



NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Idaho Water Resource Board contact: Brian Patton, Chief, Planning Bureau, 208-287-4800

## **Idaho Water Resource Board tours Elmore County water projects, provides briefing on status of major projects**

MOUNTAIN HOME - (July 26, 2022) – Last week, Elmore County and City of Mountain Home officials took the Idaho Water Resource Board on a tour of several existing and future water projects they're working on to increase water supplies in the near future. Following the half-day tour, the Board provided a detailed briefing on the status of other Mountain Home/Elmore County projects in the planning stages.

"We need more water. We need more water for farming and to handle new growth," Elmore County Commissioner Bud Corbus told Water Board members while touring the crest of Anderson Ranch Dam on Thursday. "We can't overcome the hurdles we face without your help."

Water experts with HDR Engineering and the Idaho Department of Water Resources explained that ground water aquifers in the Elmore County area have been dropping at unsustainable levels for years. In some areas, the aquifer has dropped 150 feet over the last 40 years. IDWR has established ground water management areas in the Mountain Home region to address and manage aquifer declines. County officials are hoping to develop more surface water supplies to reduce the impact on local aquifers.

"We appreciated the opportunity to participate in the tour led by Elmore County," said Jeff Raybould, Chairman of the Idaho Water Resource Board. "It was helpful to look at future project locations, recharge basins and other water infrastructure. The Board looks forward to working with Elmore County to expand their water supply."

Corbus and other Elmore County officials described a development plan to build a water pump station on the banks of Anderson Ranch Reservoir to pipe water uphill over to Little Camas Reservoir, where it could be stored and conveyed via a series of canals and tunnels to the Mountain Home area. The canal system is maintained by the Mountain Home Irrigation District.

The Idaho Department of Water Resources already has approved a water right permit authorizing the Mountain Home Irrigation District to divert up to 200 cubic feet per second of water for the pipeline project when surplus flows are available. The project is still in the planning phases, officials said.

Other projects being planned that could improve water supplies in the region include:

- Raising Anderson Ranch Dam by six feet to add 29,000 acre-feet of water storage. The Board is partnering with the Bureau of Reclamation to plan and build that project under the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act. Project design and environmental compliance requirements are expected to be completed by Summer 2024. Elmore County has expressed interest in acquiring a portion of the new storage water. The cost of new storage water per acre-foot has yet to be determined.
- Piping water from C.J. Strike Reservoir to Mountain Air Force Base to provide a new water supply for the base. The Water Board is committed to constructing a 14-mile pipeline and pump station, and the Air Force will build and operate the water treatment plant. The timeline calls for the Board to deliver water to the air base by January 2026.

The Mountain Home Irrigation District already has developed several aquifer-recharge sites by gravel pits to send water from irrigation canals into the Mountain Home aquifer in times of surplus. The Board toured one of those sites with new head gates on Thursday.

The Board is also supporting the expansion of the Treasure Valley Ground Water Flow Model to include the Mountain Home Aquifer and other local aquifers. IDWR officials said the Elmore County portion of that model will take several years to develop before results are known in late 2025 or 2026. The Treasure Valley portion of the ground water flow model is expected to be completed in late 2022.

In other action, the Board approved a \$2.81 million loan to the Warm Springs Water District in Boise to replace the aging piping and infrastructure for its geothermal ground water system. The 20-year loan was approved with an interest rate of 2.45 percent. The geothermal system, which was developed in 1892, serves about 300 water users in Boise.

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