



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **IDWR finds 63,000 acre-foot shortfall of water in April 2025 Methodology Order; Director applauds farmers who are in compliance with mitigation plans**

BOISE - (April 16, 2025) – In the ongoing Surface Water Coalition’s conjunctive administration delivery call, Director Mathew Weaver of the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) has found that the Twin Falls Canal Co. may face a shortfall of 63,000 acre-feet of water in the 2025 irrigation season in an order signed on April 16, 2025 and sent to water users.

The Methodology Order is the court-approved process IDWR uses to evaluate water supply conditions, aquifer conditions, and irrigation demand. From that calculation, IDWR determines the impacts or injury to surface water users with senior water rights caused by junior water users pumping from the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA).

Under Idaho water law, surface water users with senior water rights have priority over water users with junior rights on the Snake River and the ESPA. The rule of law is “first in time, first in right.” On the Snake River, IDWR manages both surface and groundwater resources together as a whole, or “conjunctively,” in calculating impacts each year.

The Director’s April order requires the curtailment of groundwater users who draw water from the ESPA with a priority date junior to Aug. 28, 1955, if they are not covered by an IDWR-approved mitigation plan by May 1, 2025.

All groundwater users who participate in an approved mitigation plan, including the 2024 Water Settlement, will not face curtailment so long as they are in compliance with their plan. In addition, the A&B Irrigation District, Coalition of Cities, Southwest Irrigation District, and the Water Mitigation Coalition have approved mitigation plans.

The Director cautioned that normal snowpack or full reservoirs may not mean an adequate water supply for seniors. “It is important to remember that even in a perceived good water year, large injury can occur later in the year when aquifer discharge to the Snake River is insufficient to supply water to senior surface water irrigators. I am very grateful to the hard work of farmers, Governor Little, Lt. Governor Bedke, and Chairman Raybould for their work last year to compromise on a mitigation plan that provides certainty for all water users. I encourage water users who are not part of a mitigation plan to follow the example of the protected water users who have worked so hard to create and join workable mitigation plans,” said Weaver.

The Director also said, “I am also grateful to the Governor and the Legislature for delivering \$30 million in ongoing funding for water infrastructure. This money will build projects and support programs that will help solve the water supply issues in the Eastern Snake Plain and keep our agricultural Idaho heritage strong.”

The Director’s April 2025 Methodology Order did not find any shortfall would occur to the other six members of the Surface Water Coalition (SWC) - A&B Irrigation District, Burley Irrigation District, Milner Irrigation District, Minidoka Irrigation District, North Side Canal Company, and American Falls Reservoir District No. 2.

The 63,000 acre-foot shortfall estimate is based on a water supply forecast for the Snake River and ESPA discharge conditions. The joint forecast issued by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on April 2, 2025, predicted an unregulated inflow of 3,380,000 acre-feet on the Snake River at the Heise gage for the period of April-July 2025. The forecasted flow volume equates to 102 percent of average. IDWR applied the latest groundwater model for the ESPA, ESPAM 2.2, the best available scientific tool, to determine which junior groundwater users could be affected by the Director's order.

Much water litigation has resulted from conflicts between Snake River surface water users with senior water rights and groundwater users with junior water rights in the ESPA. The litigation led to a water delivery call in 2005 by the SWC, the coalition of seven surface water irrigation entities that collectively irrigate more than 500,000 acres of farmland in Southern Idaho.

Under the SWC's water delivery call in 2005, the Director of IDWR is required by law to issue an order at the beginning of the irrigation season and again in early July determining the shortfall to senior surface water users due to the pumping impacts of junior groundwater users and determining their obligations to curtail water use or mitigate for depletions to the holders of senior priority water rights.

Please see the Director's Methodology Order for more details. The Director will issue an updated order in July after considering the new water supply and crop water need information available at that time.

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