

water

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Treasure Valley Comprehensive Aquifer Plan (CAMP)

Visit our webpage:

www.idahowaterpolicygroup.org

Upcoming Events

May 24-28: IGWA WD 120 Mitigation Plan & SWC/BOR Objections, Boise IDWR

May 25: Idaho Primary

May 26: Storage Subcommittee, Boise Idaho Water Center, 3 p.m.

May 27-28: IWRB Meeting, Boise IDWR, 8:30 a.m.

May 27: IDEQ Negotiated Rulemaking –Reclamation and Reuse of Municipal and Industrial Wastewater, Docket No. 58-0117-1001, Boise IDEQ Conf. Rm. D, 9:30 a.m.

June 2: Antidegradation Negotiated Rulemaking, Boise IDEQ Conf. Rm D, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Reconciling potential water supply conflicts within a Comprehensive Aquifer Plan (CAMP) over a 50 year planning range is a challenge, especially since the unknown variables economically, socio-politically or technically outweigh the knowns. The 32-member Treasure Valley CAMP Advisory Committee met in Boise for the second time on May 20th, working to develop a shared understanding of the area's water source and supply as well as its management and distribution, as it undertakes this challenge.

The Committee has the best science and information available, but that data often does not reflect the growth and development that has occurred in the area over the last decade. And the recent economic downturn highlights the difficulty of future casting. One of the most significant recommendations that may emerge is the need for more research to better understand the aquifer system and its changing uses.

The Treasure Valley aquifer system is described as a "bathtub filled with sediments" that is mostly at equilibrium and healthy largely due to existing agricultural irrigation practices. The water budget appears to be balanced with approximately one million acre feet of inflow offset by one million acre feet of outflow annually. Flood irrigation and canal losses are responsible for approximately 90 percent of the aquifer recharge. And land use appears to drive the changes that are occurring in the aquifer system. There are five designated management areas: the Star Bridge Moratorium, three ground water management areas (GWMA), the Boise Front Geothermal GWMA, Southeast Boise GWMA, and Mountain Home GWMA where the Cinder Cone Critical GWMA is also located. Other areas of concern are located south of Kuna and Lake Lowell.

A key aspect in the discussions that followed the technical presentations was how changing land uses may affect water supply, demand, usage, price and vice versa. And, as is often when addressing the complexities of water management and supply, more questions appeared to be raised than answered. In order to develop recommendations, the advisory committee identified a number of issues they would like to address in future meetings.

Key to that information is addressing the shift from traditional agricultural irrigation to more urban applications like water use in subdivisions, conservation and sustainability, economics, demand (both consumptive and non-consumptive), water reuse, out-of-basin issues and interstate water allocation. Part of those discussions may rely on identifying what is generating conflict now and how those conflicts may carry over into the future.

Any recommendations that the group makes could eventually be incorporated into the State Water Plan, prompting a discussion as to the scope of the group's authority. As with the CAMP processes on the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer and the Rathdrum Prairie, the Advisory Committee is making policy, not regulatory, recommendations. Should those recommendations be accepted by the Idaho Water Resource and the Idaho Legislature, they could become part of the State Water Plan. So, while the group is being encouraged to undertake a broad discussion of potential issues, some members of the Advisory Committee expressed concern that any final recommendations must not exceed the authority of the Water Board, Legislature, or other entities.

The next meeting is scheduled for **9 a.m. on June 10, location to be announced**. Subsequent meetings are scheduled for **9 a.m. on July 30** (Meridian City Hall); **September 29 & October 20** (location to be announced), and **tentatively November 10** (location TBA).

