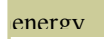




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Upcoming Treasure Valley CAMP Meetings

September 29
Meridian City Hall
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

October 20
Boise Idaho Realtors
Association
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

November 10
Location TBA
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Future topics could include cloud seeding, water marketing, land use planning, flood control, ground water quality, and water efficiency/conservation

Presentations from this and previous meetings may be viewed on IDWR's website at http://www.idwr.idaho.gov/waterboard/WaterPlanning/CAMP/TV_CAMP/TVdefault.htm.

Treasure Valley Comprehensive Aquifer Management Process

(CAMP)/Meridian/July 30: The Treasure Valley could be a model for transitioning to conjunctive management of ground and surface water in Idaho, according to Dave Tuthill, a former Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) Director, who retired last year to open Idaho Water Engineering. Change is coming, he said, and one of the Advisory Committees main jobs is to shape and guide the transition. The biggest change will be implementing conjunctive administration where water deliveries must consider connections between ground water and surface water. Other drivers include increased irrigation efficiencies that have reduced deep percolation; increasing urbanization; increased recognition of in stream values; water use for energy production; and climate change.

The transition can be an orderly if we take steps to plan in advance and do not limit our options. Such steps might be to use technology for modeling measuring and monitoring; coordinate land use planning with water use planning; develop water marketing options; and collaborate with the private and governmental sectors.

Tuthill's remarks were timely as some members of the Advisory Committee question if they are perhaps being asked to find a solution for a problem that may not exist. At present there is a plentiful supply and, faced with the current economy and a 50 year planning horizon, no guarantee demand will increase. However, assuming that the Valley's surface water supply remains stable means any changes in demand have implications for the aquifer. And lack of planning did limit the options in California and Idaho's Eastern Snake Plain when the water supply was overdrafted.

An on-going future water demand study is attempting to establish a baseline of current water use. To do so, it needs to address two data gaps: water usage for seed crops and urban irrigation.

Downstream flow obligations in- and out-of-state also impact future water supply and include: a minimum stream flow at the Weiser Gage on the Snake River to protect hydropower production at Idaho Power Company's Hells Canyon Complex and the Boise River Basin's portion of the 487,000 flow augmentation requirement for salmon. There are no specific out-of-state flow obligations nor are there any interstate compacts to address them should the situation arise.

Throughout this process, surface water users have repeatedly expressed concerns about the implications of future demand to existing water rights and storage contracts. It was explained that water supply planning is part of an overall process where demand may be examined in relationship to water rights. A representative from the Office of Attorney General discussed some basic water law principles including prior appropriation, adjudication, conjunctive management, futile call, burden of proof, and preference.

Any discussion of preference inevitably leads to domestic water use. At this time, domestic water use is exempted from conjunctive management primarily due to the cost, time and difficulty to administer (the political backlash was not mentioned). However, the exemption of domestic water rights is facing legal challenges in surrounding states. Idaho restricts domestic exemptions to in-house uses and invoking domestic preference would require condemnation and compensation.

Another option for addressing future demand is increased storage. Committee members reported on the public reaction to the Lower Boise Interim Feasibility whose scope includes building new dams. The public appears to prefer more fully exploring options like conservation and increased efficiency.

The remainder of the day was spent refining a list of reliable water supply options, generating a preliminary list of likely water conflicts over the next 50 years, and discussing future topics.