SCOTT C. BEDKE
DISTRICT 27
CASSIA & MINIDOKA COUNTIES

HOME ADDRESS
P.O. BOX 89
OAKLEY, IDAHO 83346
HOME: (208) 862-3619
EMAIL: sbedke@house.idaho.gov

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0038
(208) 332-1111

House of Representatives
State of Idaho

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

May 8, 2019

Roger Chase, Chairman
Idaho Water Resource Board
PO Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0098

Dear Mr. Chairman and Board Members,

Pursuant to Legislative authorization (see: 2006 SCR #136, 2007 HCR #28 and I.C. Section 42-1779), the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) was directed to develop a Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan (CAMP) for the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA). The IWRB completed that task and adopted the ESPA CAMP, in January 2009. Subsequently, the 2009 Legislature approved the ESPA CAMP as a component of the comprehensive State Water Plan, directing that all state agencies exercise their duties in a manner consistent with the ESPA CAMP (2009 HB #264). That legislation also directed the IWRB to prepare and submit to the Legislature for approval any subsequent proposed changes to the ESPA CAMP and also directed that the IWRB, in implementing the CAMP, should seek to optimize outcomes for irrigation, municipalities, fish and wildlife, recreation, hydropower, aquaculture and other uses.

As stated in the ESPA CAMP document, the overall goal is to "*sustain the economic viability and social and environmental health of the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer by adaptively managing a balance between water use and supplies.*" This goal was to be achieved through specific objectives, which included managing the overall demand for water within the ESP, and increasing recharge to, and reducing withdrawals from, the aquifer. The CAMP also provided for the establishment of an Implementation Committee to assist the IWRB in the prioritization, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CAMP management actions, and also an adaptive management component to support improved decision-making and water management actions over time. Finally, the CAMP directed the IWRB to conduct an evaluation of the CAMP after 10 years of implementation and make planning recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor's office.

By this letter, I am requesting the IWRB to complete this 10-year review and submit appropriate planning recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor's office by the start of the next regular legislative session. If this review and the time necessary to complete it is extended beyond this time frame, please make the IWRB available to provide

an update on the review and its progress. Please recognize the urgency in completing this review and address, among other things, the issues outlined below:

1. The ESPA CAMP establishes a long-term goal of 600,000 acre-feet (600 kaf) average annual change to the aquifer water budget with implementation to occur over a 30-year period. This water budget change was determined to be an appropriate long-term goal considering the then present and future water needs.
    a. What progress has been made over the past 10 years toward achieving this long-term goal? Please identify how this progress has addressed the aquifer levels and river reach gains while allowing for assessment/airing of hydrologic, economic and environmental issues. Further, how has public involvement through the Implementation Committee been established?
    b. Does the IWRB still consider this 600 kaf average annual water budget change to be an appropriate long-term goal? If not, what would be an appropriate long-term goal and what has changed or what new information has been developed to support the re-evaluation and re-setting of the long-term goal?

2. The ESPA CAMP adopted a mix of strategies, or actions, which it considered a "balanced approach" to modifying the aquifer water budget, and set hydrologic targets for each of these strategies. These included: ground water to surface water conversions (approximately 100 kaf/year), aquifer recharge (approximately 150/250 kaf/year), demand reduction (approximately 250-350 kaf/year) and a pilot weather modification program (initial Phase I target of 50 kaf/year with no long-term target).
    a. What has been the progress in the implementation of each of these strategies and what is the current status of each?
    b. Should changes or adjustments to the strategies be considered? If so, what adjustments does the IWRB recommend, and why?
    c. With respect to aquifer recharge, has or should the IWRB consider private recharge as well as Board funded recharge in attaining the long-term goal?
3. The Legislature has provided $5,000,000 in ongoing annual funding, as well as periodic one-time appropriations as funds were available, to the IWRB for, among other things, the implementation of the above CAMP strategies. Please provide an accounting of the funds expended in the implementation of each of these strategies in the first 10 years of CAMP implementation and an explanation regarding how funds were distributed.
4. Over the past several years, Idaho has experienced relatively good water years and a significant portion of the appropriated funds for CAMP have been expended on aquifer recharge. With reference to the IWRB recharge efforts:
    a. Provide an assessment of the overall efficacy of the recharge program, including IWRB efforts to ensure that the various recharge events (IWRB or private) undertaken are reasonable in relationship to other uses and interests. In this context, reasonable is intended to mean:
        i. That the specific recharge event provides sufficient benefit to the aquifer and the overall goal of achieving the 600 kaf annual change to

the water budget to justify the expenditure of funds on the recharge event, and

ii. In considering the recharge event, the IWRB has sought to optimize outcomes for irrigation, municipalities, fish and wildlife, recreation, hydropower, aquaculture and other uses.

I look forward to hearing from you and continuing our cordial, collaborative and productive relationship.

Sincerely,

Scott Bedke

Scott Bedke
Speaker

SB:mlm

cc: Office of the Governor
Pro Tem Brent Hill
Director Gary Spackman
Deputy Director Mat Weaver
Paul Arrington, Idaho Water Users Association
Rep. Marc Gibbs, Chairman, House Resources & Conservation Committee
Sen. Lee Heider, Chairman, Senate Resources & Environment Committee
Sen. Steve Bair, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
Brian Patton, IWRB