

# GALENA GROUNDWATER DISTRICT

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April 5, 2022

Dear Galena Groundwater District Member,

Over the past 18 months, the Galena Ground Water District (GGWD) has participated in conversations between multiple organizations and senior water right holders in an effort to establish an agreement which would set forth procedures for the management of the Big Wood River Aquifer. Such an agreement was recently formalized by all parties in a signed term sheet and the Idaho State Department of Water Resources (IDWR) is currently revising the term sheet in order to implement the Big Wood River Ground Water Management Area Management Plan (the Management Plan). The current term sheet and pending Management Plan is a three-year agreement between senior surface water users and junior ground water users that disallows curtailment or water calls on ground water pumping for those water right owners who are a party to this agreement. GGWD is a signatory to this agreement and as such, the membership are participants in the Management Plan and also have "Safe Harbor" provided the GGWD and its members take specific steps to enhance the health of the Big Wood River Aquifer.

**1. GGWD members shall not irrigate before May 1 or after September 15.**

A September 30<sup>th</sup> turn off is authorized for specific circumstances, contingent on the water use being within individual groundwater user's reduction targets. Examples of specific circumstances may include potato crops, pasture, or landscape nurseries.

**2. GGWD members will fallow at least 200 acres in 2022 and increase up to 500 acres by 2024.**

A fallowed acre means an acre of land that has been irrigated using valid groundwater rights that will no longer be irrigated from either a groundwater or surface water source. The location of fallowed acres may change from year to year during the three-year agreement. Fallowed acres shall be identified at the end of year three (2024) and may be stabilized through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) or other long-term arrangement.

**3. GGWD will purchase 1,500 acre feet of storage water to partially mitigate for our water use (1,755 AF/yr. total with 17% conveyance loss).** Cost of this water will be determined at the time of sale however, this purchase will cost a minimum of \$90,000.00 annually.

GGWD and its membership are required to implement these strategies in order to adhere to the terms of the term sheet and Management Plan. Idaho Code 42-233b states that water right holders participating in an approved ground water management plan shall not be subject to administration on a time priority basis so long as they are in compliance with the groundwater management plan. Implementation of the Management Plan does not mitigate for the groundwater pumping impacts of any groundwater users not participating in the Management Plan individually or through a GWD or Association, nor does it protect non-participant groundwater users from curtailment under any IDWR administrative process.

Unfortunately, the water outlook for this year is presenting itself as more dire than the 2021 irrigation season, when massive curtailments were issued by IDWR. The curtailment order last year impacted 19 members of the GGWD and, although the water shut-off only lasted about one week, it acutely illustrated the commitment and power of IDWR to take any and all actions in order to preserve this resource for all documented water users. GGWD is a proud signator of the term sheet and is confident that implementing the strategies contained therein and in the Management Plan will secure our water use without the threats of legal action to or curtailment of ground water rights of our membership.

What You Can Do;

**Provide Fallowed Acres**

*If you have property that has been irrigated and will not be this year, please contact us.*

**Reduce your consumptive use**

*A 15% reduction in use is the requested number.*

**Visit our website [galenagwd.com](http://galenagwd.com)**

Thank you for your assistance in protecting our water rights, please address any correspondence to [galenagwd@gmail.com](mailto:galenagwd@gmail.com)

Your Board of Directors

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