



## Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan

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### Advisory Committee

#### Meeting Notes

Date: Friday, January 04, 2008

Time: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Location: Pocatello, Holiday Inn

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#### MEETING AGENDA

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1. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review and Meeting Minute Finalization
2. Briefing and Discussion: Quantitative Goal Analysis and Goal Sub-Committee Deliberations
  - CDR and Goal Sub-Committee
3. Discussion: Management Alternative Matrix
4. Discussion: Report to Board and Legislature
5. Presentation and Discussion: Recharge
  - Eastern Idaho Water Rights Coalition (EIWRC) – Jeff Raybould
6. Discussion: Next Steps and Future Meeting Agenda Development

#### WELCOME, AGENDA REVIEW, MEETING NOTE FINALIZATION

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Jonathan Bartsch (CDR) welcomed the Committee and facilitated introductions (see list below for meeting attendees). Bartsch suggested that future meeting notes be more succinct, only capturing key issues, questions, decisions and action items. It was noted that the Committee deliberations will now focus on providing recommendations to the Board and that the notes should reflect this next phase. Some Committee members mentioned that more detailed meeting notes allow those unable to attend meetings to stay current with Committee deliberations. The Committee will try a more succinct meeting note format for this meeting and determine if more detailed notes are required later. The November 15, 2007 meeting notes were finalized without comment or edits.

Bartsch reviewed the agenda and outlined the meeting goals including to:

- Discuss and determine how to proceed with identifying a quantitative goal, including assumptions, and implementation phases
- Review and refine the matrix of management alternatives
- Decide what, if anything, to recommend to the Board and Legislature in 2008 as an early action item, and
- Understand the Eastern Snake Water Rights Coalition recharge proposal

## **QUANTITATIVE GOAL ANALYSIS AND SUB-COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS**

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The Goal Sub-Committee meeting held on December 12, 2007 was summarized. The focus of the meeting was to discuss quantitative goal assumptions and how best to proceed with identifying quantitative goals. Bartsch encouraged the Committee to begin to identify interim targets (5-10 years) and to identify implementation steps while also examining the overall goal.

### **Sub-Committee Meeting Summary**

The following is a summary of issues discussed at the December 12, 2007 Goal Sub-Committee Meeting.

#### **Quantitative Analysis Assumptions**

- Determining what type of conservation activities support the ESPA Goal and Objectives and the efficient use of water resources when presenting the ESPA CAMP.
- Exploring options that reduce demand versus increase supply.
- Clarifying the goal of the ESPA process, i.e. economic viability

#### **A Water Budget Change**

The Goal Sub-Committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of setting a water budget change with interim goals (5- 10 years) and the means to adaptively manage the aquifer. Sub-Committee members noted that a change of 900 kaf was aggressive in terms of infrastructure and water availability but also potentially achievable and may meet the ESPA Goal and Objectives. Setting such a goal, it was noted, would impress upon the legislature and the state the magnitude of the problem and that state resources would need to be devoted to the ESPA. Other Sub-Committee attendees noted that while a water budget change of 900 kaf may not be the correct number, this is a change in the right direction—particularly in light of the fact that the numbers will be refined through an adaptive management process. Although the means for funding were not discussed, some members indicated the need to develop a ‘fair’ funding strategy to support such a water budget change. Reticence regarding a water budget change was based on the concern that the change could set a legal precedent that could be used in future legal cases and that the goals could be viewed as obligations rather than targets.

#### **Committee Discussion**

##### **Conservation**

Committee members suggested that conservation measures, such as the transition to sprinkler irrigation and lining of canals, have increased the challenges in managing the ESPA. The Committee focused on conservation elements that support the overall charge of the Advisory Committee. The January 22, 2008 Committee meeting will focus on the issue of conservation.

##### **Comment:**

- Measurement for all water users is a necessary and important concept that falls under the conservation category. If we can't measure the water, all sources of water, then we cannot manage it.
- Conservation means a number of different things that need further definition. Some conservation measures could have advantages for everyone in the ESPA including increasing measurement, switching to less water consumptive crops, and conducting moisture measurements.
- This is a public perception issue, we need to demonstrate that we are using the water resources wisely and efficiently or there will be no support for various management actions.
- What we are discussing is conservation with allocation, i.e. all diversions are measured so that we can properly allocate.
- The idea behind conservation is to conserve water in one place so that it can be used in another place and/or time, i.e. recharge.
- Water past Milner is one of the greatest conservation tools that we have. What does it actually mean to have a 0 flow at Milner?
- Overusing water in wet years, that could be stored, is an example of the using water inefficiently.

### **Economic Viability**

Members spent some time reflecting on the committee's purpose, questioning whether it is to keep businesses viable and/or keep the broader, water dependant, enterprises viable. Ultimately the Committee concluded that its charge is to sustain the water supply/resource, not to focus on business viability. For example, CAMP management mechanisms, will likely include actions such as buyouts/buy downs based on a willing buyer/seller principle and the committee's challenge is to minimize the adverse effects of these actions.

### **Quantitative Goal**

The Committee discussed the various approaches to identifying a quantitative goal for the ESPA. The Committee did not reach agreement on either a quantitative goal, range of goals or how to proceed with identifying it. However, numerous members indicated that the committee should begin to identify implementation phases and start to define the priorities and projects for the first phase. The interim goal and target discussion will continue at the next meeting.

## Comments, Questions & Suggestions

The following are committee comments, questions and suggestions regarding the quantitative goal.

### Comments

- The more you try to do, the higher the number, the larger challenge the funding becomes, i.e. the higher the goal the higher the cost. This becomes an issue with the on-going litigation between water users. One question is how to go about setting a goal without setting creating legal obligations and exposure.
- We need to know if 900 kaf is an interim target or whether that is going to solve the problems in the spring discharges. The question is really what is needed, in terms of water budget change, versus what we can do. We need to be clear about what we are talking about.
- What is really needed, more so than processes, is defining results. What the committee can do is say how we will effect the budget in a certain number of years(10, 20, 30). We can also ask, that if the funding principles are fair would you then consider a range of change?
- It is important to recognize that the 900 kaf analysis conducted was not a 900 kaf water budget change; some of the actions merely redistribute the water rather than change the budget.
- Our goal is to prioritize management alternatives and provide to the Board. They will decide how to proceed. Response: The Board is looking for substantive recommendations from the Committee not a laundry list of items. The Committee has an opportunity to provide vision and be bold, we need to make such recommendations.
- We need to prioritize the tools in the toolbox from an economic and environmental perspective.

### Questions

***Was the number 900 kaf pulled out of the air? What was the rationale?***

The number was based on the recovery of available supply and run through the spreadsheet tools that show benefit to reach gains and aquifer levels. This is an amount that is achievable, albeit expensive and aggressive in terms of infrastructure. In other words this is 'aggressively do-able'. The 900 kaf analysis conducted is 'scaleable', i.e. can easily scale back the level of analysis.

***Does a 900 kaf solve the problem we are facing, i.e. calls?***

What it does do is communicate the magnitude of the problem we are facing to the legislature.

***Will a 600 kaf or a 900 kaf and improve reach gains and aquifer levels?***

Yes, through the spreadsheet tools we will be able to say if you do x then y will occur (based on the given assumptions).

***Will the plan stop the calls and fulfill all water rights?***

While we hope that any management plan will address the conflicts in the ESPA, the CAMP will not end all litigation between parties over water rights issues. The Committee goal is to maximize the beneficial use and identify alternatives to curtailment; this is where we should spend our time.

***We need the other half of the analysis, i.e. the reach gains and aquifer levels for the management actions in the quantitative analysis.***

This information was provided as part of the quantitative goal analysis.

***What is the low-hanging fruit for the first increment? I agree we need to get as much as possible done in the first 5 years – steepest path.***

Demand reductions may be the low-hanging fruit and could be implemented immediately.

***One question is whether we can afford this process and what happens if we don't reach our goal; what are the consequences? We don't want to be on the hook for all of the funding.***

**Suggestions**

- We need to start working on defining the implementation phases not arguing about where we are going to finish. We may not be able to agree on where we will end up, but maybe we can start with where we want to go in the first implementation phase (easiest to implement, least expensive etc...).
- What is needed is a cost/benefit analysis of the management tools with the available supplies. This will be the driver of the management plan.
- We need to set a goal that is high enough that it is meaningful but also achievable in 30 years; our choices will be limited to the resources available.
- We need to define a 30 year goal (as outlined in the Framework), including the benefits and impacts as a result of the change. The resources needed, annual objectives and

evaluation measures to review the plan also need to be developed. We need to maximize the benefit as quickly as possible, and need to be aggressive in the first increment.

## **MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE MATRIX**

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The Committee reviewed and revised the management alternative matrix. The Committee noted that the matrix structure and categories were sufficient to capture the relevant issues. The Committee was asked to provide red-lined edits to the matrix by **Friday, January 12, 2008** for review at the January 22, 2008 Committee meeting. Comments made during this discussion will be captured in a revised matrix.

### **Comment and Discussion**

**The following are discussion items from the management alternative matrix discussion.**

- A number of the resource agencies will get together to provide a consolidated summary of potential impacts for each of the management alternatives.
- High-Lift Exchange should be renamed as Below Milner Exchange. We are talking about what water is available below Milner Dam on the Snake main stem and tributaries.
- The 'remaining measures' outlined in the quantitative analysis should be included in the matrix as alternatives. The remaining measures include buy-outs (partial or full), dry-year leases and incentives to plant low-water-use crops.
- Should administrative curtailment be an alternative in the matrix? A: The task of the Committee is to find alternatives to administrative curtailment not work to improve it, which is the responsibility of Director.
- The alternatives need to be prioritized and we need to develop as soon as possible.
- We need to prioritize the alternatives and put in a context for the Board and Legislature. Cost/benefit is a discriminating factor in the prioritization and the Committee recommendations.
- The USFWS has a refuge that is close to the Minidoka Dam and enlargement impacts on the refuge will need to be addressed. Response: The analysis of impacts associated with enlarging Minidoka Dam will be required in NEPA.
- Specific comments and changes to the management alternatives were captured and will be incorporated in a new draft for the January 22<sup>nd</sup> Committee meeting.

## REPORT TO BOARD AND LEGISLATURE

The Committee discussed the Report to the Board and initial CAMP recommendations. After extensive discussion the Committee recommended requests of:

- 1) **\$1 million Minidoka Dam enlargement study.** Increased storage will serve the 30 year water budget change goal by adding 40 kaf to 50 kaf annually to the water budget. Storage is important with expectations that climate change will reduce Idaho's natural storage (snowpack).
- 2) **\$5 million for buyouts.** Buying down select water rights, pursuing subordination agreements or buying out some rights and transferring remaining water to others may help to reduce conflicts and help accomplish a water budget change.
- 3) **\$500, 000 for recharge.** This will support recharge activities, such as fees associated with increasing measurement, construction and water wheeling.

The issue of Below Milner Exchange (previously High-Lift Exchange) generated much discussion. Some Committee argued that Below Milner Exchange options should be an initial recommendation item, while others noted that potential environmental impacts—particularly the effects of flattening the hydrograph in the spring time on fish populations—require more analysis. To improve the committee's understanding of these potential environmental impacts, it was decided that this topic would be discussed during the next meeting.

## EASTERN IDAHO WATER RIGHTS COALITION – RECHARGE

Jeff Raybould provided a briefing regarding the Eastern Idaho Water Rights Coalition recharge proposal. While the proposal is still under development, the basic components include recharge on the shoulder of the irrigation season (spring/fall) using both the Boards recharge rights and rental water. The proposal outlines use of storage water when natural flow is not available. The EIWRC will present a more detailed proposal at subsequent committee meetings.

## FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Committee expressed interest in the following agenda items

- Finalize report to Board and Legislature
- Explore how conservation activities support the committee's goal and objectives and decide whether/how to include in the plan
- Refine and prioritize the Management Alternative Matrix
- Continue discussions on the Goal Identification and Implementation Phases
- Initiate adaptive management plan discussions to discuss the review, monitoring and revision of the plan
- Develop funding principles and strategies

## NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, January 22, 2008 –Idaho Water Resource Center (322 E. Front St  
Boise, Idaho 83720-0098), 6<sup>th</sup> floor A&B Conference Room. Parking is available in the lot  
below the building.

## **ATTENDEES**

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### **Advisory Committee Members**

1. Vince Alberdi Twin Falls Canal Co.
2. Randy Bingham Burley Irrigation
3. Rebecca Casper Ball Ventures
4. Scott Clawson Water District 110
5. Craig Evans Water District 120
6. Lloyd Hicks Burgess Canal Company
7. George Katseanes Blackfoot
8. Don Parker Water District 110
9. Jeff Raybould Fremont-Madison Irrigation District
10. Steven Serr Bonneville County
11. Dean Stevenson Magic Valley Ground Water District (MVGWD)
12. Jim Tucker Idaho Power
13. Kim Goodman Trout Unlimited
14. Linda Lemmon Idaho Aquaculture Association
15. Tim Deeg IGWA
16. Roy Mink IWWRI
17. Max Vaughn
18. Damien Miller USFWS
19. Dave Parrish Idaho Fish and Game
20. Steve Howser Aberdeen Springfield

### **Other Attendees**

21. Lynn Tominaga - IGWA
22. Brian Patton – IDWR
23. Harriet Hensley – Attorney General’s Office
24. Jonathan Bartsch – CDR Associates (facilitator)
25. Stan Clark - Eastern Water Rights Coalition
26. Lyle Swank – IDWR
27. Bill Thompson MID
28. Jon Bowling – Idaho Power
29. Bill Quinn – IDWR
30. Mike Beus - BOR