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DEPARTMENT OF  
WATER RESOURCES

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## Summary Position Statement

In regard to Docket No. P-CGWA-2016-001

The following Statement explains the position Nancy McCaslin and Rick Mauthe intend to advance at the hearing in the matter of whether to designate the Big Lost River Basin 34 a Critical Ground Water Area or a Ground Water Management Area, Docket No. P-CGWA-2016-001.

Let it be stated that the tributary in discussion in this matter is named "Big Lost River" for a reason, meaning the river sinks before it reaches the lower reaches of Basin 34 and has never flowed year round through the lower valley. In the past, when a large proportion of the Basin 34 irrigators practiced surface flood irrigation, the valley was admittedly different with rising water and more flow in some of the lower reaches during the irrigation season. Adjudication, changes in delivery administration and expanded ground under cultivation in the past 40 years has forced crop producers to utilize ground water and sprinkler technology to satisfy irrigation needs, eliminating that surface water recharge and reuse throughout the drainage. We, collectively, will not likely revert to previous irrigation practices to put the valley back to where it was 40+ years ago, but must make a concerted effort to utilize practices which promote conservation and recharge in the Basin 34.

Nancy McCaslin and Rick Mauthe are members of the Upper Big Lost River Ground Water Association (UBLRGWA) and align with the position statement submitted by the Association. We therefore also intend to demonstrate there is sufficient viable data within the memorandum dated February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from Jennifer Sukow, Subject: *Groundwater in the Big Lost River Valley* to warrant absolute consideration to preclude the upper portion of Basin 34 from inclusion in a Ground Water Management Area under this decision hearing. This would not be a precedent setting decision as other segregated basins currently exist.

As articulated by Idaho Department of Water Resources Director Spackman during the May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 pre-conference hearing, the economic impact described in the 'Petition' will not be relevant within the scope of the decision, which is to determine if there is sufficient ground water to provide a reasonably-safe supply for irrigation or other uses at the current or projected rates of withdrawal.

The relevant point of the 'Petition' is the impact to groundwater diversions, mainly domestic wells, lowered water levels causing "dry wells" in a number of

ground water diversions. These impacted groundwater diversions are concentrated in the lower part of the valley, where the focus of the problem should be addressed. We do not intend to dispute this point of the 'Petition' unless it becomes a relevant factor. If it does become a factor we will dispute the reported magnitude of domestic wells impacted as grossly exaggerated.

Based on the information in the Sukow memorandum the underflow to the Snake River Plain Aquifer from the lower Lost River Valley has remained fairly consistent historically, so despite the alleged excessive withdrawal in the lower valley 'pool' the amount of water passing to the Snake River Plain Aquifer is not significantly influenced (historically) by annual precipitation or withdrawal levels. To that end we contend that a similar situation exists in the upper valley 'pools' (as described by data as several 'pools' from Chilly, the Mackay Reservoir, and below Mackay to a point below the Leslie Butte) which deliver a equally consistent flow to the lower valley 'pool', not significantly affected by precipitation or withdrawal levels in the upper end of Basin 34.

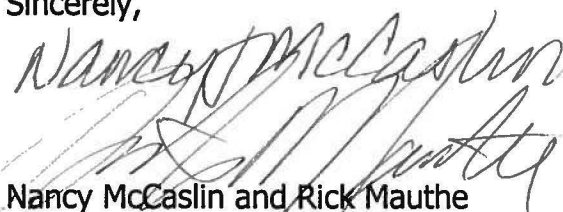
We have concern regarding several references to "Statistically significant groundwater level trends..." in the Sukow memorandum without definition of the threshold of 'significant' (subjective?) and without consideration for major geological events (e.g. Mt Borah earthquake 1983) and the affects thereof on the historical groundwater measured level data as measured in wells referenced in the memorandum.

We will request a boundary be defined, which will be consistent with the Association's already geographically defined southernmost boundary documented in the Association By-Laws, which has been confirmed by an independent Hydrologist as appropriate, logical, and demonstrable.

We do encourage and will continue to participate in ground water level measurement in the upper valley to determine any unsatisfactory trends in ground water levels and will take the necessary remedial actions when required. We and the other Association members are very active in aquifer recharge efforts and have prepared a Mitigation Plan to be exercised should a senior call be made.

We will not take a position on the disposition and decision of a lower valley Management Area designation as the data for the lower end of the valley should corroborate the appropriate decision.

Sincerely,



Nancy McCaslin and Rick Mauthe