Expanded Natural Resources Interim Committee
Northern Basins Working Group

Recommendations

Draft 10/4/04

Introduction:
The Northern Basins Working Group met monthly beginning in April 2004 at various locations including Post Falls, Orofino, Sandpoint and Moscow. The Working Group has received testimony and information from organizations, citizens, local officials and scientific experts. The following recommendations are formulated and submitted for consideration and funding by the Idaho Legislature. These recommendation in no way document support for projects or programs being developed by Work Groups in other areas of the state. The Northern Basins Work Group understands the importance of water resources for continued economic and environmental sustainability, and supports a priority focus on securing resources to resolve Idaho's various water management challenges. These recommendations are formulated by river basins.

Clark Fork, Pend Oreille, Kootenai, Moyie and Priest River Basins:

1. Establish $102,000 in funding for data base development and collection of water monitoring data for Pend Oreille and Clark Fork rivers. Including $60,000 one time funding for the development of a database to compile in one place studies done on Pend Oreille lake on water quality and water quantity issues and to identify gaps in baseline data and $42,000 for water quality monitoring to establish base conditions prior to the development and operation of the Rock Creek mine in Montana.
2. $50,000 one time money to the Kootenai Resource Initiative to supplement funding for collecting and analyzing data related to reservoir operation effects on white sturgeon and to develop baseline data for water quality and water quantity issues on the Moyie and Kootenai Rivers.
3. The Pend Oreille and Priest Lake Commission has existed for two years with no state funding. The Northern Basins Work Group recommends $150,000 in start up funding for an executive director, office space and operating expenses.
4. Legislature should provide funding for a study of Pend Oreille lake level/operation on ground water recharge to the Rathdrum aquifer. Pend Oreille is at the upper end of the Rathdrum aquifer and changes to the operation of the lake level may have an effect on the amount of water recharged to the Rathdrum aquifer. A study is needed to quantify the degree of interconnection between the lake and the aquifer and how lake level changes would affect the aquifer. *(funding amount not identified at this time)*

Coeur d' Alene, Spokane and Rathdrum:

1. Idaho is currently engaged in a collaborative study of the Rathdrum Aquifer with the State of Washington and the U.S. Geological Survey. The study resulted from concerns in Washington and Idaho of the long-term viability of the ground water and interconnected surface waters of the Rathdrum aquifer and Spokane River including interstate water delivery issues. The state of Washington committed $100,000 last year to this study and

$500,000 of federal funding was also secured and is being used for then first year of a multi-year study effort. The Work Group recommends that Idaho contribute $150,000 a year for the next two years to support the study effort and encourages continued funding for future monitoring, measurement and modeling.

2. Establish and designate an Idaho/Washington organization that will coordinate and collaborate on cross-border water management issues. The organization will work with state water management agencies, local governments and other stakeholders to facilitate cooperation and information exchange. A base level funding of $50,000 a year is proposed.
3. Adoption of the recommendation of the Rathdrum Ground Water Management Plan advisory committee (attached). Recommendations include commencement of water right adjudication for the Coeur d'Alene basin.
4. Additional funding for water quality monitoring for the Department of Environmental Quality. *(Specific amount has not been identified)*

Palouse:

1. Adopt project proposals from Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC), (attached). Work Group recommends funding the first two priority projects for Monitoring Well Fields Nos. 2 and 3 and Pilot Passive Recharge Well included in the PBAC proposal which total $474, 000 for fiscal year 2006. The remaining three projects; Pilot Infiltration Basin or Combined Wetlands/Recharge Basin, Aquifer Model Development, Pilot Surface Catchment Project that total $488,000, should be funded as soon as possible.
2. Commence a general adjudication of water rights in the Palouse basin only if supported by local community.

Clearwater and Salmon:

1. Legislative support including letters from legislative leadership for dredging and other projects to keep the Port of Lewiston operable for shipping. Also letters supporting the continued maintenance and operation of the lower Snake River Dams for clean hydropower production and shipping operation.
2. No need for additional minimum streamflows or protection is necessary for the Selway, Lochsa, Salmon and Little Salmon rivers. If the proposed settlement of Nez Perce tribal claims in the Snake River Basin Adjudication is not approved then the state should evaluate if additional protection or regulation in needed.
3. Legislature should oppose the potential listing of North Fork Clearwater rainbow trout as a threatened species requiring protection under the Endangered Species act.
4. State should seek greater control of Dworshak reservoir so the water resource could be used for the benefit of Idaho citizens not the federal government.

General Recommendation:

1. Additional funding into the IDWR budget to monitor, measure, collect and analyze surface and ground water data in the Northern basins particularly in areas with on-going concerns. Recommend $250,000 per year of which $150,000 for FY06 and FY07 will be dedicated to support the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Hydrologic Project.

2. Move forward to adjudicate the remaining basins in the state that were not completed in the Snake River Basin adjudication. This should be accomplished by basin based upon support from the local community. At this time an adjudication is not supported for the Palouse and Potlatch basins, but a public process will be implemented to determine if there is support for an adjudication.
3. Establish an organization to coordinate and facilitate cross-border water resource management. Organization should focus on collaboration and information exchange for water resource issues between Idaho and Washington. Goal should be to provide a forum to educate and inform the community as well as provide recommendations to state water management agencies.