

**Mountain Home Aquifer Working Group
of the
Expanded Natural Resources Legislative Interim Committee
Mountain Home City Hall Meeting Room
160 South 3rd East
Mountain Home, Idaho 83647
December 6, 2004**

Attendees: Chairman: Representative Bert Stevenson
Committee members: Representative Doug Jones, Representative Peter Nielsen
Senator Tom Gannon
Members of the public: Sign-up sheet available from Legislative Services Offices

Presenters: Lynn Tominaga, Idaho Ground Water Appropriators, Inc. (IGWA)

Chairman Bert Stevenson called to order the meeting of the Mountain Home Aquifer Working Group at 9:35 a.m. on Monday, December 6, 2004, in the Mountain Home City Hall Meeting Room. In the first order of business, Senator Gannon moved to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2004, meeting. Representative Jones seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

In what is expected to be its last meeting, the working group briefly discussed the outcome of a meeting with representatives from the Mountain Home Air Force Base, received an update on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and adopted its final report to the Expanded Natural Resources Legislative Interim Committee. Members of the working group expressed appreciation for the support they received from various stakeholders, including the Mountain Home Ground Water Advisory Group, Mountain Home Irrigation District, Mountain Home Air Force Base, City of Mountain Home, the staff of Idaho Department of Water Resources and in particular Helen Harrington, Gary Spackman, David Blew and Brian Patton, and others.

Mountain Home Air Force Base: In a meeting with the base commander and other personnel to discuss water issues, members of the working group learned that the base's involvement in these issues is restricted at this time. Mountain Home Air Force Base is part of the on-going Base Realignment Committee (BRAC) process that identifies military bases for closure or consolidations. It can take no actions until Congress acts on the completed report. The base has several water conservation and monitoring projects underway and is willing to cooperate in any way it can with Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) to share information. Helen Harrington, IDWR, said contact has already been made to discuss this data. Since there are already monitoring wells in place in this area, money may be available to be spent on additional monitoring wells in other locations.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program: Lynn Tominaga, executive director of IGWA, said CREP appears to becoming a major piece of the final solution to conjunctive management issues on the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer. While most acreage will be concentrated on the plain, there are provisions to enroll acres located within designated critical ground water management areas and ground water management areas, including the two in Elmore County. Tominaga presented an update on the proposal that included eligibility criteria, a time line for getting the program on the

ground, and other technical standards to be met in this federal lease program. CREP is not a buy out. Anyone enrolling in the program must meet NRCS and FSA technical standards and other eligibility criteria. There will be stiff penalties for non-compliance. A ranking sheet is being developed with a point system that will ensure the program's primary goal of water conservation and secondary goal of habitat improvement are met. Water savings must be measurable, monitored and reported.

A final draft is expected to be presented to the legislature by January 2005. If approved by March 30th, the governor will support the program if state funding issues are resolved, and could forward a letter proposing the project to the United States Secretary of Agriculture by June. With no major objections from Congress or the USDA, the proposal could be adopted by late summer. Enrollment could begin in the fall of 2005 with the program being implemented in the 2006 planting year.

Final Report: The working group reviewed the revisions to its draft final report proposed at its November 10th meeting. One additional change was inserted on page 3 under Recommendations.

1. Mountain Home Ground Water Advisory Committee. Sentence 2.

“The working group recommends that the committee complete and submit to IDWR a recommended management plan within 180 days *starting on January 1, 2005.*”

Senator Gannon moved to adopt the Draft (Revised 11/10/04) with the stated addition as the working group's final report, seconded by Representative Nielsen. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Ms. Harrington was directed to make the final revision and forward the final report to Legislative Services Office. Chairman Stevenson will forward an official copy with a cover letter to the City of Mountain Home, the Elmore County commissioners, and the Mountain Home Air Force Base. A copy will also be posted on the internet.

The Expanded Natural Resources Legislative Interim Committee will review the final reports from all the working groups to develop a legislative package and budget requests that will be forwarded to the legislature as a whole in its up-coming session.

There being no further business before the working group, the meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Copies of the maps, studies and handouts are available to the public on the IDWR website at www.idwr.state.id.us/Committee

Meeting notices, agendas and minutes are available to the public at <http://www2.state.id.us/legislat/legislat.html>.

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