

IN THE SENATE

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 116

BY RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

STATING FINDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE RELATED TO WATER DISTRICT 1 AND SUPPORT-  
ING VARIOUS ASSOCIATED PROJECTS.

Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Idaho:

WHEREAS, Water District 1 of the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB), encompassing the Panhandle region including Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Shoshone, Benewah, Latah, Clearwater, Nez Perce, Lewis, and Idaho counties, is a region of vital hydrologic importance to the State of Idaho; and

WHEREAS, the efficient management of water resources in District 1 is essential for maintaining the region's agricultural productivity, sustaining the Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, managing flood risks in the Kootenai and St. Joe River Valleys, and preserving the recreational and economic value of North Idaho's lakes and rivers; and

WHEREAS, IWRB has identified, funded, and overseen numerous projects critical to modernizing aging infrastructure and ensuring long-term water sustainability in the region.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the Second Regular Session of the Sixty-eighth Idaho Legislature, the Senate and the House of Representatives concurring therein, that the Legislature hereby formally recognizes the importance of and supports the continuation of existing and future water projects in Water District 1.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature supports the continued development and active management of the Priest Lake Outlet Dam Modification in Bonner County and recognizes that IWRB's oversight of this structure is indispensable for maintaining statutorily established lake levels, thereby safeguarding North Idaho's tourism economy, protecting shoreline property values, and ensuring adequate downstream flows for the Priest River ecosystem.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature prioritizes the Lewiston Orchards Irrigation District's Lower Clearwater Exchange Project in Nez Perce County as a model of regional water sustainability and acknowledges the critical nature of this exchange, currently in the design phase, which shifts reliance from unstable ground water sources and the Sweetwater Creek system to the Clearwater River, thereby stabilizing the local aquifer and benefitting Endangered Species Act listed steelhead populations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature commends the successful deployment of Aging Infrastructure Grants to vital agricultural systems, specifically recognizing the Burnett Water Users Association project in Clearwater County. The rehabilitation of this diversion and conveyance infrastructure is declared essential for preventing catastrophic failure and ensuring that water rights remain beneficially used to support the rural economy of the region.

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature acknowledges the critical  
2 modernization efforts undertaken by the Hayden Lake Irrigation District in  
3 Kootenai County and affirms that the replacement of failing pipelines and  
4 the improvement of pumping efficiency are necessary actions to reduce energy  
5 costs and protect the water quality of the Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, which  
6 serves as the primary drinking water source for the rapidly growing populace  
7 of the Spokane-Rathdrum region.

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature declares the projects  
9 herein identified as vital to the strategic interests of District 1 as  
10 they, among other benefits, secure economic stability for agricultural and  
11 high-tech industries, preserve the recreational tax base of the region's  
12 lakes, and provide essential protections for sole-source aquifers.

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature recognizes that the main-  
14 tenance of water security requires a sustained commitment to future invest-  
15 ment, particularly as District 1 faces the compounding pressures of rapid  
16 population growth and aging infrastructure, and that proactive funding for  
17 planning, modernization, and aquifer management is fiscally responsible  
18 and essential to prevent the significantly higher costs associated with de-  
19 ferred maintenance and emergency response.

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature supports the continued ap-  
21 propriation of funds to IWRB to ensure the completion and long-term viabil-  
22 ity of these critical projects in Water District 1.