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**Farmers Are Working Together to Survive Severe Drought Conditions
and Protect Idaho's Food Supply**

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho – June 12, 2026 – Idaho's severe drought and low snowpack are placing significant strain on the state's water supplies and forcing difficult decisions for farmers across the region. This year's poor snowpack is already translating into reduced surface water flows, highlighting how quickly drought conditions can affect canal systems that depend primarily on annual snow accumulation. For many surface water users, those impacts are immediate and acute.

Across Idaho, farmers are responding by working together to stretch limited supplies and keep as much farmland in production as possible. Since 2016, IGWA members have curtailed their water use by at least 11.4% every year, whether conditions are wet or dry. Those reductions, combined with long-term investments in managed aquifer recharge, infrastructure improvements and other measures, are designed to strengthen the overall system and better prepare Idaho for drought years like this one. These efforts are part of the 2024 mitigation plan, which is focused on reducing conflict, protecting water users and promoting long-term stability under both good and challenging water conditions. In years like this, the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) serves as a critical, more stable underground reservoir that helps buffer these year-to-year swings and sustain farms, communities and Idaho's agricultural economy.

"Drought years like this remind us how dependent Idaho agriculture is on reliable water supplies," said Stephanie Mickelsen, President of IGWA, Chair of the Bonneville Jefferson Ground Water District and longtime Idaho farmer. "Surface water systems can change quickly with snowpack conditions, and this year those impacts are hitting hard. The aquifer provides an important level of stability, and our members have been investing in that system for years so it can help sustain agriculture when conditions tighten."

Farmers on the ground are making difficult production decisions in real time. Low water supplies affect crop planning, rotations and local economies, and drought places pressure on both surface water and groundwater users alike. The ESPA supports more than 1 million acres of farmland and nearly 500,000 Idahoans, and agriculture supported by the aquifer contributes

roughly \$10 billion a year to Idaho's economy. When water supplies are constrained, those impacts extend well beyond the farm.

"In a year like this, every drop of water matters," said Lynn Carquist, Vice Chair of IGWA, Chair of the North Snake Ground Water District and multigenerational Idaho farmer. "Surface water users are feeling the effects of low snowpack right away, and everyone is working to adapt. Groundwater users are doing what Idaho farmers always do — tightening operations, making careful decisions and working together to use what water we have as efficiently as possible."

Adam Young, a third-generation barley, wheat and alfalfa grower and member of the Bingham Ground Water District board of directors, said drought conditions require farmers to constantly reassess their operations.

"These decisions are personal," Young said. "We are deciding what ground we can keep in production and how to make limited water go as far as it can. Farmers are adjusting rotations, reducing acreage where necessary and supporting each other so that as much of Idaho agriculture as possible can make it through a year like this."

This year's conditions underscore the importance of managing surface water and groundwater together and continuing to invest in a system that can respond to both wet and dry cycles. Idaho's water supplies naturally fluctuate from year to year, and drought has always been a challenge for canal systems tied to snowpack. By contrast, the ESPA provides a longer-term, more stable reserve that helps sustain agriculture through those swings. Continued investment in both the aquifer and surface water delivery systems will be essential to maintaining resilient farms, strong communities and a reliable food supply for Idaho and beyond.

About Idaho Ground Water Appropriators

Idaho Ground Water Appropriators (IGWA) represents groundwater users across the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer and tributary basins. IGWA protects groundwater rights, promotes smart water use, and works to ensure Idaho's aquifer supports agriculture, communities, and the economy for generations to come. IGWA's efforts span advocacy and legal representation, aquifer protection, conflict resolution and public education. For more information, visit idahogroundwater.org or follow IGWA on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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