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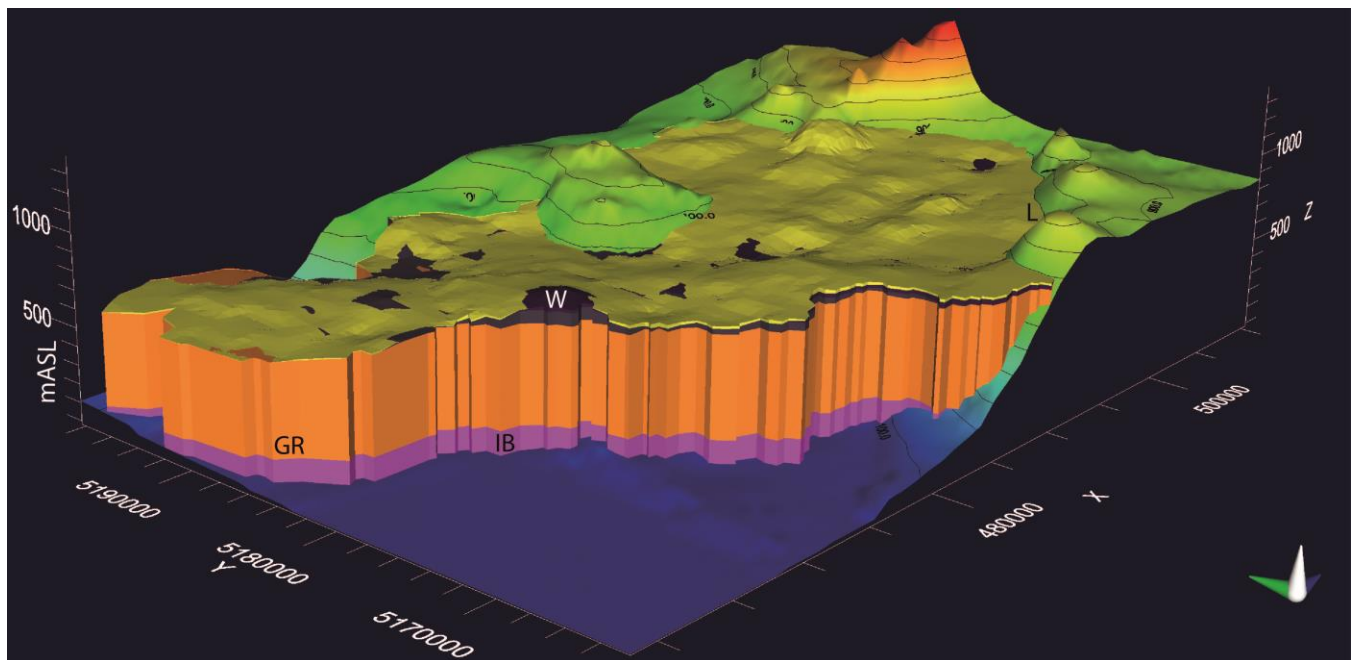
Idaho Water Resource Board contact: Brian Patton, Chief, Planning Bureau, 208-287-4800

Citizens in Palouse Basin reducing ground water use through conservation, but many people are not aware of the problem, officials say

BOISE – (Jan. 28, 2020) – Residents of the Palouse Basin are doing a better job of reducing ground water use, slowing the decline of the Palouse Basin Aquifer from 1.5 feet per year historically to .72 feet per year since 2006, through multi-pronged conservation measures, while the population of the Moscow-Pullman region continues to grow, said Paul Kimmell, chairman of the Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC).

Kimmell gave a progress report on PBAC to the Idaho Water Resource Board last week.

A recent survey of Palouse Basin residents shows that 52 percent of the public knows “nothing” (22 percent) or “very little” (32 percent) about the declining aquifer situation. On the positive side, 35 percent of the public has a “moderate” knowledge about the aquifer decline and 11 percent have “substantial” knowledge about it, the University of Idaho survey showed.



A Palouse Basin ground water model is being developed to help refine solutions to ground water declines.

The mission of PBAC is “to ensure a long-term, quality water supply for the Palouse Basin region,” Kimmell noted. The aquifer has been in a general state of decline through the early 1990s, when a ground water management plan for the regional aquifer was put in place.

The aquifer decline has been averaging about .72 foot per year since the mid-2000s, Kimmell said. Water use decreased by about .9 percent in the last year, he said. About 2.3 billion gallons are pumped from the aquifer each year by the City of Pullman, City of Moscow, Washington State University, University of Idaho, and the Palouse region.

Four preliminary long-term solutions have been identified in the [Palouse Ground Water Basin Water Supply Alternatives](#) report in 2017. One of those solutions would divert water from the Snake River near Lewiston (a new water right would be necessary) and pump it uphill to Moscow and Pullman.

A ground water flow model is being developed currently to further refine opportunities and solutions, Kimmell said. “We’re excited about the model. It will shape our supply projections, he said.

PBAC officials will be doing further public outreach with elected officials and stakeholders over the next several months, gauge public feedback on the proposed solutions, and come back to the Idaho Water Resource Board in May. For more information, go to palousebasin.org.

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