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WATER PROTECTION
WESTERN REGION

❖ Water District Update ❖

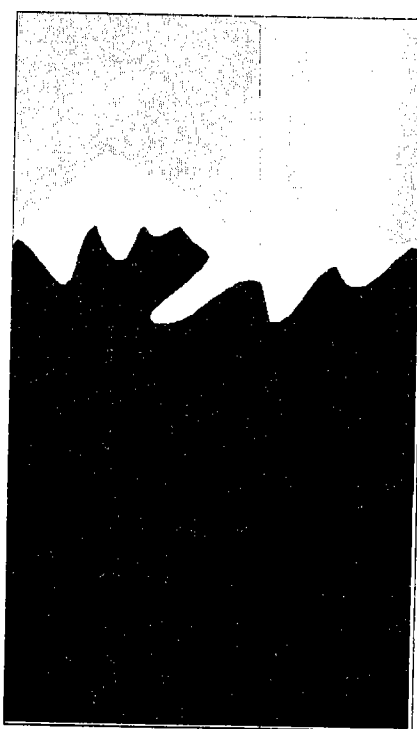
Volume 1 Issue 1

Spring, 1995

Water Outlook Bright For 1995 Irrigation Season

As of April 1, 1995, the Payette and Weiser River Basins show a snow pack of 120% of average. This report should mean the Payette River System will have adequate flows to fill reservoirs and provide users with enough water to fill their needs for the upcoming water season. The report also shows a 103% of average snow water equivalent for the entire Payette and Weiser River Basins. Snow water equivalent is the amount of moisture in the snow pack measured on a given day. The snow pack at the various Payette River Basin gauging sites range from 107% of average at the Brundage Reservoir site to 130% of average at Banner Summit and 139% of average at Cozy Cove. The Weiser Basin sites are Squaw Flat at 128% of average and West Branch at 125% of average. The averages used for data comparison are based on the reference period from 1961-90.

Other Basins reporting snow pack condition comparisons to average include the Clearwater at 99%, the Salmon at 111%, Big and Little Wood at 133%, the Big and Little Lost at 114%, the Snake above Palisades at 91%, the Bruneau at 89% and the Boise at 118%. Across the border, the Cwyhee Basin in Malheur County, Oregon reports a 95% of average snow pack and an 84% of average snow water equivalent.



The snow pack looks favorable for a successful irrigation season in 1995 according to the April 1st USDA SnoTel data.

New Watermaster Elected for WD65

(IDWR Press Release)

The new Watermaster for Water District No. 65 is Mark Limbaugh. He was elected at the recent annual meeting of Water District No. 65 held on February 10, 1995. He is a 1974 graduate of Fruitland High School and attended the University of Idaho, majoring in Accounting. Mark has been working on his family's farm for the past 14 years, and currently owns a farm in the District. Prior to farming, Mark worked for Touche, Ross and Co., an international accounting firm, in their Boise office.

Mark brings both the experience of a farmer and the skills of an accountant to the Watermaster position. "One of my main concerns as a water user and now as the Watermaster is to protect our water from outside interests. We must all work together to accomplish this task." Communication is an important element of the Watermaster position, says Limbaugh, and he believes his job will include meeting with most of the users on the river.

Measuring and accounting for water deliveries on the river will take up the balance of Limbaugh's time. These tasks are important in maintaining good records to prove beneficial use of water rights. "Our District has always been made up of many diverse interests, and I believe I can represent all of them."

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427,000AF of Idaho Water Earmarked for Salmon

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has released its 1995-98 Biological Opinions of March 1, 1995. This opinion, the result of negotiation and reconsideration of the 1993 Biological Opinion rejected by Judge Marsh of Portland, specifies that the Bureau of Reclamation must obtain 427,000 acre feet of Idaho water for use in flow augmentation by 1998 on a yearly basis. The opinion also calls for water to be discharged by Idaho Power from Brownlee and for a drawdown of Dworshak Reservoir in northern Idaho. In addition, more intensive barging of smolts, additional water from the Columbia River basin, drawdown of the four lower Snake River reservoirs to minimum operating pool, continuation of predation control programs and several additional studies relating to collectors, by-pass systems, and fish friendly turbines was called for by the new opinion.

The 427,000 acre feet of Idaho water can only be acquired through a "willing buyer, willing seller" format and must be in compliance with state law. The Idaho Water Users Association (IWUA) has asserted that this amount of Idaho water not be guaranteed but only a target for what might become available through this process. Also, IWUA, in concert with representatives from the Congressional delegation, the Governor's office, the Idaho Legislature, the Northwest Power Planning Council, and many irrigation entities, is pressing the Bureau to consider leasing water rather than purchasing water from state lands as a means of acquiring additional water for flow augmentation. Many consider the permanent removal of Idaho water from

our land to be against public interest.

As for our Water District, a move to transfer use of uncontracted storage water is currently under way at the Bureau of Reclamation in an attempt to legalize out of basin uses for Cascade and Deadwood reservoir waters. This transfer, if allowed by the Idaho Department of Water Resources, would let the Bureau move all 95,000 acre feet of uncontracted storage water downstream for flow augmentation efforts free from any intervention by the state or our Water District. The District would also lose the administrative fee currently being paid to move this water downstream.

"IWUA has asserted that 427,000 acre feet not be guaranteed, but merely a target amount from Idaho water..."

and the valley would lose all hope of obtaining additional storage water in severe drought conditions. Payette River Water Users Association ~~has~~ went on record to file protests on the

transfer and to research the possibility of a term lease through our Water Bank. A term lease might avert a major change in the Bureau's water right (i.e. transfer of use) by allowing the Bureau to continue to move uncontracted storage water downstream for an administrative fee through the Water District, but would also protect this space for the valley in future years as needs change. The Watermaster will continue to communicate further news on this issue in the future.

In a related action, NMFS released its draft Recovery Plan on March 15, 1995. The 500 page document has been submitted to the public for review and comments will be accepted for 90 days. Public hearings will be held in Boise on May 17, 1995. For information contact the Watermaster.

Water District No. 65 Annual Meeting Held

Water District No. 65 held its annual meeting on February 10, 1995, at the New Plymouth Senior Citizens' Hall. W. Brick Andrew was elected Chairman of the Water District Local Committee for 1995. Marcia Herr was re-elected Secretary of the Committee. The Local Committee, a group comprised of sixteen members representing irrigator's interests in the District, advises the operations of the Watermaster and the District throughout the year. Also, this board oversees the Water Bank and all leases and rentals to and from the Bank of storage water. Helen Bivens, the past Watermaster, was commended for her tireless efforts over the past year. A proposed budget of \$123,569 for the operations of the Water District was approved. An assessment of not more than \$.50 per acre, not to exceed \$70,000 total, was approved to facilitate rental pool funds in funding the budget. The reason for this assessment is to replace revenues the rental pool may lose in the coming year. The Bureau of Reclamation is applying to transfer the

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Watermaster: Teamwork Critical to Water District

The Payette River system has never failed its users as long as we can remember. About the only reason we might be in for a disastrous water season is if we do not work together as a team to help each other make it through a dry year. 1995 looks like an excellent year for irrigators and other users on the system. However, we must remember the recent dry years as precursors to what might happen in the future. We must, as a Water District, keep our communication lines open to each other. I see my job as a facilitator of this communication. My goals for the coming year are two fold. First, I plan on meeting with most of you, either in the boardrooms of the different companies and irrigation districts or individually as users on the Payette. Second, I would like to send you the information I believe is important for all water users on a timely basis. I hope this newsletter, which I will publish three times a season, accomplishes this goal.

All of us have one thing in common, water is essential to our livelihoods. The importance of water in our lives will never be totally quantified. Water is the reason we are here in this valley. Our forefathers would never have settled here if it were not for the Payette River and all its tributaries. And our farms and ranches would not be here if it were not for the reservoirs and canal systems strategically planned for our valley's economic base. We must begin to protect what we have by becoming involved in the political and managerial structures organized for us. Serve on an irrigation board, serve on a committee, become involved proactively, not reactively. Your service to your canal company or Water

District is essential to its survival in this world of environmental and endangered species concerns. The more users become involved and educated to the problems of our Water District, the more questions and criticism will be answered intelligently and accurately.

The public is looking to us for the answers. We must communicate the importance of our water to them as well. Our economy in this area is still affected to a large extent by agriculture. The public needs to know what might happen if our water is lost to downstream interests.

"All of us have one thing in common, water is essential to our livelihoods..."
.. Mark Limbaugh, Watermaster

I look forward to serving the District as Watermaster during the coming year. With your involvement, we can make a difference in the ongoing fight for Idaho's water.

Annual Meeting...

(Continued from page 2)

water right on the uncontracted space in Cascade and Deadwood Reservoirs downstream to meet flow augmentation demands for the salmon. Also, all other Water Districts in the state are supported with assessments of their users. These assessments must be paid by June 1, or water deliveries may be terminated until payment is received. Finally, the new Local Advisory Committee was elected. The members are: Bob Henggeler, Jerry Anderson, Jay Sisler, Duane Van Leuven, Steve Dobson, Cecil Shurtleff, Virgil Johnson, Keith Standley, Leonard Arbuckle, Marc Shigeta, W.L. Charters, Monty Pearce, Dale Krause and Dave Tuthill, Jr. Chairman Andrew closed the meeting by praising the efforts of Bob Henggeler and Cecil Shurtleff on behalf of the Water District.

Idaho Water Users Assn. Legislative Log

Idaho Legislators addressed over 40 bills affecting water users, water rights, irrigation districts and canal companies in the short time they were in Boise. Issues such as elections, endangered species, drainage districts, domestic use definitions, water quality, ground water administration and water measurement districts were all reviewed and addressed.

Idaho Water Users Association maintains a presence before the Legislature throughout the session. All bills affecting IWUA membership are reviewed and positions are taken on those bills through the IWUA Legislative Committee. According to Sherl Chapman, Executive Director of IWUA, one of the more important bills passed by the Legislature this year deals with the formation of Ground Water Districts. -- This bill provides a mechanism to fund mitigation programs or other efforts designed to administer and protect ground

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Payette River Water Users Hire Hydrologist

The Payette River Water Users Association, a non-profit group formed to protect water users within the District, has hired a hydrologist-engineer to study the Bureau of Reclamation's storage accounting procedures in Cascade Reservoir. According to Bob Henggeler, president of the group, Terry Scanlan of Scanlan Engineering has been contracted to report on the consistency of this storage accounting, as well as the effect future drought conditions might have on the availability of storage water to users in the valley. The report should assess a series of back to back drought years, such as 1977, 1987, 1992, and 1994, as possible scenarios to be used as evidence to challenge the current storage accounting procedures. This information could also be

useful in proving the need for additional storage space for irrigation if these drought scenarios become a reality. The Bureau is currently prepared to apply for a transfer of use on the uncontracted space in Cascade and Deadwood Reservoirs, and this transfer would not allow for irrigator's concerns. The Scanlan Report, as it will be called, could be used to protest the Bureau's transfer and cause the Idaho Department of Water Resources to issue conditions to the transfer of use to include irrigator's needs in drought situations. According to Henggeler, the transfer, if allowed, would take uncontracted irrigation water out of the valley forever.

IWUA Leg. Update:

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water users and senior water rights", says Chapman.

Issues not passed, but might be brought up next year are bills protecting the right of irrigation companies to maintain their ditches and canals, providing for water quality concerns on Idaho rivers and streams, and several bills introduced by the environmental community in an effort to insert non water right holders into the Adjudication process and to make it easier to develop river basin plans restrictive on irrigated agriculture. For more information, contact your Watermaster.

Water District Update

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