BEFORE THE IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF RAFT RIVER BASIN HYDROLOGIC PROJECT TO SUPPORT ESPA RECHARGE AND MODELING EFFORTS	A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE FUNDING FOR YEAR ONE OF THE RAFT RIVER BASIN HYDROLOGIC PROJECT

WHEREAS, House Bill 547 passed and approved by the 2014 Legislature allocates $5 million annually through 2019 from the Cigarette Tax to the Idaho Water Resource Board's (IWRB) Secondary Aquifer Planning, Management, and Implementation Fund (Secondary Aquifer Fund) for statewide aquifer stabilization; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 256 passed and approved by the 2019 Legislature allocated $5 million in ongoing General Fund dollars to the IWRB's Secondary Aquifer Fundy to statewide water sustainability and aquifer stabilization; and

WHEREAS, many aquifers across Idaho are declining or have existing or potential conjunctive administration water use conflicts, including the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), which has been losing approximately 216,000 acre-feet annually from aquifer storage since the 1950's resulting in declining ground water levels in the aquifer and declining spring flows from the aquifer; and

WHEREAS, the State Water Plan, approved by the 2012 Legislature, recognized that measurement, data collection, quantification and monitoring of Idaho's water supply and use are essential for sound water resource planning, management and administration; and

WHEREAS, the Sustainability Policy Section of the State Water Plan identifies the need to obtain more accurate water supply, water measurement and forecasting information, and a need to disseminate water supply forecast to water users in cooperation with other federal and state agencies; and

WHEREAS, the State Water Plan includes a goal to accomplish managed recharge in the ESPA averaging 250,000 acre-feet annually; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 Idaho Legislature passed and approved Senate Concurrent Resolution 136 directing the IWRB to develop the capacity to achieve 250,000 acre-feet of annual average managed recharge to the ESPA by December 31, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Raft River Basin contributes tributary underflow to the ESPA, was designated a Critical Ground Water Area in 1963, and is experiencing large groundwater level declines. It contains 117,000 acres of agriculture dependent on a sustainable water supply and supports the only operating commercial geothermal power plant in Idaho; and

WHEREAS, the last comprehensive hydrologic study of the Raft River Basin was conducted 40 years ago by the United States Geologic Survey; and

WHEREAS, the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) and the Idaho Geologic Survey

WHEREAS, the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) and the Idaho Geologic Survey developed a proposal for a five-year hydrologic characterization of the Raft River Basin (Raft River Basin Hydrologic Project, "project") which involves data gathering and analysis, installation of stream gages and monitoring wells, seepage studies, and development of a conceptual hydrologic model and water budget; and

WHEREAS, the project is broken into multiple phases. Phase 1a, to be accomplished in the first year, will include compilation and assessment of existing data, development of a data repository, identification of data gaps, and expansion of the IDWR monitoring network for an estimated cost of $204,000; and

WHEREAS, subsequent phases involve installation of measurement and monitoring equipment, additional data collection, performing seepage studies, and development of a conceptual hydrologic model and water budget; and

WHEREAS, IDWR seeks funding from the IWRB to complete the Phase 1a of the project and proposes to pursue Department of Energy funding through the Supplemental Environmental Project process for the majority of expenses associated with subsequent phases over the remaining four years of the project; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the IWRB authorizes expenditures not to exceed $204,000 in Fiscal Year 2020 from the Secondary Aquifer Fund for expenses associated with Phase 1a of the Raft River Basin Project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the IWRB authorizes its chairman or designee, Brian Patton, to execute the necessary agreements or contracts to implement the Raft River Basin Project.

DATED this 20th day of September, 2019.

ROGER W. CHASE, Chairman
Idaho Water Resource Board

ATTEST
VINCE ALBERDI, Secretary