



Outlook

Re: Jack B Parsons Transfer/Permit

From Cefalo, James <James.Cefalo@idwr.idaho.gov>
Date Fri 11/14/2025 8:59 AM
To Kristin Moore <kristin.rmea@gmail.com>
Cc Stewart, Christian <Christian.Stewart@idwr.idaho.gov>

Kristin,

The email from Christian about insufficient mitigation is primarily based on the pasture grass to cottonwood forest ratio. An analysis of the aerial imagery reveals a higher percentage of pasture grass than was asserted in the technical report accompanying the application. A higher percentage of pasture grass at the reservoir site results in a higher mitigation requirement.

We realize that ET data can change, particularly ET data sets that rely on thirty-year averages. Generally, the Department will accept an analysis based on the data available at the time an application is filed. For example, when the ESPA Model version is updated, there is usually a grace period where the Department accepts transfer tool analyses using the old version of the ESPA Model. Similarly, if ET data is updated between the time a permit is issued and the time the water right is licensed, the Department does not re-evaluate the sufficiency of a mitigation plan at licensing. There may be exceptions to the general practice. For example, if an application is pending before the Department for several years, the Department may require an applicant to update its technical analysis using the most current data.

For the Parsons applications, we will accept an analysis based on the ET data set that was available at the time the application was filed. Based on our review of aerial imagery, the original mitigation plan is insufficient. Please let me know how you would like to proceed with the applications.

James



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

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From: Kristin Moore <kristin.rmea@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 13, 2025 4:29 PM
To: Stewart, Christian <Christian.Stewart@idwr.idaho.gov>
Cc: Cefalo, James <James.Cefalo@idwr.idaho.gov>
Subject: Re: Jack B Parsons Transfer/Permit

Christian,

Thanks for the email. After bringing in your shapefile to review, it looks like we have some georeferencing differences on the old imagery. I'll never claim to be a georeferencing expert. To ensure we are evaluating on the same playing field, can you send me a high resolution screen shot or pdf of how your shapefile overlaps the 1969 image so I can see how you applied your interpretation?

As general commentary, not necessarily as a disagreement, I always use the most current ET data available when I prepare applications. However, I cannot predict when IDWR may update that data. I noticed in the last few weeks that there was an update, as a precipitation deficit became available for open water, which was not available before. Other land covers were also updated. I have noticed the update as I have been actively working on other applications in recent weeks and have had to update all of my calculations. Will IDWR review all applications using "current" data, even if that "current" data was updated after submitting an application? If data changes after submission, that could cause issues with applications that were prepared in good faith and with the best available data at the time. I can especially see this as an issue if the applications are tied to water right purchase contracts and the "new data" would require those purchase quantities to be higher in order to meet a demand already calculated. For this application specifically, the number of acres dried up in the transfer were based on obtaining 66 afa for the applicant, which volume is a part of the agreement between the applicant and Brad Woolstenhulme. Using an updated ET value for Winter Grain now means we aren't getting 66 afa and thereby not meeting the agreement anymore. All of the calculations were based upon the ET values available at the time of preparation of the application.

As you know, we are constantly working with buyers and sellers of water rights and our purchase quantities are often tied to ET values at the time of drafting the contracts and preparing the applications. If we cannot be sure that IDWR will use the same data, we need to know and sort through how to proceed. It could get messy on our end if our purchase quantities are determined insufficient to meet the requirements of the buyer and we have to change contracts, increase acres, and readvertise applications. Maybe we won't have regular updates to ET data and will encounter this issue infrequently. Please advise.

Thanks,

Kristin Moore

Water Rights Analyst

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On Thu, Nov 13, 2025 at 12:52 PM Stewart, Christian <Christian.Stewart@idwr.idaho.gov> wrote:
Kristin,

Floodplain vegetation is ephemeral and dynamic; many questions arise when trying to analyze historical vegetation to grant a permanent water right in 2025. Notwithstanding, I have discussed this transfer with James and we hold that the transfer does not provide sufficient water to cover pond evaporation. We do not believe there are 30.2 acres of cottonwood trees to give "credit" for.

I mapped 19.2 acres of cottonwood tree canopy cover. In redoing the analysis with 19.2 acres of cottonwoods and assuming 28.2 acres of grasses with the most current ET IDWR data, I found that the transfer comes up 15.3 acre feet short. This means an additional 10.45 acres of winter grain are needed to fully account for consumptive use.

I have attached the shapefile used to estimate the cottonwood coverage, and the spreadsheet I used to calculate ET credits.

Please let us know your thoughts,

Christian Stewart
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