

July 2010

Temperatures in the final days of June shot straight to 90 plus degrees, again raising concerns about the impacts of a hot, dry summer on irrigators, storage supplies, electrical demand and pumping costs. A cool, wet spring initially mitigated some of those concerns that arose from a disappointing winter snowpack.

Reacting to that snowpack and possible water supply concerns for the irrigation season, Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) set mitigation requirements for ground water users at 84,000 acre-feet in Water District 110, 120, 130 and 140. Those mitigation requirements and the May 1st deadline to have mitigation water in place sent Idaho Ground Appropriators (IGWA) scrambling. In the end, IDWR reduced the mitigation requirements to 62,000 acre-feet. And that number does not include the additional 27,000 acre-feet required for spring users in Water District 130.

IGWA met the mitigation requirements, largely due to the leasing program it has in place with irrigation districts and canal companies mostly in the Upper Valley. IGWA also participated in an administrative hearing in May before IDWR Interim Director Gary Spackman that resulted the approval of a permanent mitigation plan in the Surface Water Delivery Call.

We expect there will be little legislative activity over the summer due to state budget constraints and election campaigns. The Natural Resource and Energy, Environment and Technology Interim Committees are not expected to meet. The Energy, Environment and Technology Interim Committee lost its co-chair, Senator Gary Schroeder (Republican/Moscow), in a surprising upset in the May primary.

However, our summer schedule is busy as we follow three Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plans, other Idaho Water Resource Board activities, and two negotiated rulemakings before Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

On the energy side, Idaho Irrigation Pumpers Association is gearing up to participate in Rocky Mountain Power's general rate case and Idaho Power Company's next Integrated Resource Planning process. IIPA will be tracking the impact of the unusual weather patterns to irrigators enrolled in both utilities' Demand Side Management Programs.