



IDAHO WATER USERS ASSOCIATION

Quarterly Newsletter



June 2014

Association Launches Quarterly Newsletter

This marks the first edition of a new quarterly newsletter for IWUA members. It is designed to serve as a conduit for more in-depth information to members regarding Association programs, projects, actions and achievements, plus background on issues of interest and concern. If you have suggestions for items or topics you would like to see included, please let the IWUA staff know. Consistent with IWUA Board policy, we will not publish editorials or opinion pieces in the quarterly newsletter.

2014 IWUA Water Safety Outreach Program Begins

The IWUA 2014 Ag Water Safety Awareness Program is now underway across the southern half of Idaho. Two 30-second radio commercials began airing the last week of May and will air every other week through the middle of August.

The commercials are targeted towards women ages 25-49, the primary caregiver for children. It should be noted, however, that both men and women outside of the primary target group will be listening to the station on which the spots air and so will also hear the safety message. That means the overall impact of the campaign actually is greater than that for the specific target group.

All told, the Association airtime purchases will mean the two commercials will air at least 1,458 times during this year's campaign. In practice, the stations will also air the spots as a public service announcement which means even more exposure.

Here is a regional campaign breakdown for each of the three regions:

Treasure Valley: the commercials will air at least 348 times; 50.3 percent of the target audience will be reached with each person hearing the commercial 9.7 times; \$7,176 in funding available - \$7,015 spent;

Magic Valley: the commercials will air at least 654 times; 84.1 percent of the target audience will be reached with each person hearing the commercial 22.2 times; \$6,452 in funding available - \$6,213 spent;

Eastern Idaho: the commercials will air at least 456 times; 80.7 percent of the target audience will be reached with each person hearing the commercial 12.6 times; \$6,410 in funding available - \$6,231 spent.

Total funding for the project amounted to \$20,039, of which \$19,559.91 was spent. Funding consisted of \$5,000 from the Association and the remainder from donations by irrigation entities in the three geographical regions. In addition to the charges for airtime, there was a charge of \$300 for the voice talent and production of the two spots. We also needed to leave \$100-\$200 in the individual IWUA checking account for each region to maintain the account.

If you would like to listen to the commercials, they are available on the IWUA website – www.iwua.org.

Comment Period Open on Proposed Clean Water Act Rule

A controversial new rule that could affect Idaho's water, proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency, will be at the forefront of issues being presented at the Idaho Water Users Association's annual Summer Water Law and Resource Issues next week at the Sun Valley Resort in Sun Valley.

Idaho water user organizations opposed to the new rule see it as a far-reaching attempt by the EPA to extend its regulation to an entirely new range of waters, and one that could seriously impact the state's water user community. An hour-long panel, including an EPA representative from Washington, DC, will dissect the various elements of the proposed EPA rule starting at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, June 24.

The following statement was issued by the EPA in regard to the proposed rule:

“The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jointly released a proposed rule to clarify protection under the Clean Water Act for streams and wetlands that form the foundation of the nation's water resources. Determining Clean Water Act protection for streams and wetlands became confusing and complex following Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006. The proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register* on Monday, April 21, 2014. The public comment period will be open for 182 days and will close on Monday, October 20, 2014.”

A copy of the proposed rule along with information on how to file comments is available on the IWUA website, or on the EPA website – www.water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/wetlands/CWAwaters.cfm.

Association Praises Endangered Species Report Findings

IWUA has hailed a recent report by a Congressional working group that says the Endangered Species Act (ESA): “while well-intentioned from the beginning, must be updated and modernized to ensure its success where it matters most: outside of the courtroom and on-the-ground.”

The report was compiled by 13 members of the House of Representatives from across the United States to examine a variety of questions related to ESA implementation. Numerous hearings and investigations are referenced in support of the group's findings. A pdf copy of the report is available from the Association upon request.

The report cites four specific aspects of the ESA that should be addressed:

- Ensuring Greater Transparency and Prioritization of ESA with a Focus on Species Recovery and De-Listing;
- Reducing ESA Litigation and Encouraging Settlement Reform;
- Empowering States, Tribes, Local Governments and Private Landowners on ESA Decisions Affecting Them and Their Property; and
- Requiring More Transparency and Accountability of ESA Data and Science

According to the report, in just the past four years, litigating environmental groups have raked in more than \$15 million from taxpayers, with some of these groups' attorneys being paid as much as \$500 per hour from the public treasury.

At the heart of IWUA's concerns with the ESA is the ever-present potential of serious federal restrictions being placed on Idaho's irrigation water storage and delivery activities. Potential future endangered species listings are on the horizon in Idaho, including the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a topic slated to be examined

at the upcoming IWUA Summer Seminar. That prospect has IWUA very concerned about new federal restrictions being placed on the water supplies that are crucial to Idaho's multi-billion dollar irrigated agricultural economy.

“A thorough and candid examination of the Endangered Species Act is the only way to pinpoint its strengths and weaknesses. As the Congressional Working Group pointed out, the ESA can be modernized to more successfully assist species that are truly in danger and it can be updated so species conservation does not create conflicts with people. IWUA supports these goals and hopes the report will prompt Congress to take action,” is how IWUA Executive Director and General Counsel Norm Semanko described the Association's position.

June 1 Idaho Water Supply Outlook

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Snow Survey has issued its June water supply outlook for Idaho. (Note: The content of this article is taken from the NRCS Snow Survey water supply outlook. The opinions and conclusions expressed below should not be attributed to the Association.)

“Too little” or “just enough” water best sums up this year's water supply across the state. The good news is that the numerous Snake River water users in eastern and southern Idaho will have adequate surface irrigation supplies. However, across Idaho's central basins, a dry May which saw no precipitation fall at two central Idaho SNOTEL sites further increased the impacts of a second consecutive low snow year.

Some irrigators with junior water rights are already being cut off in the Little Wood basin, while Mackay Reservoir irrigators will be lucky to have water supplies last until mid-July. These central Idaho streams could see summer runoff volumes approaching record lows by summer's end.

Shortages are also expected in the Oakley, Salmon Falls and Owyhee basins. Wise planning and planting will help stretch this year's limited supplies, along with the improved irrigation delivery and sprinkler systems that irrigation districts and farmers have implemented over the years.

Good news, and in contrast to the way the winter started, Treasure Valley irrigators will have adequate water supplies with residual streamflow volumes at 55-75% of average. Magic Valley users across southern Idaho that rely on western Wyoming snowfall will also have adequate supplies and hopefully a little bonus for next year with better reservoir carryover storage due to residual streamflow forecasts at 115-130% of average.

More good news for whitewater river runners and water users; rivers are forecast at 100-130% of average in the Clearwater and Panhandle Region, while the Salmon River basin will see residual flows in the 70-90% of average range which will provide a long floating season.

For information on specific basins, streams and reservoirs, view the full report online at [June Water Supply Outlook Report](#). This is the final report of the 2014 season.

New Hydroelectric Unit Delayed at Black Canyon Dam

Construction of the new hydroelectric generating unit at Black Canyon Diversion Dam on the Payette River near Emmett, Idaho will be postponed at least four months from the projected spring 2015 date in order for an independent engineering firm to test and verify cost estimates, according to the Bureau of Reclamation.

This is a standard practice prior to making the final investment in such a large project. Reclamation's cost estimate indicates that the price of the new hydroelectric generating unit may exceed its financial benefit.

"Throughout the process, all indications were that this looked like a financially feasible project that would boost power generation and provide added benefits by upgrading existing infrastructure," said Reclamation's Project Manager Chris Vick. "The latest cost estimate increased considerably from previous construction estimates; therefore, Reclamation is having an independent engineering firm provide a separate cost estimate."

If the independent estimate indicates the cost of construction is justifiable, work will proceed to complete the National Environmental Policy Act process and secure all necessary permits. Following successful completion of the NEPA process, the specifications for the project will be issued to potential bidders.

Although the construction of the additional generating unit is on hold, some construction will still take place at the facility over the next few years. Reclamation and the Bonneville Power Administration plan to move forward with the design and relocation of a new power switchyard, design and construction of a new trash rack and trash rake system, upgrades to control systems at the dam, and construction of a new administration building.

The proposed 12.5 MW hydroelectric unit will expand the capacity of the two existing 5 MW units to generate 105 million kilowatt-hours (enough to power 9,359 homes a year). The power produced will be integrated into the power grid to serve 10 irrigation districts in southern Idaho and eastern Oregon, as well as the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.

Idaho Water Resource Board Lowers Interest Rate for Loans

The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) recently took action to lower interest rates for its water project loan program.

The new interest rate is set at 3.5% for all new loan applicants and this rate will be reviewed annually by the IWRB. The rates had been in the 5%-to 6% range. The term on an IWRB loan is usually 15 to 20 years.

The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) loan program exists to financially assist in the development of the water resources of the State of Idaho through the construction of water projects. Typical projects that receive loans include the rehabilitation and improvement of canal systems and small community water systems. Many of the water storage dams around the state have also been rehabilitated and improved over the years through this program. In State Fiscal Year 2013 the Board authorized seven loans for more than \$5.6 million.

For more information on the IWRB Loan Program contact Stuart VanGreuning, IWRB Financial Loan Coordinator, (208) 287-4905 or Stuart.Vangreuningen@idwr.idaho.gov.