



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Idaho Water Resource Board approves \$10M loan to Magic Valley GWD for soft conversion project, four ESPA recharge projects in E. Idaho

BOISE – (Jan. 26, 2026) – The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) voted to approve a \$10 million loan to the Magic Valley Ground Water District help finance a \$27 million project to reduce the district’s impact on the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) and help meet the terms of the 2024 Water Settlement.

The Board also approved four new ESPA recharge projects in Eastern Idaho:

- The Dubois and Riverside site proposed by the Bingham Ground Water District. The site would have a capacity of 30 cubic feet per second (cfs) when surplus water is available in the Upper Snake River Basin.
- The Butte-Market Lake Canal project would have a capacity of 65 cfs when surplus water is available in the Upper Snake River Basin.
- The Wilford Canal pilot project proposed by Fremont-Madison Irrigation District would have a capacity of 47 cfs when surplus water is available in the Upper Snake River Basin.
- The Searle well in the Southwest Irrigation District, which is estimated to have a capacity of 22 cfs.

Funding for the Magic Valley GWD and ESPA recharge projects were part of a continuing commitment approved by the Idaho Legislature and supported by Gov. Brad Little to help water users invest in water infrastructure for long-term sustainability.

The Board also approved four flood management grants for \$559,000 – two to the Bear Lake Soil and Water Conservation District, and one to the Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation District and Boise River Flood Control District #10 (see spreadsheet below with additional details).

The Magic Valley GWD had been awarded two Groundwater to Surface Water Conversion grants from the IWRB previously totaling \$17 million. The district’s water users will pay for its share of the project through the 4.88% IWRB loan with a 20-year term.

“We appreciate the funding,” said Dean Stevenson, a Rupert sugar beet farmer, IWRB member, and board member of the Magic Valley GWD. He abstained from voting on the loan. “The loan was the final piece of business we needed to get done to get our project going.”

Magic Valley GWD expects to begin construction on the project in the late fall of 2026, Stevenson said. The project will reduce the district’s impact on the ESPA by up to 15,000 acre-feet per year by piping canal water to farms that previously irrigated with groundwater, he said.

Flood grant award details below:

Attachment A: January 2026 Flood Management Grant - supplemental round				
Entity	Project	IWRB District	Funds Requested	Total Project Costs
Bear Lake SWCD	Hardcastle Riverbank Stabilization Project	4	\$34,621	\$69,242.25
Bear Lake SWCD	Bear Lake Surface Water Control Project	4	\$124,740	\$249,480.00
Clearwater SWCD	Cedar Creek Project	1	\$199,997	\$421,247.00
FCD #10	Update BRMT/LIDAR	2	\$200,000	\$723,375.00
Total Funds Requested			\$559,358	\$1,463,344.25

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