



Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) Implementation Committee

Funding Working Group - Meeting Summary October 28, 2009

The Funding Working Group met with representatives from County Treasurer's office to discuss the draft legislation prepared by Phil Rassier, Deputy AG.

The role of the county assessor and treasurer was discussed and clarified. The Treasurer's office can serve as a collection agent but cannot provide data. The Treasurer's need the parcel number, name, amount to collect and contact information for billing questions in order to move forward. The collection information will be needed in by July or August in order to begin collection the next year. It was noted that assessors don't want to be treasurers and treasurers don't want to be assessors.

The county assessor's office can provide assistance in collecting information, such as number of irrigated acres, parcel modifications and others. Coordinating information between IDWR, Water Districts and County Assessors is required. A meeting will be set up, coordinated through Dan Chadwick with Valdi Pace (Blaine County) and Max Vaughn a member of the Implementation Committee/ Minidoka County and IDWR to discuss the mechanics of the proposed approach. In addition Kerry Ellen Elliott will need to be involved in the legislation review.

Working Group Proposal on Collection Mechanism

The Working Group reviewed Phil Rassier's draft legislation and noted that the legislation needs to authorize the Board to impose fee on all Plan contributors but allow for flexibility of collection methods. Any legislation will also need to include authorization for the Board to both collect and use allocated funds.

The following approach was agreed to by the Working Group

1) Irrigated Agriculture

- a. Collect \$1 per acre fee annually for all irrigated acres within the ESPA model boundary on the tax bill through the County Treasurer's office.
- b. Collect an additional \$1 an acre for all groundwater acres in the ESPA through the Groundwater Districts (need to identify the groundwater users outside of groundwater districts). One option discussed is to use the counties to collect for groundwater users outside of districts. **Next Steps** – Hal Anderson will coordinate with Cindy/Ernie, IDWR staff who measure acres that are outside ground water districts but within the ESPA boundaries, to determine the number and location of these acres. Lynn Tominaga will coordinate with Groundwater Districts.

2) Other users

- a. Municipalities could be included in groundwater district assessments based on the number of hookups. Cities not included in a groundwater district may be able to opt in to a District for the purpose of the ESPA. **Next steps** - Jonathan Bartsch will discuss with Implementation Committee municipal representatives and Roger Chase (IWRB)
- b. Spring users could be assessed through water districts based on cfs use. It will be important that not only the two largest spring users pay the entire fee. Due to the potential size of the fee, it is not recommended to include as part of the property tax bill. **Next steps** - Randy MacMillan and Linda Lemon to discuss the best way to proceed.
- c. Industrial/Commercial – ?
- d. Idaho Power likely through a separate agreement with the IWRB.

The issue of the State of Idaho contribution to Plan implementation was discussed. It was noted that it would be very difficult to allocate \$3 million from the 2010 budget as part of the state matching funds for the Plan and that the draft legislation should be modified. Since the Plan envisions funding participation targets contingent on others contributing, the legislation could include a scale/weighting system if the State was unable to contribute the full amount. There are a number of ways in which the state could contribute, including with resources available to the IWRB. This item needs further discussion.

Administrative Fee

The administrative fee that would be paid to the county to provide the staff/programming for the county treasurer collection was discussed. Currently the GW districts pay up to 3% of the total amount collected as outlined in statute. Whether the administrative fee is added to the collection or would be part of the fee collected was discussed but no direction provided.

Size of Fee

The size of fee attached to the tax role was discussed; it was recommended that the overall tax bill should not significantly increase due to ‘specials’ (ESPA Plan). For example, the spring user contributions would seem to be too large to be connected the property tax.

Delinquency

After 3 years of delinquent payment the proportion of the tax to be collected from the Plan would be turned back to the IWRB for civil action to collect. It was emphasized that interest, penalties and a fee have to be consistent with the way it is handled with other taxes and fees if it will be on the tax roll. A 3 year window seemed appropriate.

Broader Public Education

It was suggested that prior to collection of a new fee that a broad public education effort be undertaken. A notice to each parcel affected along with a news release is recommended. The educational effort should also identify the benefits of the ESPA plan and will likely be coordinated with the entire implementation effort.

Next Meeting

The next Funding Working Group meeting will be - **Tuesday, November 10 at 9 am** via teleconference.

Attendees:

Debbie Kaufman – Twin Falls County

Barb Fry – Nez Perce

Janice Wells –

Hal Anderson

Lloyd Hicks

Jeff Raybould

Randy Bingham

Randy MacMillan

Lynn Tominaga

Alex Le Beau

Stephan Goodson

Phil Rassier

Dan Chadwick

Jonathan Bartsch