

**WATER DISTRICT NO. 65**

**102 N. Main St.  
Payette, Idaho 83661  
Phone (208) 642-4465  
Fax (208) 642-1042**

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**JUN 02 1995**  
WATER RESOURCES  
WESTERN REGION

May 30, 1995

Mr. John Keys, Regional Director  
Attn: Allen Powers, PN-6430  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Pacific Northwest Regional Office  
1150 North Curtis Road  
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

Gentlemen:

As Watermaster for Water District No. 65, Payette River Basin, located in the State of Idaho, I believe I have a responsibility to present the following comments on behalf of water users within the District. Water District No. 65 includes two irrigation districts, four irrigation companies and approximately 80 independent water users on the Payette. Many users currently own contracted storage space in two major storage reservoirs within the District. These water users are a diverse group of irrigators, ranging from large row crop and fruit orchard operations to cattle and sheep ranches to small hobby farms. All these operations make use of a river and reservoir system which has never failed them, even in the most severe drought conditions. The Bureau's efforts to promote water conservation through the implementation of these Rules and Regulations and Guidelines and Criteria will upset the delicate balance our forefathers created when our water system was initially engineered, as well as put undue financial and social burdens upon water users on the Payette.

Conserving our natural resources, including our irrigation water supplies, is foremost in the minds of irrigators today. But to attach "strings" to existing storage water contracts by requiring irrigators to adhere to a set of rules and regulations geared to funnel water savings toward environmental uses (page 5 of the Guidelines) is certainly not in the best interests of true water conservation. Irrigators conserve water in order to protect themselves from the possibility of drought, and carry this water over in the reservoirs for future needs. The idea that an irrigator or irrigation company would voluntarily enter into an agreement with the stipulations the Bureau sets forth in these Rules and Regulations and Guidelines and Criteria is contrary to the true nature of water conservation and should be considered a disincentive to irrigators to enter into such agreements.

The fact that the Bureau will require irrigation districts and companies to be responsible for "...appropriate studies, analyses, and document preparation for each level of NEPA compliance" (page 12 of the Guidelines) could lead to the financial failure of most irrigation districts and companies in our Water District. Also, the requirement that water metering or measurement devices be installed on every agricultural turnout (page 20 of the Guidelines) would require investing thousands of dollars installing these devices, with most of the financial burden falling on the companies. Water District No. 65 currently promotes the installation of measuring devices for deliveries on the river, and accounting for water use through these measuring devices is a much more economical and efficient way to determine actual use than measuring every agricultural turnout on individual canals and laterals, and afflicting huge financial burdens on water users.

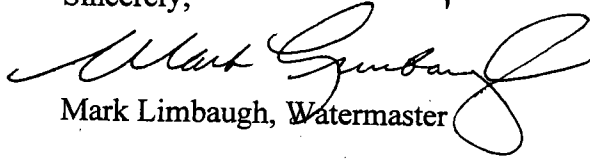
The procedures (outlined on page 11 of the Guidelines) proposed for the submittal and evaluation of all water conservation plans include a "... minimum 45-day public comment period..." and the stipulation that a "Notice of Proposed Approval" will be published in the Federal Register. The fact that unrelated third parties would have any business commenting on a water conservation plan made between a district or company and the Bureau is questionable. Interest groups with goals contrary to the contractual obligations of the storage contracts between irrigation companies and the Bureau would simply disrupt, if not completely destroy, a valid plan to attempt water conservation measures in an effort to protect irrigators interests for future drought conditions. These groups, in conjunction with some of the verbage in the Guidelines and Criteria proposed here, have shown an interest in actually reducing the amount of water available for the irrigation of privately held lands within our Water District in order to promote enhancement of the environment. Storage contracts held by users in the District designate space in the reservoirs for the storage holder to accrue water for future irrigation needs and do not include other uses at this time. Conserving storage water held in this contracted space will simply allow more water to be carried over to the next irrigation season.

A great deal of time and money will be spent on these water conservation plans by irrigators and the Bureau. My main concern, as Watermaster for this District, is the effect these conservation efforts will have on the downstream users of return flows, both wastewater flows as well as ground water recharge. Our water users have developed, over the past 100 years, a system, based on these recharges to the river and aquifer, which depends on upstream diversion and use of water resources from the Payette River. To diminish this upstream diversion of water would have devastating results to users downstream who have relied on this source for many years. We will probably find, through all the efforts to develop these conservation plans, that more water would have to be diverted from the river to make up for shortfalls in this source of downstream recharge, and result in little, if any, net conservation of water resources in the District. The implementation of these proposals would cause expensive and time consuming litigation over certain parts of these provisions, as well as water rights affected by these plans.

I have touched on only a few of the negative impacts to users in our Water District from the possible implementation of these proposals. I can only urge the Bureau to evaluate these proposals with more common sense than has been written into them as they have

been presented. My sincere hope is that many of the problems I have mentioned will be averted by the Bureau's reconsideration of these proposals. Attempting to promote water conservation through pages of stringent rules and guidelines in an effort to reduce the use of contracted storage water and cause reallocation of our water resources to the environment would do more harm to our water users and their environment than any possible benefits would be worth.

Sincerely,



Mark Limbaugh, Watermaster

cc: Payette River Water Users Association  
✓ Dave Tuthill, Jr., P.E., IDWR  
Wilbur "Brick" Andrew, WD65 Chairman  
Emmett Irrigation District  
Black Canyon Irrigation District  
Farmer's Cooperative Irrigation Co.  
Noble Ditch Co.  
Lower Payette Ditch Co.

✓DWR WD65 File

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**MAY 31 1995**

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WESTERN REGION**

May 30, 1995

**\*\*NOTICE OF MEETING FOR ALL PUMPERS ON THE PAYETTE RIVER\*\***

Dear Irrigator:

On Wednesday, June 7, 1995, Water District No. 65 will hold a meeting for all pumpers on the Payette River at the County Courthouse in Horseshoe Bend at 7:30p.m. It is imperative that you attend as we will be discussing river operations and accounting for storage water use for the coming year. Idaho Power Company representatives, as well as Department of Water Resource personnel, will be in attendance. If you have questions or cannot attend, please let me know at (208) 642-4465.

Sincerely,

Mark Limbaugh, Watermaster

cd/ Dave Tuthill, Jr., P.E., IDWR

Bob Sutter, IDWR

Sheryl Howe, IDWR

Mike Leichty, IPCO

Roy Orr, BCID

Roy Maxwell, EID

Brick Andrew, WD65

Marsha Herr, WD65

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June 7, 1995

Payette River Pumpers Meeting - Horseshoe Bend

\*\*\*TENTATIVE AGENDA\*\*\*

1. Introductions.
2. Water District No. 65 update of 1995 operations - Watermaster.
3. Water rights explanation - Dave Tuthill, Jr., P.E., IDWR.
4. 1995 Water Accounting System - Bob Sutter and Sheryl Howe, IDWR.
5. Storage water availability and costs - Watermaster.
6. Water use accounting based on kilowatt use - Mike Liechty, Idaho Power.
7. Issues facing our Water District - Watermaster.
8. Adjourn.