

Irrigators, BOR team up on Payette River water levels

Goal: Maintain fall flows

PAYETTE — Five local irrigation organizations and the Bureau of Reclamation have teamed up to boost water levels this fall in the Payette River downstream from Black Canyon Dam, state water officials announced.

The groups have donated approximately 6,000 acre feet of water presently stored in Cascade and Deadwood Reservoirs, which can be released into the river. That's enough water to supply an additional 100 cubic feet per second flow in the river for a month. The extra water will be used to help keep river flows below Black Canyon dam at a minimum of 500 cfs, helping fishery development.

Historically, this time of year the river flows below Black Canyon Dam begin to drop to less than 500 cfs due to a sharply reduced need to supply water downstream for irrigation. Last year in late September the flow below Black Canyon fell at one point to about 230 cfs. The flows typically do not recover until later in the fall when rain and snow boost the natural flow levels of the river.

The decision to provide the flow augmentation water came after a series of informal meetings between the organizations and the Idaho Department of Water Resources, which oversees water distribution activities around the state. The irrigation groups

include the Black Canyon Irrigation District, the Emmett Irrigation District, the Farmers Co-Op Irrigation Company, the Lower Payette Ditch Company and the Noble Ditch Company.

"We have extra water this year left over for carryover," Payette River Watermaster Mark Limbaugh said. "The thought behind this is not to let the river go down to its natural level. We augment the flow to keep local fisheries and the public in water around the Emmett area. We feel it is good management of river irrigation water for public use."

Limbaugh added this area of the state should have some of the highest carryover levels it has seen in 10 years. "The flows stayed fairly high and constant through June and July -- that cut out three weeks when we normally use stored water."

Limbaugh will monitor flows at Black Canyon Dam and has been authorized to release extra water from Cascade and Deadwood reservoirs to make sure flows stay at the 500 cfs minimum.

The collaboration is the first time irrigation interests in the area have joined forces to provide storage water to augment river flows, Limbaugh said. "We see it as another step to manage our resources. When it's a good water year and we've got lots of storage we want to maintain flows which benefit the public and wildlife. We see it as a win-win situation," he said.

Post-it* Fax Note	7671	Date	# of pages ▶
To	DAVE TOTHILL	From	DICK LARSEN
Co./Dept.		Co.	
Phone #		Phone #	
Fax #		Fax #	

WD65 —

PAYETTE INDEPENDENT-ENTERPRISE
9-27-95

Irrigation water to help fish

Five local irrigation organizations and the Bureau of Reclamation have teamed up to boost water levels this fall in the Payette River downstream from Black Canyon Dam, state water officials said.

The groups have donated about 6,000 acre feet of water presently stored in Cascade and Deadwood reservoirs, which can be released into the river. That's enough water to supply an additional 100 cubic feet per second flow in the river for a month. The extra water will help keep river flows below Black Canyon dam at a minimum of 500 cfs, helping fishery development.

Historically, this time of year the river flows below Black Canyon Dam begin to drop to less than 500 cfs due to a sharply reduced need to supply water downstream for irrigation. At one point last September the flow below Black Canyon fell to about 230 cfs. The flows typically do not recover until late fall when rain and snow boost the natural flow levels of the river.

The irrigation groups participating include the Black Canyon Irrigation District, the Emmett Irriga-

tion District, the Farmers Co-Op Irrigation Company, the Lower Payette Ditch Company and the Noble Ditch Company.

"We have extra water this year left over for carryover," said Payette River Watermaster Mark Limbaugh. "The thought behind this is not to let the river go down to its natural level. We'll augment the flow to keep local fisheries and the public in water around the Emmett area. We feel it is good management of river irrigation water for public use."

Limbaugh added this area of the state should have some of the highest carryover levels it has in 10 years. "The flows fairly high and constant in June and July — that cut out weeks when we normally use stored water."

Limbaugh will monitor flows at Black Canyon Dam and has been authorized to release extra water from Cascade and Deadwood reservoirs to make sure flows stay at the 500 cfs minimum.

The collaboration is the first time irrigation interests in the area have joined forces to provide storage water to augment river flows, Limbaugh said. "We see it as another step to manage our resources. When it's a good water year and we've got lots of storage, we want to maintain flows which benefit the public and wildlife. We see it as a win-win situation," he said.