



State of Idaho

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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DIRK KEMPTHORNE
Governor

KARL J. DREHER
Director

April 13, 2004

CITY OF KETCHUM
PO BOX 2315
KETCHUM ID 83340

RE: Application for Permit 37-8195

Dear Applicant:

In 1984 Craig H. Neilsen applied to Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) for a permit to appropriate 2.75 cfs from ground water for domestic and irrigation use in the Bigwood and the Flowers Mill subdivisions in Ketchum. In 1988 Craig H. Neilsen assigned the application to the City of Ketchum. After receiving the application, the city amended it to show that the water would be used for municipal purposes within the City of Ketchum. The proposed point of diversion is a well located in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 1, Township 4 North, Range 17 East, B. M. I have enclosed a copy of the application for you to review.

Since it was filed, IDWR has held the application without approval. The application was first held in response to the Swan Falls litigation in the late 1980s, and then it was held in response to the ground water management area established in the Big Wood River basin upstream from Magic Reservoir in 1991. Since 1992 IDWR has held the application in compliance with the moratorium on new consumptive water uses in the Eastern Snake River Plain area and tributary basins.

At this time IDWR wants to know if you have a continued interest in this application. Both the management plan for the Big Wood River Ground Water Management Area and the ESPA moratorium order authorize the issuance of new permits for domestic or municipal use, so long as any new consumptive use is mitigated or the use is limited to 13,000 gallons per day per home and to 2,500 gpd for any other use. You can request that the application be processed subject to conditions limiting the use as described above, you can request that IDWR continue to hold the application, or you can withdraw the application. If IDWR does not receive a response within 30 days, it will continue to hold your application indefinitely.

If you have any questions, please call me at 208-327-7946, or email me at skeen@idwr.state.id.us.

Sincerely,

Shelley W. Keen
Water Rights Supervisor

Enclosure

MANAGEMENT POLICY

FOR

THE BIG WOOD RIVER GROUND WATER MANAGEMENT AREA

I. GENERAL

A. Introduction

The Big Wood River drainage basin is located in southcentral Idaho within Blaine, Camas, Lincoln and Gooding Counties. In the approximate center of this basin is Magic Reservoir with a water storage capacity of 191,000 acre feet. This reservoir generally divides the basin into two distinct areas. The area upstream from the reservoir is herein referred to as the upper Big Wood River Basin.

The headwaters of Silver Creek are located east of the Big Wood River in the Bellevue Triangle. Silver Creek provides water to users who divert from the creek and from the Little Wood River to which it is tributary.

The upper Big Wood River Basin (including Silver Creek), particularly in Blaine County, is an area of continued economic growth and development. Water resource development to support some of this growth has occurred through transfers of existing water rights and new water appropriations.

B. Geohydrologic Characteristics of the Big Wood River Basin

The surface and ground water system in the upper Big Wood River Basin is interconnected. Diversion and use of water from a tributary stream or well will impact the total water supply available in the system. Downstream from Magic Reservoir, the river and ground water system are not as directly connected and there are other sources of water supply including canals bringing water from the Snake River and the Snake Plain ground water system. Magic Reservoir collects much of the water which moves through the upper Big Wood River Basin and which is not diverted and used upstream from that point. Except during periods of high runoff when Magic Reservoir fills and spills, the available water supply, both surface and ground water, upstream from Magic Reservoir is fully appropriated. Camas Creek and the Big Wood River are the major surface water tributaries upstream from Magic Reservoir.

Silver Creek is fed by numerous springs whose flows depend partly on percolating seepage resulting from Big Wood River irrigation diversion and use upstream in the Bellevue area. Ground water inflow contributes to the surface flow of Silver Creek and its tributaries from the headwaters to

a point approximately two miles upstream of Picabo, where Silver Creek ceases to be a gaining stream.

Diversions of ground water in the Bellevue Triangle, and generally in locations hydrologically upstream from Picabo, will deplete the surface flow of Silver Creek. Prior water right holders who divert from the Little Wood River also depend on surface water flow from Silver Creek. Depletion of Silver Creek flow will injure these earlier-in-time right holders. Many of the Little Wood River right holders also receive storage water from Magic Reservoir.

C. Present and Proposed Uses

Approximately 73 applications for permit to appropriate ground water upstream from Magic Reservoir and in the upper Silver Creek area are pending before the Department of Water Resources. Protests have been filed with the department against some of these applications. Complaints have also been lodged that continued granting of permits to develop new ground water uses in the upper Big Wood River Basin is interfering with prior surface water rights.

D. Recent Declines

The water years 1987 to the present have been below average within the basin. As a result, Magic Reservoir has not filled to its capacity within that time period. It has been suggested that this has been caused, in part, by the diversion of water within the basin under water rights with priority dates later in time than the Magic Reservoir rights.

Many natural flow rights have been cut off because of insufficient surface water flows. Since the water supply of the basin is finite, any withdrawal and consumption of water which would otherwise contribute water to a surface water source, when the source is fully appropriated, will injure another water user.

Various estimates have been made of the quantity of water within the basin. The studies have not all agreed on the total quantity of water but all have generally agreed that the surface and ground waters of the area are interconnected and that withdrawal and use of water from either source will impact the total supply.

E. Past Department Designation

In 1980, the Director of the Department of Water Resources issued a policy memorandum by which he declared that the surface water of the Big Wood River upstream from Magic Reservoir was fully appropriated. Since that date, no new permits for consumptive purposes have been issued for the use of the river or any of its tributaries. The department has continued, however, to issue permits for the use of ground water within the watershed. It now appears

that this policy must be changed with respect to new consumptive uses of ground water.

II. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND AUTHORITIES

- A. Section 42-226, Idaho Code, declares all ground water to be the property of the state, and charges the state with supervising the appropriation and allotment of the same. One of the purposes of this is to assure that early appropriators of ground water are protected in the maintenance of reasonable ground water pumping levels.
- B. Section 42-233b., Idaho Code, authorizes the Director of the Department of Water Resources to designate a "Ground water Management Area" when the water supply in the area may be approaching conditions which could lead to designation as a critical ground water area.
- C. Section 42-237 a.g., Idaho Code, empowers the Director to prohibit or limit the withdrawal of water from any well during the period that he determines that water to fill any water right is not available.
- D. Policy 1F of the State Water Plan adopted by the Idaho Water Resource Board provides that "It is the policy of Idaho that where evidence of hydrologic connection exists between ground and surface water, they be managed as a single resource."

III. MANAGEMENT POLICY

Management policies which could be used in connection with future use of water in the upper Big Wood River Basin include the designation of all or a portion of the drainage as a groundwater management area, a critical ground water area or to issue a moratorium on additional permits for development.

The designation of a ground water management area for the upper Big Wood River Basin is the preferred management policy. Under this policy, additional approvals of ground water for consumptive uses can be granted upon a showing by an applicant and a determination by the department that the water supply is adequate and other water rights will not be injured. After the water rights of the basin are determined in the Snake River Basin Adjudication, and a method for the co-regulation of surface and ground water rights has been determined, the Director may require record keeping and reporting and may also issue orders if needed to reduce or stop ground water diversions.

This management policy allows the processing of all pending filings. Most consumptive use applications will be denied unless the applicants can demonstrate there will be no injury or can provide acceptable mitigation to prior rights.

The department will continue to consider the approval of applications for permit which propose non-consumptive uses, municipal uses, stockwater and domestic uses as defined in Section 42-111, Idaho Code. Domestic uses meeting the definition of Section 42-111, Idaho Code, are not subject to the application for permit filing requirements of Section 42-229, Idaho Code.

Section 42-111, Idaho Code, defines "domestic uses" as

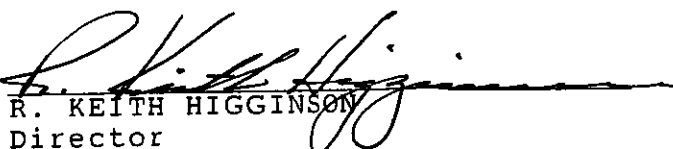
- A. The use of water for homes, organization camps, public campgrounds, livestock and for any other purpose in connection therewith, including irrigation of up to one-half (1/2) acre of land, if the total use is not in excess of thirteen thousand (13,000) gallons per day, or
- B. Any other uses, if the total use does not exceed a diversion rate of four one-hundredths (0.04) cubic feet per second and a diversion volume of twenty-five hundred (2,500) gallons per day.

For purposes of this management policy, applications for ground water permits seeking water for multiple ownership subdivisions or mobile home parks will be considered provided each unit satisfies the definition for the exception of need to file an application for permit as described above.

While an incorporated city has wide latitude under state law to beneficially use its water rights for municipal purposes, any new large consumptive use within the municipal limits, such as irrigation of lands not associated with a dwelling, or irrigation of more than one-half acre associated with a dwelling, must be mitigated by the municipality.

The department will continue to accept and process new applications for permit and applications seeking amendment or transfer of existing water rights. Applications for amendment or applications for transfer which propose a change in the point of diversion from outside the ground water management area to within the area which would directly or indirectly result in the irrigation of new land will be treated as a proposed new appropriation of water.

Dated this 28TH day of JUNE, 1991.


R. KEITH HIGGINSON
Director