

**Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer
Ground Water Management Area
Advisory Committee**

**James Cefalo
Idaho Dept. of Water Resources
October 28, 2024**



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

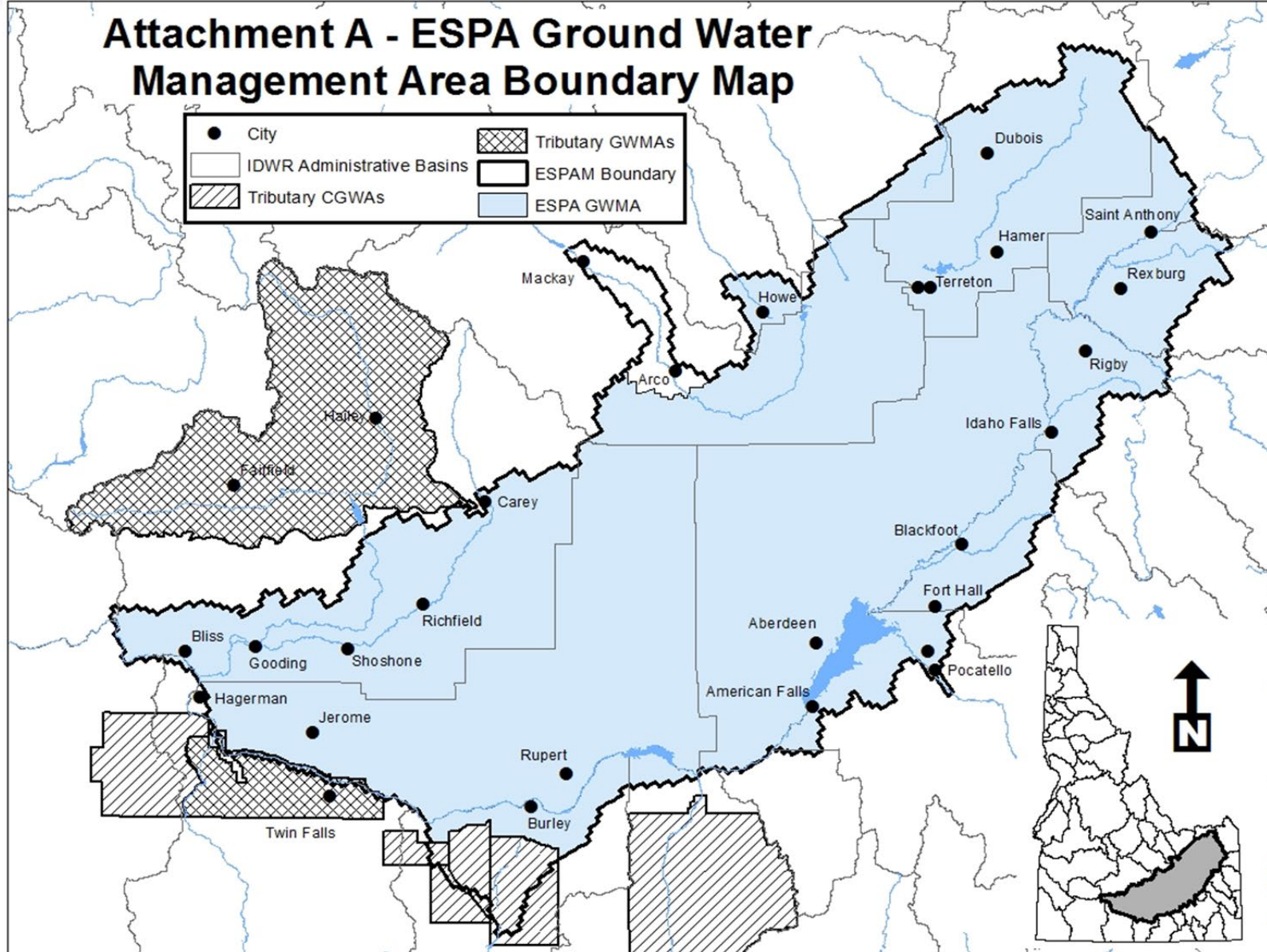
“The ESPA is a vital source of water for the State of Idaho. Approximately a million acres of land on the Snake River Plain are irrigated by ground water pumped directly from the ESPA. The ESPA is hydraulically connected to the Snake River and indirectly supports surface water irrigation of roughly another 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



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

ESPA GWMA Advisory Committee

- Full committee met twelve times between August 2023 and August 2024.
- Multiple breakout sessions with ground water group and surface water group.
- Topics Discussed: annual pumping allocations, multi-year averaging or blocking, measurement and reporting, enforcement, long-term and short-term objectives, metrics for success, private recharge, future adjustments, non-irrigation rights.
- Committee was not able to reach consensus on most topics.
- September 1, 2024, deadline established by Governor Little.
- August 30, 2024, memo to Governor Little and Director Weaver ending committee process and providing summary of the topics for a management plan and the positions of the committee members.

ESPA GWMA Advisory Committee

- Shortcomings:
 - Many of the early committee meetings were not productive because committee members have fundamental disagreement about the purpose of a management plan.
 - Make-up of the committee did not lend itself to resolution on certain topics.
- Successes:
 - Advisory Committee process laid the foundation for settlement negotiations in the Surface Water Coalition Delivery Call.
 - Draft settlement agreement being considered by IGWA and SWC incorporates many of the topics and ideas considered by the ESPA GWMA Advisory Committee.
 - Even though the Advisory Committee was not able to draft a consensus plan, the materials provided to Director Weaver provide a comprehensive summary and analysis of the primary components of a management plan.

James Cefalo
Eastern Regional Manager
james.cefalo@idwr.idaho.gov
208-525-7161



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