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Bonneville-Jefferson GW District
Jefferson-Clark GW District
Madison GW District
Magic Valley GW District
North Snake GW District
Southwest Irrigation District
Busch Agricultural Resources, Inc.
Jerome Cheese
United Water, Inc.
City of American Falls
City of Blackfoot
City of Chubbuck
City of Heyburn
City of Jerome
City of Paul
City of Post Falls
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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Pocatello, Idaho - March 13, 2009

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Groundwater pumpers submit plan to avoid economic disaster, compensate aquifer spring users

Shutoff of surface wells would endanger water supply for cities, factories, food processors, farmers and cost thousands of jobs

Hoping to avoid the loss of thousands of jobs, groundwater users on the Snake River Plain aquifer submitted a plan late Thursday to compensate aquifer spring users and thereby allow continued use of the aquifer by cities, factories, food processors, dairies, farmers and other entities that depend on the water for their economic survival.

Magic Valley Ground Water District and North Snake Ground Water District filed a 2009

Replacement Water Plan and Third Mitigation Plan with the Idaho Department of Water Resources late Thursday afternoon. The filing was in response to a March 5 order from the IDWR for up to 430 water users in Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka and Twin Falls counties to shut off their water, so that Clear Springs Food Inc. can continue to receive an additional 2 cubic feet per second in water flow.

“We hope the director will accept and implement our mitigation plan and that the curtailment won’t take place,” said Lynn Carlquist, Chairman of North Snake Ground Water District. “As a simple matter of economic survival for these six counties, we need to address the curtailment so it does not occur.”

The plan filed Thursday provides for measures not seen in past proposals, including the “Over-the-Rim” direct delivery of ground water from existing wells to Snake River Farm’s intake. This proposal proposes to convert up to 2,000 acres of irrigated farmland from ground water irrigation to surface water irrigation. Certain members of North Snake Ground Water District farming near the canyon rim above Snake River Farm have agreed to cooperate in the effort. Surface water leased from the Upper Snake reservoir system will be delivered through the North Side Canal Company “S Coulee” to replace the ground water irrigation. It will now be up to Director Tuthill to either approve this plan or curtail 41,000 acres.

Carlquist pointed to March 7 Idaho Statesman story announcing Idaho’s jobless rate is at a 21-year high of nearly 7 percent, with some 53,000 unemployed; the state is expecting a 12 percent drop in tax revenue. Economists say joblessness will continue to rise nationally for the rest of the year and into early 2010, with the unemployment rate reaching 9 to 10 percent before it turns around.

Lynn Tominaga, Executive Director IGWA, said. “To avert this catastrophe, we will spend over \$900,000 on this 3rd mitigation plan so that Clear Springs, will receive its water. This is in addition to the millions of dollars we have spent over the last few years to mitigate their material injury claim.”

Dean Stevenson, Magic Valley GWD director said, ”We would like to thank North Side Canal Company board of directors and Manager Ted Diehl for their cooperation and help in getting this plan put together to avoid this water delivery call.”