Executive Department
State of Idaho

State Capitol
Boise

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE OF IDAHO
BOISE

EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 2024 - 06
PROTECTING IDAHO WATER SOVEREIGNTY ACT

WHEREAS, water is the lifeblood of Idaho and we must be good stewards of this finite resource for current and future generations or we risk handing control of our water over to the federal government, courts, or other states; and

WHEREAS, Idaho is an agricultural state – its farmers are the backbone of the state's economy and Idaho celebrates the contributions that all farmers make to our outstanding way of life; and

WHEREAS, Idaho must maintain its water sovereignty and not turn out like other western states that rely on the Rio Grande River and those in the Colorado River Basin where the federal government stepped in to supersede the state's control of its water. Idaho must take action today to ensure a safe, reliable, and sustainable water supply into the future, which is why the State of Idaho championed over half a billion dollars in recent years to improve Idaho's water security through water supply projects, like cloud seeding, recharge, raising Anderson Ranch Dam, and the Mountain Home Air Force Base water supply pipeline as well as infrastructure modernization and repair statewide; and

WHEREAS, the Governor hosted a Water Summit in August of 2023 with hundreds of Idaho stakeholders to identify challenges and potential solutions to water issues in Idaho; and

WHEREAS, the Governor directed the Idaho Department of Water Resources to create the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) Groundwater Management Plan Advisory Council which has met regularly since 2023 with a goal of creating a groundwater management plan for ESPA; and

WHEREAS, while these efforts demonstrate a commitment to Idaho's water resources, additional efforts will be required to address future challenges; and

WHEREAS, the Snake River and ESPA are hydraulically connected resources that provide water for agriculture, communities, fisheries, energy production, and recreation; and

WHEREAS, the ESPA has been in a state of decline since the 1950s, and significant disputes have arisen over the conjunctive administration of the ESPA and Snake River; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, following a curtailment order issued by the Director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources, the surface water users and groundwater users worked together and crafted a solution to avoid water curtailment for the 2024 irrigation season (the 2024 Stipulation), demonstrating the "Idaho Way" of getting things done; and

WHEREAS, the State of Idaho recognizes a meaningful long-term solution, one developed through the collaborative efforts of the surface water users and groundwater users, is necessary to ensure a stable water supply into the future.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Brad Little, Governor of the State of Idaho, by the authority vested in me under the Constitution and laws of the State of Idaho, do hereby order and direct the following:

1. *To improve understanding of the aquifer, the Idaho Department of Water Resources will coordinate efforts to bolster and improve water supply modeling technology through partner organizations. The effort will require the partnership of universities, industry, farmers, ranchers, and others.*

2. *The Governor will recommend the Idaho Legislature convene the Interim Natural Resources Committee prior to the 2025 legislative session to identify predictable and consistent opportunities to enhance the state's water infrastructure.*

3. *The Idaho Water Resource Board will prioritize funding for projects that have net benefits to the ESPA while making water use more efficient.*

4. *The Governor will bring together industries and stakeholders to propose solutions to long-term water sustainability because the ingenuity of the private sector is far more desirable in seeking solutions than relying on the government to do so.*

5. *The Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Groundwater Management Plan Advisory Council will continue to meet to create a Groundwater Management Plan to be submitted for review by the Idaho Department of Water Resources, as required by law, by September 1, 2024.*

6. *Concurrently, as required by the 2024 Stipulation, the groundwater users and surface water users will meet to establish an improved mitigation plan as soon as possible, no later than October 1, 2024.*

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Idaho on this 26th day of June in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-four.

BRAD LITTLE
GOVERNOR

PHIL MCGRANE
SECRETARY OF STATE