



Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan

Conversions Working Group Meeting

Draft Meeting Summary February 3, 2010 Teleconference

UPDATE ON 2009 AWEP CONVERSIONS PROJECTS

There are 18 contracts for 2009 AWEP projects that are ready to be signed into agreements, including projects in the Thousand Springs. These projects are currently in the design phase in coordination with NRCS and IDWR staffs. At this point, IDWR is following NRCS lead. The MOA discussed and approved over the past several months has been distributed to property owners.

Members of the WG shared concerns about the 2009 AWEP process:

- The MOA is long. One suggestion is to include only information about the measuring device, the price of water and its implications on utilizing the conversion project and an option for signing the MOA that is to include ESPA Plan incentives
- Clear language needs to be included in the contract about when a property owner can utilize ground water (i.e. the price of obtaining surface water is too much) because it is significantly cheaper. Property owners want some security that they won't have to pay for surface water that is cost prohibitive in relative terms. One idea was to exempt users when the associated costs are at red in the rainbow chart.
- WG members would like to see coordination between the property owner and the water master early in the process so that there is an understanding of what measuring devices are required. This one point has made property owners nervous.

APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The Conversions WG would like to have a sense of how the 2010 projects will be selected prior to going out to the public, even if the information is general about the eligibility and ranking criteria. A plan needs to be developed by mid-March, so that people are able to hear about the opportunities for converting to surface water.

The WG also would like to utilize the NRCS public meetings to educate and reach out to property owners across the ESPA. Therefore, the plan is to coordinate with NRCS to ready and present the information.

CRITERIA FOR 2010 AWEP

The Working Group discussed draft criteria that were presented at the meeting, including the ESPA Plan and NRCS suggestions. In regards to project eligibility, the Working Group would like to remove the 100 acre minimum from the list and add it to project ranking. Including it in the eligibility list may prompt litigation from small farmer. Members of the WG also would like to see clearer ranking items for benefits received (i.e. multi-user system or targeted location), so that the most effective projects are able to rise to the top through the ranking process.

The WG discussed the role of the WG/IC in selecting AWEP projects, but was unable to come to any final recommendation. Concern also was expressed about the amount of time and IWRB staff effort it would take for the WG to be actively involved in selecting the projects.

One idea for selecting projects for AWEP includes the WG evaluating projects between the eligibility and ranking stages. Others felt that the eligibility and ranking criteria should be given to NRCS, and they should handle the administrative oversight throughout the process. WG members will have a follow-up conversation to determine the level of involvement of the WG and IC members in making these decisions. Finally, the WG discussed the integration of habitat and environmental quality as ranking criteria. Given that Will Whelan has the most background information and accurate explanation of this element, the WG wanted to wait until he is available to discuss this matter.

STREAMLINING THE PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

This discussion is captured above, in regards to what role the WG/IC will play in the decision-making process for AWEP project implementation. The group needs to continue the discussion on the exact role(s) that are needed to implement these projects effectively.

REQUEST FOR FUNDS FOR 2010

The Working Group plans to request \$200-300K for measuring devices, to offset the 25% cost share associated with implementing AWEP conversions projects. The \$200-300K range provides a picture of what it might be to either supplement the cost (at the 200K end) or cover the entire price (at the high end). The Working Group additionally wants to see that the funds are retroactive for 2009 projects.

NEXT MEETING

- TBD

MEETING ATTENDEES

Conversions Working Group Members			
1.	Randy	Bingham	Surface Water Users
2.	Linda	Lemmon	Spring Water Users
3.	Brian	Olmstead	Surface Water Users
4.	Dan	Temple	Mixed-Use
Ex Officio Members and Other Attendees			
5.	Cynthia	Bridge Clark	IDWR
6.	Brian	Patton	IDWR
7.	Joan	Sabott	CDR Associates
8.	Lynn	Tominaga	Idaho Ground Water Appropriators, Inc