

## **East Idaho Water Rights Coalition**

Board Meeting – May 8, 2025

IGWA Office, Idaho Falls

Present: Brad Buttars, Bob Turner, Roger Warner, Dean Mortimer, Catherine McClure, Princeton Lee, Mayor Marc Carroll, Mayor Donald Powell, Mayor Rebecca Casper, and Keith Esplin, with Don Dixon on Zoon.

The meeting began with unanimous approval of the minutes. The group then addressed a bill for approximately \$1,500 submitted by Keith Esplin, which was also unanimously approved.

The water supply update, led by Keith, highlighted concerning trends, including a dry April with only 60% of normal precipitation and a significant drop in flow projections for the Snake River and Brownlee Reservoir. The US Drought Monitor indicates moderate to severe drought conditions. drought in areas north of Rexburg and Jackson. Despite these concerns, reservoirs are currently at 116% of normal, and flood control operations are ongoing. The importance of managing recharge water rights and reservoir levels to prevent flooding was emphasized.

The discussion then shifted to recharge water management. Keith stressed the significance of recharge and effective reservoir management. A discussion ensued on the recharge capacity of existing canal systems and the need for improved management.

Keith agreed, acknowledging the challenges of recharge during hotter periods. It was mentioned that notifying districts to prepare for recharge is essential, with varying levels of response. Brad's efforts in securing recharge water were recognized and acknowledged, along with the work of other districts.

Keith presented the financial report, showing an increase in membership income to \$53,000 and a decrease in expenses to \$17,000 to date. The topic of the treasurer's role arose, with Keith noting Alan's desire to step down due to his busy schedule. The group discussed the convenience of the current arrangement, with the bookkeeper working closely with Alan. Brad suggested finding a new treasurer by the annual meeting in December.

Upcoming events and meetings were then discussed. A conversation regarding a forthcoming meeting with LIDCO to explore the use of drain tiles for recharge, a method Keith explained could allow recharge without disrupting crop growth. This meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 14th, at 9 AM in the Idaho Falls City Council chambers.

The group then discussed the upcoming presentation at the City Club about water issues in Eastern Idaho. They emphasized the need to educate the public about the concept of consumptive use and the importance of recharge. It was noted that the public has a limited understanding of these topics.

Keith emphasized the benefits of recharge for both agriculture and cities, as well as the need for a comprehensive strategy. The challenges of water resource management and the importance of collaboration were also addressed.

Keith then mentioned a JFAC tour scheduled for May 19th, stressing the need to highlight successful recharge sites. It was proposed to suggest they concentrate on positive examples.

Final announcements included a Family Farm Alliance tour on the Lower Snake River in July. The group then began planning their August meeting, forming a committee that includes Mayor Casper, Brad, Dean, and Bob. Keith suggested combining their tour with one from the Henry's Fork Foundation. The preliminary agenda includes discussions on various recharge types and their impacts on irrigators and fisheries, followed by an afternoon tour of recharge efforts.

The discussion continued, with efforts combined with those of the Henry's Fork Foundation. Aaron Dalling's support for showcasing recharge and the availability of lake water-quality data were noted. Keith preferred highlighting successful recharge sites.

The idea of modernizing canal infrastructure was also raised. The potential benefits of a combined effort, including support from conservation and irrigation communities, were discussed. Logistics and scheduling for the tour were discussed, with consideration given to the next to last week of August to avoid conflicts. The need to examine various recharge types and target the public as the audience was emphasized, along with the possibility of recording the tour.

The proposed goals for 2025 were deliberated, followed by a motion to approve them, which was seconded and subsequently approved.

The topic of Teton Dam and future storage needs was discussed. Previous studies and the Water Board's role were noted.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.