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Water Curtailment Order Lifted For East Idaho Farmers
Farmers Will Get Back to Work Without Further Penalty

Idaho Falls, Id. – The Idaho Ground Water Appropriators (IGWA) have finalized a deal that saves 500,000 acres of farmland and averts economic catastrophe in the state.

A 2024-year water mitigation agreement, brokered by Governor Brad Little and Lt. Governor Scott Bedke, has now been signed by all parties and the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) has lifted its curtailment order that has barred thousands of Idaho farmers from irrigating their crops since May 30.

“This is a huge relief to our members, who have had their very livelihoods threatened over the past months,” said TJ Budge, IGWA attorney. “We want to thank Governor Little, Lt. Governor Bedke, Senator Van Burtenshaw and, especially, all of our groundwater district members for their sincere and significant efforts to get a deal done before it was too late.”

Though this agreement allows farms to continue the 2024 growing year, it does not fix the underlying issues with the 2015 Agreement that governs mitigation during projected shortfalls. Groundwater districts are putting considerable trust in the state to fulfill promises that the outdated methodologies and assumptions within that plan will be remedied before next season.

“Our farming communities have now had a gun to our heads for two straight years despite there being plenty of water to go around,” said IGWA Chair Stephanie Mickelsen. “Without meaningful change to how water resources are managed over the coming months, we will find ourselves right back in this same position and all of Idaho will end up paying the price. We urge our state leaders to keep their word and continue the productive discussions that began with this interim agreement.”

Districts are ready to continue negotiations for a new or altered agreement that helps the state avoid mitigation plans that rely on drying up farmland. It must also protect farmers who have already planted crops for the season from sudden changes in their access to water.

The curtailment was ordered after IDWR projected a 74,100-acre-foot shortfall of surface water to the Twin Falls Canal Company, a senior water right holder in the Magic Valley. The new plan mitigates for that shortfall and continues the commitment of IGWA members to recharge the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer.