



NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDWR Director issues curtailment order to 140 junior ground water users in the Bellevue triangle area in the Wood River Basin

BOISE – (June 28, 2021) – Gary Spackman, Director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), issued a curtailment order today to approximately 140 entities that own about 310 ground water rights in the Bellevue Triangle area in the lower Wood River Valley.

The curtailment order takes effect on July 1, 2021. It was sent by mail on Monday, June 28, to approximately 140 entities with junior ground water rights in the Bellevue Triangle area.

In the Curtailment Order, the “Director concludes that consumptive ground water pumping in the Bellevue Triangle for purposes other than domestic and stock watering uses ... should be curtailed as soon as possible in order to protect senior surface water rights diverting from Silver Creek and the Little Wood River.”

The decision comes following a recent six-day hearing and administrative proceeding on the matter initiated by Director Spackman. “Because of drought conditions in the Big Wood Basin area, water supplies in Silver Creek and its tributaries may not be adequate to meet the needs of senior surface water users,” he said.

While IDWR has not been jointly managing surface and ground water in the Big Wood Basin previously – a practice known as conjunctive management – Spackman said Idaho Code § 42-237 a.g. gives him the authority to take action to protect senior surface water users.

In the past, IDWR officials have taken numerous steps to manage ground water in the Big Wood Basin since the Big Wood Ground Water Management Area (GWMA) was established by former IDWR Director Keith Higginson in 1991. “The surface and ground waters of the Big Wood River drainage are interconnected,” Higginson wrote at the time. “Diversion of ground water from wells can deplete the surface water flow in streams and rivers.”

Since designating the GWMA in 1991, IDWR has taken actions to prepare for conjunctive administration in the Wood River Basin. From 2011 to 2013 IDWR worked to create a single water district to manage both surface water and ground water uses and to ensure measuring devices were installed on all regulated wells. Also, from 2012 to 2019, in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, IDWR developed and refined a groundwater flow model for the Wood River Valley including

Silver Creek and ground water underlying the Bellevue Triangle. The model is generally considered the best available science to understand and predict interactions between surface water and ground water use in the basin.

During the past year, Spackman and IDWR staff held a series of meetings with the Big Wood GWMA Advisory Committee, meeting with senior and junior water users to develop a water use management plan. The water users did not develop mutually acceptable actions for the joint administration of surface and ground water rights, Spackman said.

For more information, please see the curtailment order issued by Director Spackman (Docket No. AA-WRA-2021-001).

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