov; mvgwd@hotmail.com; tlw@northsidecanal.com; msloan@usbr.gov; michael.comeskey@wsp.com; michael.gibson@tu.org; mhilliard@usbr.gov; milner@safelink.net; nsgwd@safelink.net; paul@iwua.org; secretarytreasurer@minidokairrigationdistrict.org; rbliss@usbr.gov; rfosness@usbr.gov; godsey@isu.edu; simeon_caskey@nps.gov; svgwd@svskylan.net; steve@lazytriplecreek.com; taohuang@isu.edu; jhayes@americanrivers.org; dstoker@anchorqea.com; Bryan.Horsburgh@hdrinc.com; Abby Bitzenburg <abitzenburg@parsonsbehle.com>; Mark.Fountain@stantec.com; Michael.Fuss@stantec.com; TJ Budge <tj@racineolson.com>; will@tetonwater.org

Cc: Clark, Cynthia Bridge <Cynthia.Clark@idwr.idaho.gov>; Hipke, Wesley <Wesley.Hipke@idwr.idaho.gov>; brianolmstead1452@gmail.com

Subject: Schedule update - Upper Snake River Basin Study proposal

Dear Stakeholders,

At the IWRB Storage Committee meeting last week, we announced some changes to the Proposal development schedule:

- Due to guidance from Reclamation staff, we have requested a 3-week extension to develop a more detailed task list, timeline, and budget for the Basin Study proposal.
- The draft proposal is available on the IWRB's Committee Meeting Materials website : <https://idwr.idaho.gov/iwrb/meetings/committee-meeting-materials/>
- The link to the draft proposal pdf is located here: [IWRB Water Storage Committee Meeting No. 1-26 | Meeting Materials | February 5, 2026](#)
- If you have comments regarding the draft proposal, please email them to me directly. The IWRB will collect comments through **EOB Friday, February 13, 2026**.
- The IWRB Special Board meeting scheduled for tomorrow, February 10, 2026, will **NOT** have the Basin Study proposal topic on the agenda. We will schedule a meeting to approve the Final Proposal in late February, early March. I'll send out an email as soon as we schedule it.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me directly.

Thank you,



Amy Cassel

Project Manager

Planning and Water Projects Bureau

Phone: 208.742.0656 ♦ Mobile: 208.577.1565



February 13, 2026

Amy Cassel

Project Manager

Planning and Water Projects Bureau

Idaho Department of Water Resources

Via email: amy.cassel@idwr.idaho.gov

Ms. Cassel,

Trout Unlimited appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Idaho Water Resource Board's (IWRB) Upper Snake River Basin Study Proposal to the Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) WaterSMART Program. The Upper Snake River Basin above Milner Dam to its headwaters above Jackson Lake is a complex and interrelated system that supports agriculture, municipal uses, fish and wildlife habitat, and economic vitality across Idaho and parts of Wyoming. Ensuring that the system and water supply are prepared to meet the current and future demands and challenges facing the region is of the utmost importance to Trout Unlimited (TU) and its many conservation partners. We look forward to engaging in and tracking the study as it develops.

About Trout Unlimited

TU is the nation's leading conservation organization working to care for and recover rivers and streams and their trout and salmon populations. We bring people together across the country to be champions for their rivers and help make our water cleaner and our communities healthier. Founded by a small band of Michigan anglers in 1959, we have grown into a national organization with more than 350 staff, 400 chapters, and 300,000 members and supporters. We bring science-driven restoration know-how, state and national policy muscle, and local volunteer energy to bear on behalf of clean water, healthy trout and salmon and thriving communities. TU has over 4,500 members in Idaho and Wyoming, and in the Upper Snake River Basin alone, we are represented by four different chapters in both Idaho and Wyoming that call the Upper Snake River their home waters. Additionally, we have 10 professional staff embedded in communities and working on stream restoration and reconnection projects, water policy, and scientific research throughout the upper basin.

Include the best available science

TU would like to recognize that the IWRB, the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), and their research partners have well-developed models, data, studies, and analyses for the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), managed aquifer recharge, springs, and other key elements of the system's connected hydrology. Having this existing information included, leveraged and complemented by the study is efficient and makes good sense. At the same time, the Basin Study also

Every River Needs A Champion

presents a unique collaborative opportunity to integrate new modeling, data, and science to project future water supply and demand, such as improved streamflow snowmelt and climate forecasting. In addition to IDWR, IWRB, and BOR, other institutions including university and nonprofit partners may have emerging science and local basin expertise to contribute that would strengthen the effort.

Leave no stone unturned

With a Basin Study comes the opportunity to explore new water management tools and strategies and weigh their costs, benefits, and feasibility through an integrated watershed planning and management approach. Building on the extensive surface and groundwater expertise, data, and models pioneered by IDWR, IWRB, BOR, and partners, we recommend the study conclude with a comprehensive assessment of all potential management tools, strategies, and siting, including for surface water storage, groundwater recharge, demand reduction, irrigation infrastructure efficiencies, and nature-based drought resiliency projects.

The study also presents an important opportunity to fully investigate and model potential administrative and operational changes across the system. These strategies may include, but are not limited to, flexibility in management and timing of winter fill and storage, flood control space, ESA- and other downstream flow obligations, and reservoir operations and maintenance.

Additionally, we believe that robust stakeholder input can help identify the full universe of tools, strategies, collaborative partnerships, funding and market-based mechanisms that can help address long-term drought and water supply imbalances in the Upper Snake River Basin into the future while also factoring in potential impacts to fish, rivers, and local communities. As a science-based, pragmatic, and solution-oriented organization with experience in drought resiliency efforts across the West, as well as boots on the ground throughout the basin, we look forward to supporting your efforts and appreciate your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Erin Plue, Idaho State Director
910 W. Main St. Suite 342
Boise, Idaho 83702
erin.plue@tu.org



Leslie Steen, Wyoming State Director
960 Alpine Lane #5, PO Box 5002
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
leslie.steen@tu.org