



NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **IDWR restores digital water records following a server crash in 2023; many water records are now available online**

BOISE – (Dec. 13, 2024) - Over the last year, the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) has engaged in a herculean task behind the scenes to overcome a computer server failure that resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of electronic, searchable water records.

When IDWR's Laserfiche servers crashed on Oct. 7, 2023, the agency lost its entire online water rights records document-management system, containing hundreds of thousands of records. This impacted the department's business operations, and prevented the public from accessing the agency's records online.

"Thanks to the hard work of our agency and our partners at the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) and contractor MCCi, we have rebuilt our document-management system, and we are reintegrating it into our workflow processes," said IDWR Director Mathew Weaver. "Soon the public will be able to access documents that existed prior to the Laserfiche crash and all new documents moving forward."

IDWR is still working with ITS and MCCi to import documents from a gap period between September 2022 to November 20, 2024, into Laserfiche; those documents will be available to the public in the coming months.

"It's a good thing that IDWR always had the original hard copies of all the water records in our vault," Weaver said. "We take our record-keeping very seriously. I want to thank our IT Business Analysts, Burke Barton, and IDWR Deputy Director Shelley Keen for spearheading our data-recovery efforts. It has been a huge undertaking for them and the many dedicated employees across the agency who supported the effort."

IDWR maintains records of 200,000+ water rights filings—water right decrees, licenses, permits, applications, and claims. IDWR also maintains well construction, stream channel alteration, and water districts records—statewide. The agency maintains these records in paper files, in a massive computer database, and as scanned images of the paper files. "Water rights are property rights. It's of paramount importance for IDWR to maintain these records for legal and administrative purposes, and to make them available and accessible to the water right owners and the general public," Keen said.

Historically, IDWR water records were created in paper form, dating back to the Idaho pioneer days. Those original documents are kept at the IDWR State Office in a well-organized repository IDWR staff call “the vault.”

Over time, with the advent of digital technology, IDWR digitized the water right records so they could be searched and retrieved online on the IDWR web site by water users, attorneys, IDWR staff, and the public. “The electronic records served as a backup for the paper documents, in case disaster strikes, and they provide easier access to the water right records via basic online queries,” Keen said.

In 2022, IDWR, working with MCCi, finished a long overdue modernization of its electronic records management system, transitioning from its original legacy electronic document management system, to Laserfiche. During that process, IDWR migrated more than a million scanned image files from the legacy system to Laserfiche. “It was a big undertaking, but necessary to make sure the records remained secure . . . we thought,” Keen said.

And then, the server crash occurred in October 2023. In February 2024, ITS contracted with MCCi, the company that accomplished IDWR’s initial migration to Laserfiche in 2021-2022, to recover the agency’s Laserfiche environment and data. That project has been ongoing since, “coordinated by the very able Burke Barton on our side,” he said.

IDWR has been working with ITS and MCCi since that time to recover all the data and store it on Laserfiche on new servers at the State’s Chinden Campus. A new backup system is in place. “We are assured by ITS that our data will be secure moving forward,” Keen said.

He expects the whole recovery project to be completed in the first half of 2025.

For more information on researching IDWR water rights records, go to:

<https://research.idwr.idaho.gov/apps/waterrights/wrajsearch/wradjsearch.aspx>.

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