

Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Ground Water Management Area Management Plan

James Cefalo
Idaho Dept. of Water Resources
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What is a Ground Water Management Area?

Idaho Code § 42-233b authorizes the Director of IDWR to designate a ground water basin as a Ground Water Management Area (“GWMA”) if IDWR has determined that the basin is approaching the conditions of a critical ground water area (an area “not having sufficient ground water to provide a reasonably safe supply for irrigation . . . or other uses in the basin at the current rates of withdrawal”)



Designation of Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) GWMA

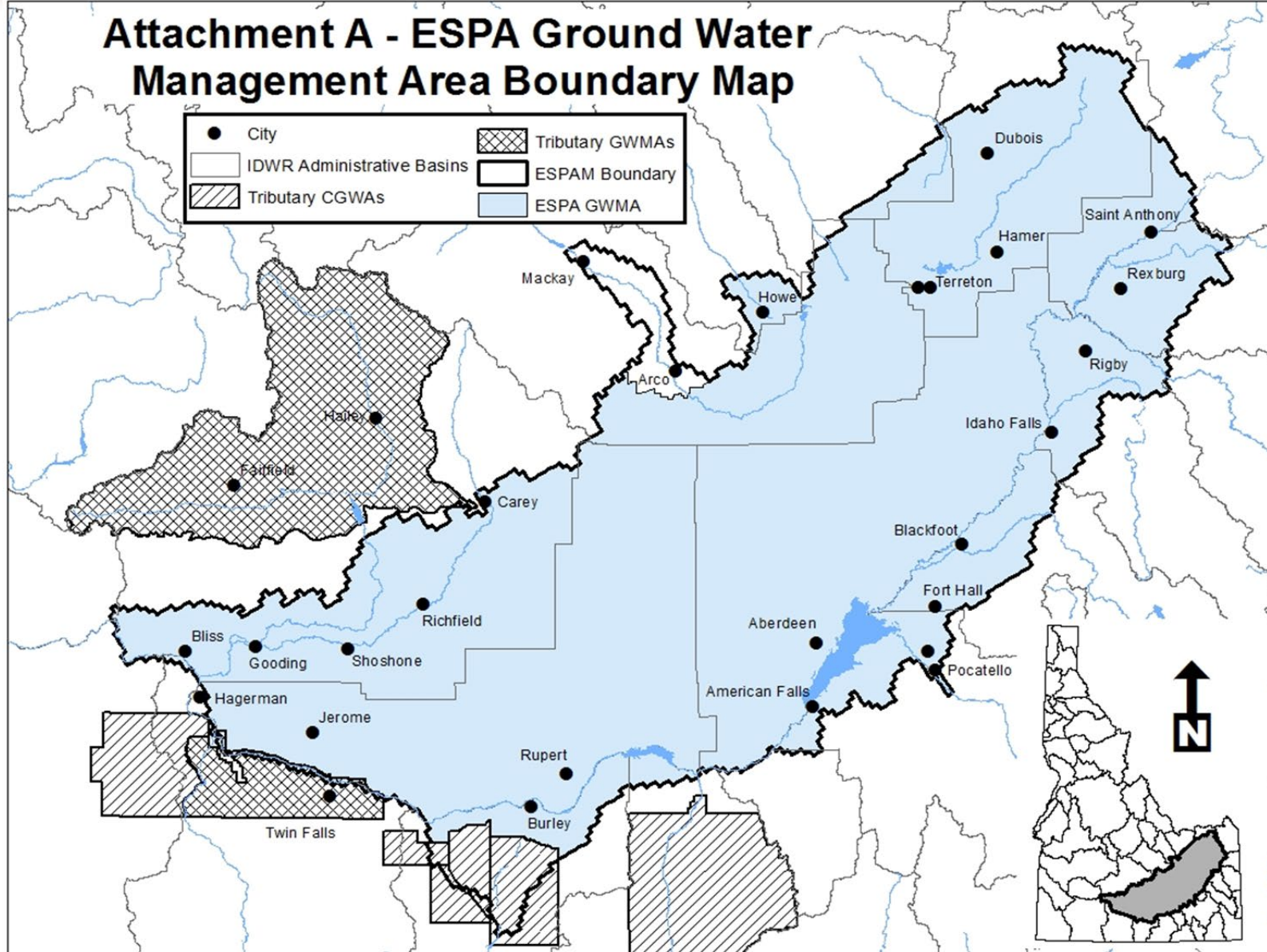
“The ESPA is a vital source of water for the State of Idaho. Approximately a million acres of land on the Snake River Plain are irrigated by ground water pumped directly from the ESPA. The ESPA is hydraulically connected to the Snake River and indirectly supports surface water irrigation of roughly another million acres. ESPA-supported agriculture is crucial to Idaho's food supply and to the economies of communities across southern Idaho.”

“The record establishes that as a result of chronic declines in ESPA storage and spring discharges, in many years the ESPA ground water supply is not sufficient to satisfy senior priority water rights diverting from the ESPA and hydraulically connected sources”

Order Designating ESPA GWMA at 5, 19 (Nov 2, 2016)



Photo: Chadh/Flickr



Effects of a GWMA Designation

1. A Ground Water Management Area (“GWMA”) designation changes the administrative focus from injury determinations for individual water users to management of the ground water resource as a whole
2. GWMA tools: (1) management plan; (2) measurement and reporting; and (3) restrictions on new appropriations from the aquifer
3. GWMA require participation by all ground water users
4. Could replace existing delivery call mitigation plans if adopted management plan is effective
5. The designation of a GWMA and the adoption of a management plan may lessen the likelihood of future delivery calls, support the goals of the State Water Plan, and protect existing settlements

ESPA GWMA Advisory Committee

Formed August 2023

Ellis Gooch, American Falls Reservoir District #2

Roger Blass, Twin Falls Canal Company

Kresta Davis, Idaho Power Company

Jeff Mansfield, City of Pocatello

Bill Stoddart, Jefferson-Clark GWD

Tim Deeg, Aberdeen-American Falls GWD

Karen Henderson, Hagerman Valley Spring Users

Brent Bowen, Burley Irrigation District

Randy Brown, Southwest Irrigation District

Mike Telford, Big Lost River GWD

Mike Williams, City of Jerome

Stephanie Mickelsen, Bonneville-Jefferson GWD

Lynn Carlquist, North Snake GWD

Progress of ESPA GWMA Advisory Committee

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Sept 2023 | Initial meeting of committee |
| | Discuss role of committee and framework of plan |
| Oct 2023 | Reviewed management plans from other basins |
| | Established initial set of goals for management plan |
| Nov 2023 | Review technical information about ESPA water balance |
| | Review recent pumping reductions by GWDs |
| Coming Yr. | Prepare draft management plan (the difficult work) |
| Dec 2024 | Submit draft management plan to Director |

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IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES



Photo: John O'Connell, Idaho Farm Bureau