# Memorandum

To: Idaho Water Resource Borad
From: Max Deckman
Date: October 28, 2026
Re: Environmental Resources Technical Working Group Meeting Report – Meeting #17

**REQUIRED ACTION:** None

**Background**

The Environmental Resources Technical Working Group (ERTWG) is established to study and discuss the potential impacts of Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) planned recharge activities on aquatic, wildlife, recreational resources, and on water quality, of the ESPA, Snake River and tributary water bodies. The working group may recommend actions to be undertaken by the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) to minimize and/or mitigate the potential impacts of managed ESPA recharge activities.

The working group is convened at least twice annually, to consider:

- impacts of past recharge activities on ESPA and Snake River aquatic, wildlife and recreational resources, and on water quality;
- whether additional information should be gathered, to better understand the potential impacts of past and/or future recharge activities on ESPA, Snake River and tributary water resources;
- whether protocols for managed recharge activities should be recommended to the IWRB, to ensure potential impacts of recharge activities on water resources are adequately considered, including potential impacts on ESPA discharges and Snake River flows necessary to support aquatic species and maintain aquatic and riparian habitats.

A steering committee was established for the working group, to develop a governance structure for the working group. In the summer of 2022, the steering committee determined that a meeting report should be drafted following the conclusion of regularly scheduled working group meetings. The written working group meeting report would be provided to the IWRB, to inform the Board of the findings of the working group. This report summarizes the discussions of the working group meeting held October 28, 2026.

**Attendees**

The following is a list of the individuals who attended the meeting:

| Individual | Association | Representation |
|---|---|---|
| Max Deckman | IDWR | Idaho Water Resource Board |
| Neal Farmer | IDWR | Idaho Water Resource Board |
| Matt Anders | IDWR | Idaho Water Resource Board |
| Caitlyn Swanson | IDWR | Idaho Water Resource Board |
| Wesley Hipke | IDWR | Idaho Water Resource Board |

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| Kathryn Elliott | IDEQ | Idaho Department of Environmental Quality |
| Brett High | IDFG | Idaho Department of Fish and Game |
| Tom Bassista | IDFG | Idaho Department of Fish and Game |
| Heather Neace | IPC | Idaho Power Company |
| Christina Morriset | HFF | Henry's Fork Foundation |
| Megan Satterwhite | IDA | Idaho Dairymen's Assn. |
| Alyssa Bangs | USFW | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service |
| Courtnie Dawson | IRWA | Idaho Rural Water Association |
| Garrett Kitamura | Parsons Behle & Latimer | Surface Water Coalition |

**Meeting Minutes**

1. Max Deckman (IDWR) started the meeting at 2:01 p.m. by introducing the attendees in person at the Idaho Water Resource Center in Boise, ID, IDWR staff Matt Anders and IRWA representative Courtnie Dawson. Max then listed all attendees online, having them state their name and affiliation.
2. Neal Farmer (IDWR) provided a recap of the 2025/2026 Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) managed aquifer recharge operations including locations, flow rates, and total volumes of IWRB accomplished recharge. Neal noted that approximately 38,000 acre-feet of water was not diverted for recharge over the winter and instead allowed to flow past Milner Dam in accordance with an agreement with IPC. He also noted that due to the 2025-2026 recharge season's impact on the IWRB's annual average for recharge, no bypass will occur next winter. Neal noted the low flows in the Snake River at the Twin Falls gauge, showing how we are in a historically low-flow time.
3. Neal noted that IWRB started recharge on October 20th, 2026, and had a total of 5,940 AF recharged as of October 28th. He noted that we expect the same partners to recharge water for IWRB as in 2025/2026. Next, Neal noted that the reservoir system along the Snake River is significantly below average for the system. Next, Neal showed the yearly changes in water availability and total IWRB recharge through the program's history. Lastly, Neal showed the recharge time series throughout the year, with low flow years being near the bottom and years with exceptional spring runoff towards the top. Neal also noted that he will be presenting at the IWRRI seminar series on Tuesday, November 17th, 2026.
4. Heather Neace (IPC) inquired about the recharge website and if it would be used this year or if IDWR were not using it anymore. Neal responded that IDWR were planning to use the recharge website, but that it had not had the chance to update the website yet. Max also responded that IDWR were planning to update the website on Mondays and that data had not come in yet last Monday. Max additionally noted that telemetry units were not working correctly so IDWR were working to fix those and get correct data to the public.
5. Tom Bassista (IDFG) inquired about the reason water was passed over Milner in 2025/2026 but will not be passed in 2026/2027. Neal responded that he could not answer the question, but Matt Anders (IDWR) may be able to. Matt answered that IWRB and IPC have and agreement about when to pass water and that the threshold to conduct bypass is an average acre-feet-per-year (AF) 250,000 since 2016. He noted that the threshold is not met right now since we are at 246,000 AF and that the snowpack and reservoirs are low, so IDWR is not expecting to bypass water next year.

6. Max presented three new approved recharge sites since the past ERTWG meeting (Hell's Half Acre ITD Pit, Weggland Lateral, and Sugar Factory), with all sites described and cfs listed. He noted that all three sites, and another approved in 2025 (Burgess), will have monitoring plans developed in the near future. Lastly, Max noted maintenance of the telemetry systems for IDWR and the drilling of a new well near Star Lake and Shoshone, Idaho.
7. Courtnie Dawson (IRWA) inquired about the municipality where Weggland Lateral is located. Max answered that the Weggland site is near Rose, Idaho, north of Blackfoot, Idaho.
8. Tom Bassista inquired about where canals are located in eastern Idaho, specifically off the South Fork or Henry's Fork. Max answered that IDWR knows where the point of diversions for each canal is based on the water right for each canal, but that he did not know specifically where the canals divert for the three projects listed. Wesley Hipke (IDWR) responded that all canals listed in this presentation divert from the main stem of the Snake River below Idaho Falls, Idaho.
9. Kathryn Elliot (IDEQ) asked if any of the sites are expected to be ready by fall of 2027. Max answered that two sites could be ready by that time because they are already excavated gravel pits, but the other two sites have not been excavated yet and are unlikely to be ready by that time.
10. Courtnie Dawson asked if the canal companies are responsible for the monitoring plans for the sites and who tracks the accountability for them. Max answered that IDWR will write the monitoring plans, but that the plans are owned by the canal companies. He continued that IDWR will help with operations and monitoring when the site is running IWRB water, but that the canal companies are responsible if they choose to recharge in the site with their non-IWRB water. Wesley Hipke added that basins and land applications are accountable to IDEQ and injection wells are accountable to IDWR UIC.
11. Max asked whether there were new items for discussion. There were no responses.
12. Max concluded the meeting by announcing that the next regularly scheduled ERTWG meeting will be held on the last Wednesday of April, the 28th, 2027.