



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDWR Director places five-year moratorium on processing any new, or pending applications for groundwater rights in Southern Canyon County area

BOISE - (March 20, 2026) – Mathew Weaver, Director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), issued two orders on Friday, one denying a request to designate the southern Canyon County region as a Critical Groundwater Area, and another placing a temporary moratorium on the processing of any new water right applications for groundwater in the southern portion of Canyon County.

The temporary moratorium will be in place for five years, the order said.

Noting ongoing concerns about the groundwater supply in southern Canyon County, Weaver said more information is needed before acting on 21 pending applications for groundwater permits, which request a total of 121 cubic feet per second flow to irrigate about 7,000 acres of farmland.

“To protect vested groundwater rights and the people of the region from the depletion of groundwater resources, it is necessary to quantify the impact of current injection well activities and the pending applications prior to approving additional groundwater appropriations in South Canyon County,” Weaver wrote in the order.

The petition filed with IDWR to designate a Critical Groundwater Area (CGWA) in southern Canyon County was denied for two reasons – existing data does not justify the creation of a CGWA, and more information is needed about the groundwater resource to the south of IDWR’s existing monitoring wells in the area, south of Lake Lowell, the Director said.

IDWR data from 11 groundwater monitoring wells actually shows a slight increase in aquifer levels within the monitored region of southern Canyon County, while also showing temporary declines during the irrigation season. But the monitoring network does not extend far enough south to provide information that would allow the Department to analyze and administer the region south of Lake Lowell as a whole. The Treasure Valley Groundwater Flow Model, developed by the U.S. Geological Survey, does not provide sufficient data south of Lake Lowell either, the order said.

“Groundwater availability in the monitored region and the area south of the monitored region in South Canyon County may be impacted by existing injection wells and the development of approved permits. Issuing additional permits without better knowledge of the impacts of development pursuant to the approved permits could jeopardize the water supply necessary for existing groundwater rights,” Weaver said.

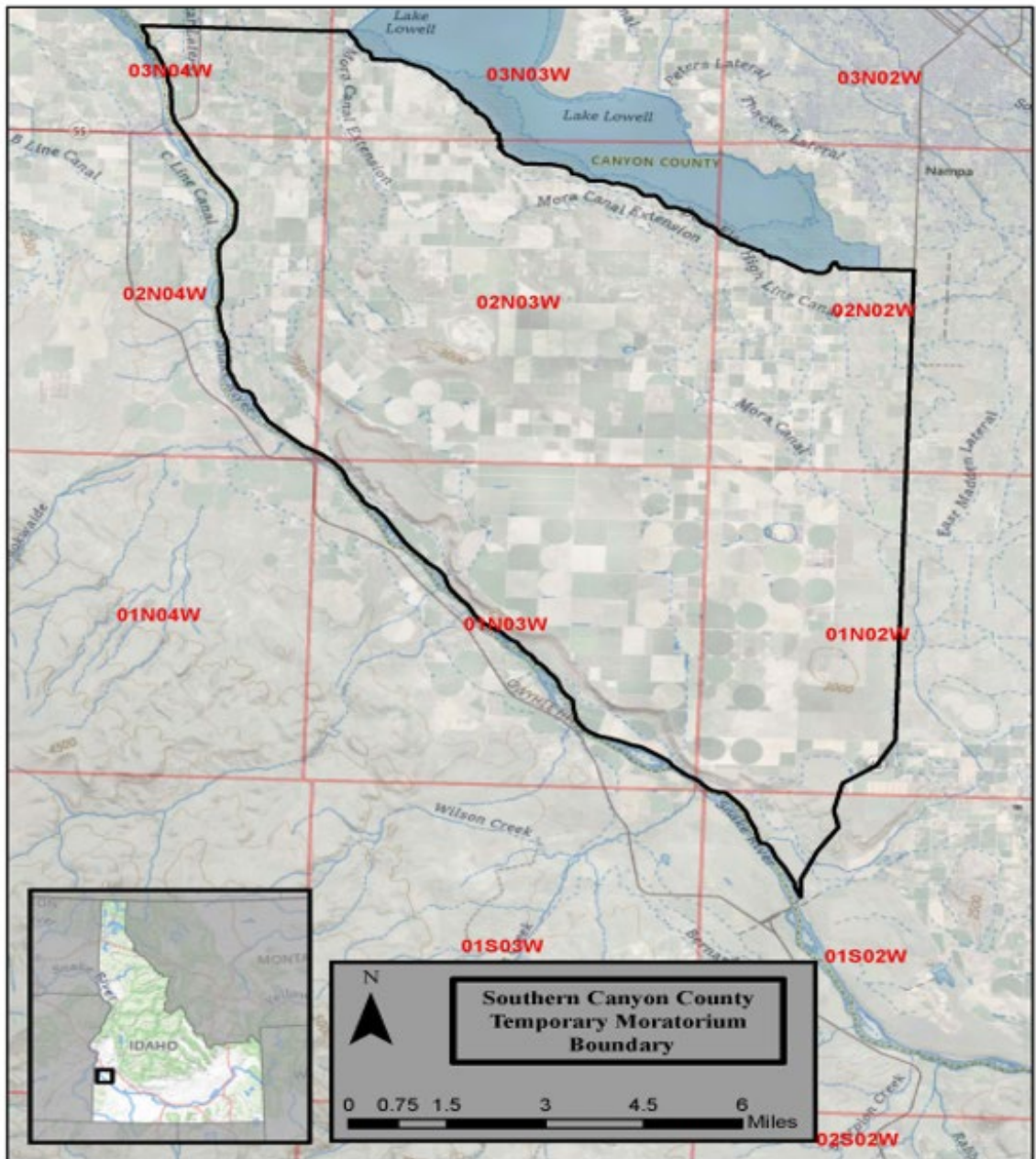
IDWR needs to determine injection well volumes and continue to expand its well-monitoring network, while collecting more data and recalibrating models, to better ascertain groundwater conditions in the region and determine impacts from future development, the Director said. By refining the Treasure Valley Groundwater Flow Model, the Department will be better equipped to quantitatively evaluate groundwater availability for future appropriation in the southern Canyon County area, specifically the area south of the existing monitoring wells.

In November 2025, IDWR staff completed a memorandum titled *Evaluation of Groundwater Resources South of Lake Lowell*. The staff memo contains an analysis of the region, groundwater data, and conclusions and recommendations for further action. The groundwater memo provided key information about data gaps that exist in the area.

In his order, Weaver said the 5-year moratorium does not apply to applications for drilling permits to replace or deepen existing domestic wells, wells that have valid, existing water rights, or applications for transfer, including applications to add points of diversion to valid, existing water rights.

See map below of the Southern Canyon County boundary of the moratorium area.

APPENDIX A



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