



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Idaho Water Resource Board takes key steps toward raising Anderson Ranch Dam to create additional storage water**

BOISE - (Jan. 25, 2021) – The Idaho Water Resource Board reviewed the critical actions needed to move forward with a 6-foot raise of Anderson Ranch Dam in its January meeting, and in one of the necessary steps, it hired a financial consultant to help with financing the non-federal portion of the \$83 million project, officials said Monday.

In its briefing to the Board, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) officials said two critical milestones have been met. First, the Secretary of Interior determined that the dam raise is feasible. Secondly, Congress passed a Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations bill, which secured \$12.88 million in funding for the project.

Mark Limbaugh, the Board's consultant in Washington D.C., said that Congress had earmarked \$2.8 million in an omnibus spending bill to complete the Boise River Feasibility Study and Final EIS in the summer of 2021, and \$10 million in funding for construction under the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act for FY 2021.

The Board discussed the project schedule and decisions that will need to be made before the end of the year, including preparing a financing plan for the project and coordination with water users who may be interested in securing portions of the new storage space.

The Board passed a resolution to contract with a financial advisor to help prepare a financing package to fund the non-federal cost of the project, potentially through the sale of revenue bonds. In addition, Board staff plans to send a survey to the water user community in the Treasure Valley to gauge interest in the purchase of new reservoir space.

The Final Feasibility Study published by BOR estimates about 29,000 acre-feet of water would be created by the six-foot raise, while the reservoir currently holds 413,100 acre-feet of water at full pool.

In other action, the Board heard an update on managed recharge activities in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA). About 75,000 acre-feet of water has been recharged into the ESPA so far this winter, mostly in the Magic Valley area. Currently, about 415 cubic feet per second of water is being diverted for managed recharge, officials said.

Knowing that Upper Snake River Basin snowpack is below 100 percent of normal at the present time, the Board's recharge project manager Wesley Hipke said it's unclear whether the annual average

recharge target of 250,000 acre-feet of water will be reached this winter. “We need a lot more snow in the rest of January and February,” he said.

In other action, the Board:

- Heard details of the Governor’s proposed FY 2022 budget and was pleased to see funding for the Bear River Adjudication in SE Idaho. The Bear River Adjudication is expected to take 10 years and cost about \$1 million a year, officials said.
- Received an update on ground water studies in the Big Lost River Basin. The overall trend of the ground water studies shows ground water levels dropping in the basin, compared to historical levels, especially in the lower portion of the Big Lost Basin around Arco. Final results will be presented next year upon completion of the three-year, \$2 million, study , officials said.
- Approved funding for Phase II of an analysis on cloud-seeding benefits. The Cooperative Cloud Seeding Program has operations in the Upper Snake, Wood, and Boise River basins and is funded by the Board, Idaho Power Co., and water users. The Board initiated the study to better understand where the additional water supply goes in each basin and who benefits. This information will help make decisions about program improvements, expansion and funding, official said.
- Held officer elections and voted to elect Jeff Raybould as chairman of the Idaho Water Resource Board and Roger Chase to be vice-chair. Lewiston member Jo Ann Cole-Hansen will serve as secretary. The former mayor of Pocatello, Chase chaired the Water Board for the last 8 years. “He’s traveled all over Idaho to meet with constituents, and committed more time than we will ever know to support the Board’s efforts. He’s done an outstanding job,” Raybould said. Chase was given a round of applause for his service.

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