



State of Idaho

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
Governor

GARY SPACKMAN
Director

October 30, 2015

Lucas Yockey
Watermaster
Water District 34
P.O. Box 53
Mackay, ID 83251

Water District 34 Advisory Committee
P.O. Box 53
Mackay, ID 83251

RE: Water District 34 Leslie Gage Measurement Plan

Dear Gentlemen:

Idaho Department of Water Resources (“Department”) staff and Water District 34 (“WD34” or “District”) Watermaster Lucas Yockey have repeatedly discussed the Leslie gage station on the Big Lost River. Lucas has expressed a desire that he be allowed to measure and maintain the Leslie station to save the District money.

Presently, the Department has contracted with Idaho Power Company to maintain this gage station. The current contract term is from October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016. The Leslie gage is one of a number of gage stations in the state where Idaho Power measures water pursuant to a contract with the Department. The Department and Idaho Power normally renew the contract in August of each year. The Department has contracted with Idaho Power to maintain the Leslie gage since 2006. The Department began paying one-third of the gage cost in 2015 and is committed to paying one-third of the cost in 2016.

Department staff advised Lucas this summer of its concerns about WD34 assuming operation of the gage over the next year. The following are reasons for the Department’s reluctance to allow the Watermaster to measure the flows at the Leslie gage: (1) the District’s high turnover rate in the Watermaster position which requires Department time to train the new Watermaster how to administer the water rights and would require additional staff time every year to train the Watermaster how to establish a rating table, and (2) the District does not currently have all the necessary equipment and resources to maintain the gage at a level consistent with Idaho Power. I reiterated these same concerns in direct conversations with Lucas this past August. I also mentioned these same concerns to several WD34 Advisory Committee members and area water users during an informal meeting on September 29, 2015 in Mackay.

On August 18, 2015, Lucas sent an email to Department staff that outlined basic components of a Leslie gage measurement plan. Department staff and I find that the plan lacks detail. The request from WD34 to assume operation and maintenance of the Leslie gage station in 2016 is denied for the following reasons:

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- The Department has already executed the contract with Idaho Power to maintain the gage in 2016. The Department has reduced the District's overall cost of the gage in 2015 and 2016;
- WD34 needs to establish consistency in its election of Watermaster before the Department will consider a change in operation of the Leslie gage. The District must follow through with longer term re-election of the Watermaster position;
- WD34 does not currently possess adequate equipment to safely and accurately measure the range of flows that may be encountered at the Leslie gage during the irrigation season. The District must demonstrate how it will acquire the necessary equipment. Acquisition of equipment may depend on budgets or resolutions approved at future annual water district meetings;
- Even if the District acquires suitable measurement equipment in the next year, the Watermaster will need some time during at least one field season to become fully trained in the use of the equipment and any related software;
- The District's plan does not adequately address resources or expertise that will be used to maintain or update a station rating table; and
- The expertise and time required to independently maintain a rated gage station is considerable. For this reason, the more critical Big Lost River gages are operated under contract.

The Department may consider a measurement plan from WD34 for the Leslie gage station in the future. I encourage the Watermaster to continue gaining experience in discharge measurement and stream gaging, seek opportunities for additional training, and diligently track and document his progress. Please let Department staff know if there are ways that we may assist in his efforts.

Respectfully,



Gary Spackman
Director

Cc: Cindy Yenter
Tim Luke
Liz Cresto