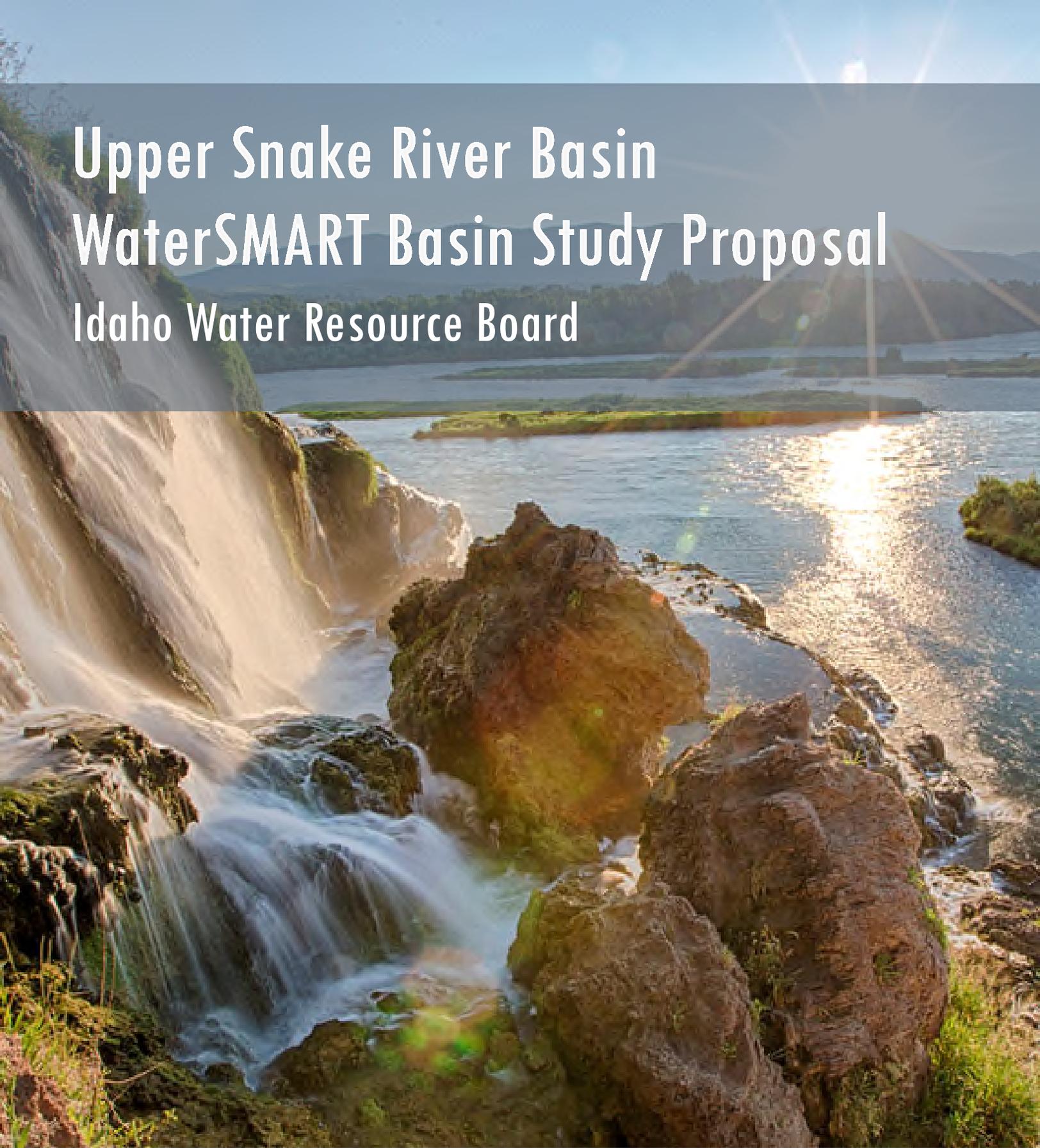


Upper Snake River Basin WaterSMART Basin Study Proposal Idaho Water Resource Board



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

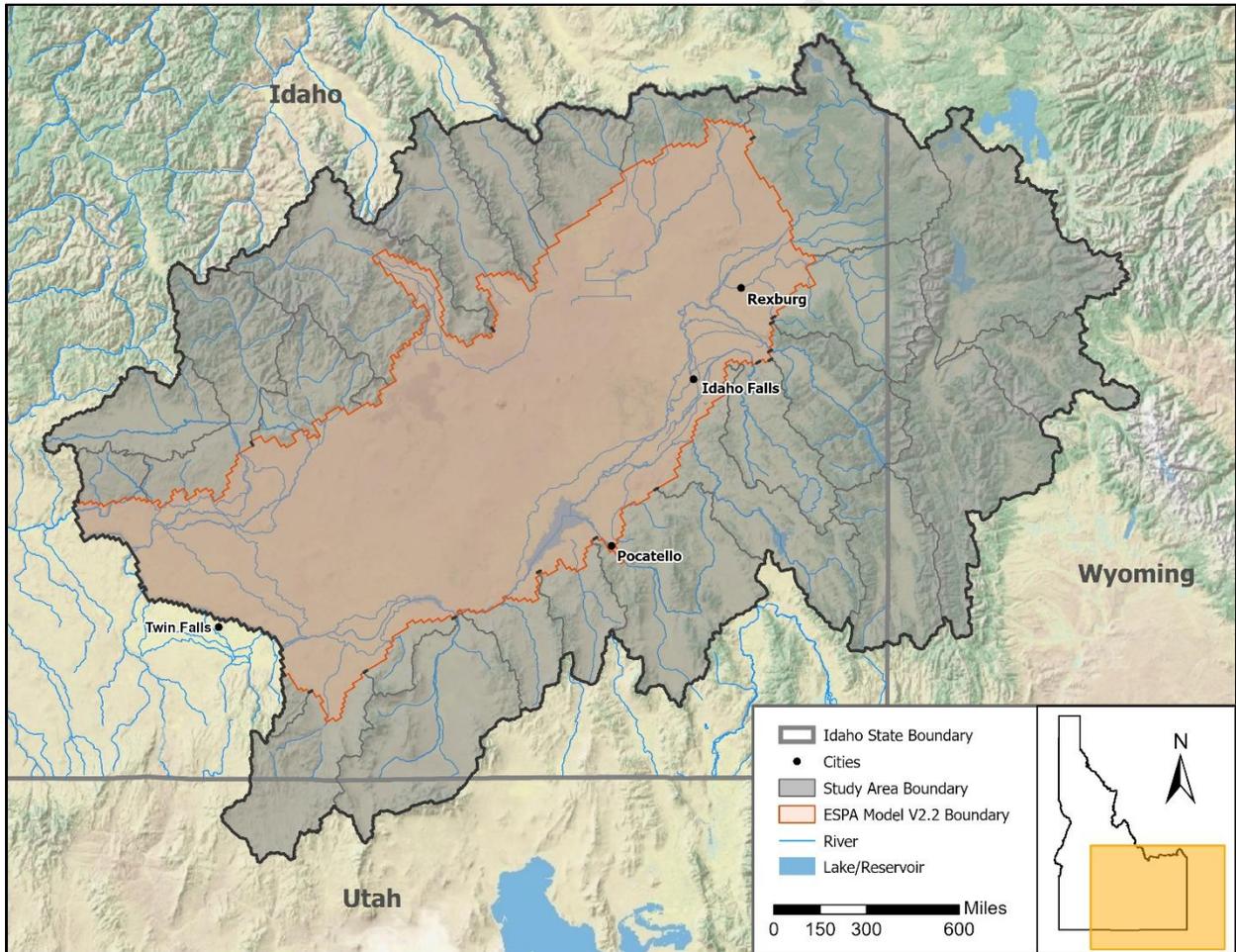
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A. PROJECT INFORMATION

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.



Total cost of study

The estimated total cost of the proposed Upper Snake River Basin Study (Basin Study) is \$5.0M, of which the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) will be seeking \$2.5M cost-share from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) in in-kind-services. Additional non-Federal funding may be raised for additional work products with the understanding that Reclamation will likely not match these funds.

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

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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 adaptation 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 operations 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 evaluation of existing storage and potential new or expanded surface water storage.
- Conducting trade-off analyses of alternatives based on cost, environmental impact, risk, and stakeholder considerations.

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 new or expanded storage opportunities and operational strategies to address climate variability, population growth, 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 aimed at:

- Utilizing water supplies to better align with seasonal and annual demand.
- Increasing effective storage and operational flexibility.
- Reducing seasonal and long-term water imbalances.
- Improving conjunctive management outcomes and aquifer stabilization.
- Enhancing 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. (30 points)

Importance of Region to Idaho & Nationally

The USRB supports approximately two million acres of irrigated agriculture, generating roughly 21% of Idaho's economic output, an estimated \$10 billion annually (1). The ESPA is the sole source of drinking water for 400,000 residents and 27 municipalities. Together, the ESPA and Snake River system supply water for irrigation, hydroelectric generation, fisheries, wildlife, recreation, and thousands of businesses. Idaho ranks third nationally in water use, averaging 54,000 acre-feet per day (2).

Water Supply – Current Supply Conditions

Status of the Region

The USRB is fully appropriated, with a moratorium on new water rights first implemented 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 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).

In the USRB, groundwater and surface water are hydraulically connected, with the ESPA supplying much of the baseflow to the Snake River and its springs, such that changes in groundwater storage directly affect surface water flows. Accordingly, Idaho law requires groundwater and surface water in the region to be conjunctively managed, allowing senior surface water right holders to seek administrative protection from material injury caused by junior groundwater pumping. Declining aquifer levels have diminished discharge from groundwater springs from the ESPA to the Snake River and reduced water supplies for many canal companies and irrigation districts that divert from the Snake River in the Magic Valley region, all of whom hold storage space in Reclamation reservoirs. This has prompted a number of requests by senior-priority water right holders for administrative action and possible curtailment of junior water rights, or "conjunctive administration delivery calls". These include the Surface Water Coalition Delivery Call, which has had the most widespread effects on ground water users in the Basin. With new

appropriations 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).

Demand Shortfalls

Early 20th-century irrigation practices increased aquifer storage and discharge to surface water through incidental recharge, enabling significant agricultural expansion. 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, aquifer storage and discharge from groundwater springs remain well below peak historic levels.

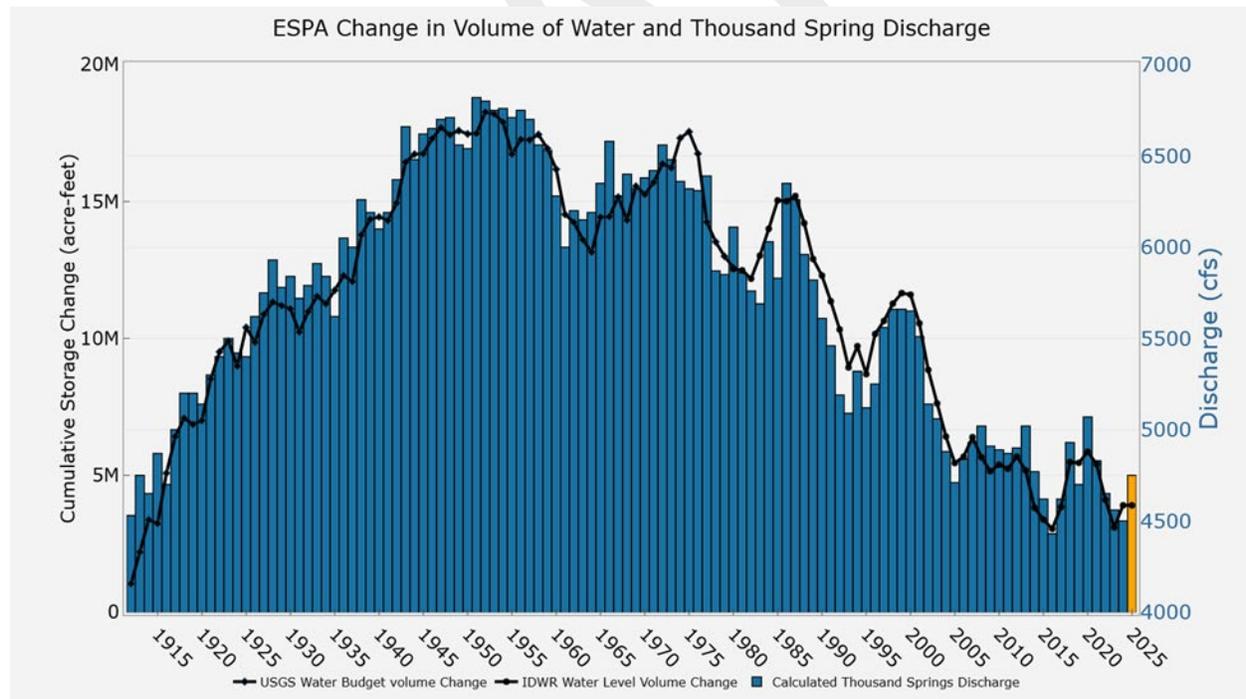


Figure 1. ESPA storage volume change and Thousand Springs discharge, 1912-2025. Source: IDWR

Due to the declines in groundwater storage and surface water flows, surface water storage has become increasingly relied upon to meet demands. The USBR 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 USBR has experienced recurring drought and water shortages since the early 2000s, with state drought declarations in the USBR most recently in 2021. Even outside of formally declared droughts, much of the USBR 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. 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 peak-season supply.

Water Supply – Future Supply Conditions

Population and industrial growth in the USBR have averaged about 1.7% annually and are expected to continue at a similar rate, increasing demand for municipal, industrial, and domestic water (8,9). 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. As more users fall under administration of the Snake River Moratorium and ACGWS, these factors are expected to further strain an already limited and increasingly unreliable water supply.

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%) (2). These uses dominate water demand in the USBR but are not the only uses important to the region.

Agriculture: Agriculture uses roughly 85–90% of water in the USBR. 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% (4). 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 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 meet it 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 cultural practices, ecosystems, and participation in water markets. Shortfalls would affect tribal resources and reduce storage available for mitigation.

Environmental: Adequate flows are critical for aquatic species, water quality, and ecosystem health. Reduced supplies 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 (10). 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 (11). Insufficient water supplies would increase energy costs, reliance on external energy sources, and reliance on energy sources that are environmentally detrimental.

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 (12). 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.

Climate variability will significantly increase evapotranspiration (ET), 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 (13). 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. This number does not include ET from reservoirs, lakes, canals, or other bodies of water (12). 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. As a result, retaining sufficient storage water for hotter, drier months will become critical for sustaining agriculture.

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 USBR, through incidental recharge, supplies the ESPA, which stretches 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 Snake River minimum flow is zero cubic feet per second (cfs). Because of this, the primary driver to streamflow from Milner to King Hill is reach gains from the ESPA. In addition to water supply, the flows in the Snake River are critical for other beneficial uses. For example, there are multiple hydropower plants downstream of Thousand Springs, along with a minimum flow agreement at Swan Falls Dam, which requires steady flow from Thousand Springs (14). As climate variability and population growth alter water availability and demand, managing this surface water-groundwater connection will be essential to maintain Idaho's water and energy systems.

Balancing groundwater and hydropower water needs amid population growth and climate variability will require effective surface water storage solutions to meet competing demands. Both population growth and ET losses will drive higher irrigation water needs, while downstream hydropower requirements remain constant. Consequently, irrigation-driven summer electricity demand is projected to increase, while at the same time, streamflow available for hydropower production will decrease (15). To address competing demand challenges, new water storage options are necessary. The Basin Study will prioritize the evaluation of existing storage infrastructure and new storage options.

Dam operations will be affected by climate variability, with operators needing to tightly manage flood control, storage, and discharge. Earlier (and more rapid) snowmelt runoff means that water arrives in reservoirs before it can be safely stored. Floods in the spring are common, and this issue will worsen with earlier, faster snowmelt. Because dam operators must reserve a portion of storage for emergency flood-control, earlier peak runoffs mean more water will be released and effectively "lost" for later use. In addition, with an earlier runoff season, reservoirs will fill sooner, leading to a longer summer discharge period. Combined with reduced natural snowmelt in the early summer, increased ET, and increased demand, pressure will grow to retain sufficient surface storage water for the full irrigation season (15). This will make strategizing storage opportunities essential to provide continuous, predictable flow throughout the summer and early fall.

Altered snowpack levels and runoff timing will significantly impact recreation, aquatic ecosystems, and water quality. In later summer months, lower summer reservoir levels and river flows will create warmer environments for fish. Cold-water aquatic species will be most affected. Harmful algal blooms will increase in frequency and limit tourism opportunities such as boating, swimming, and fishing. Additionally, changes in flows and water temperatures will impact seasonal stratification and destratification in reservoirs. Contaminants may concentrate at unnatural levels near the water surface or at reservoir outflow points, causing further harm to downstream species (15). Together, these changes

threaten both ecological health and tourism opportunities, reinforcing the need for adaptive storage strategies.

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

The IWRB has developed diverse mitigation strategies to manage Idaho's water resources for the future. Existing programs have slowed aquifer decline but are insufficient to fully resolve long-term supply-demand imbalances, underscoring the need for Basin Study evaluation of additional operational and storage strategies.

Managed Recharge: Managing aquifer levels is crucial to maintain adequate flows in the lower Snake River. The ESPA CAMP, published in 2009, outlined an original plan to support aquifer stabilization. This included a goal of 150,000-250,000 acre-feet of annual aquifer recharge (1). As of 2025, this goal has been exceeded and will be increased to 350,000 acre-feet per year (16). The IWRB continues to carefully monitor aquifer levels to ensure appropriate water usage.

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, groundwater users committed to groundwater demand reductions, supply a set amount of rented surface water from the Upper Snake Rental Pool, enhanced diversion measurement and reporting, and allow additional groundwater users to join the agreement as the state expands that area subject to the delivery call.

State-funded Grant Programs: IWRB awards grants for projects to convert groundwater use to surface water use. Over the last few years, IWRB has awarded over \$32 million in funds (17,18). Other state-funded grant programs assist with improving aging infrastructure and enhancing monitoring. These programs increase efficiency of pre-existing systems.

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 (19). Cloud seeding operations continue to expand due to the relatively low cost per acre-foot of water produced.

Monitoring and Modeling: Hydrologic models, such as ESPAM, are used to model other projects supported by IWRB that involve aquifer management and surface water analysis. These models are continually updated and can be refined to accurately predict necessary variables. IWRB has also awarded over \$800,000 in grant funds for telemetry and monitoring projects within the USRB (20).

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 *Henry's Fork Basin Study* (21) and the *Minidoka Dam Raise Special Study* (22). Examples of additional possibilities include 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 mitigation strategies will include quantitative analysis of cost, effects to the natural environment, acceptability (according to stakeholder feedback), and effect to the water budget. To screen each alternative, the study will focus on finding “fatal flaws” associated with environmental, social, or political alternatives. This will be very similar to the Henrys Fork Basin Study. A shortlist of promising alternatives will be defined. Results will be reviewed for accuracy and credibility.

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 USBR 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 USBR consistently developed and improved with advancements in technology, science, and data availability. Currently, Reclamation holds a recently updated baseline RiverWare model of the USBR. This model simulates the major features of the USBR, including major reservoirs and reaches, current operational logic (flood release management, reservoir balancing, flow augmentation releases, minimum release), surface water irrigation deliveries, groundwater pumping, and groundwater flows due to irrigation.

Reclamation Technical Capability

As the primary developers of the existing USBR 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 USBR water management models.
- Experience modeling managed hydrologic systems across the Columbia Pacific Northwest.
- Experience and tools necessary to develop theoretical future reach gains under various potential climate futures.

Reclamation Projects in the Upper Snake River Basin

The baseline USBR 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 with federal partners such as the Army Corps of Engineers and NOAA and tribes such as the Nez Perce and Shoshone-Bannock. 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 USBR'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, municipal use, and private industry. As such, studying and planning water resource management in the USBR 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 well-established hydrologic 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 Snake River Planning Model (SRPM)**
 - Reclamation maintains a baseline water management model encompassing the Snake River Basin above Brownlee Reservoir as described in CRITERIA 3. Reclamation and Basin Study partners will collaborate on any potential revisions to Reclamations baseline model to be used in this study.
 - IDWR maintains a version of the Snake River RiverWare model that was originally developed by Reclamation. Recent enhancements by IDWR include improved diversion demand logic, updated groundwater response functions, and updated IWRB groundwater managed recharge logic. The model is linked to ESPAM through response functions that connect surface water flows to groundwater recharge, enabling surface-groundwater analysis. This model has helped the IWRB understand how changes, like an increase in water supply from cloud seeding or changes in recharge capacity, affect or will affect the USRB.
- **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)

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 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 that has a vested interest in the Basin Study. The IWRB anticipates contracting a third-party technical consultant to facilitate the three stakeholder groups. Letters of support from stakeholders that have a vested interest in the Basin Study are located in the Appendix.

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 (23). 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

In progress

E. REFERENCES

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F. APPENDIX



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 line 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.

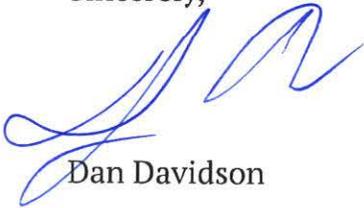
We have the utmost confidence in the Idaho Water Resource Board's ability to manage this project. The Board has long served as the voice of Idaho's water users and managers, and they are uniquely equipped to coordinate among the many stakeholders who have already rallied in support. The breadth of this 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan W. Hansten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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