**VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**MAY MINUTES 209 N IDAHO ST, CASCADE**

**THURSDAY MAY 1, 2025, 9:00 A.M. IN-PERSON/ZOOM HYBRID MEETING**

**Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88091655753?pwd=XaHxrYwWifdTvnYrk1b2qYlMJjAu4j.1**

**Meeting Called to Order at 9:01am by John Lillehaug. The agenda order was adjusted to address action items while quorum was present.**

**Members Present: John Lillehaug,** Bill Leaf (online); Judy Anderson; Associate Supervisor, Lenard Long (online); Associate Supervisor, Pam Pace (online).

**Others Present:** Durena Farr, VSWCD District Manager; Mattie Bradford, VSWCD Admin; Carter Borden, Centered Consulting LLC; Jordan Messner, IDFG.

**Others Online:** Kim Thompson, NFPRWC Admin; Neil Shippy, IDWR; Ron Brooks, ISWCC; Meghan Brooksher, ISWCC; Melissa Jayo, BoR; Cynda Herrick, Valley Co. P&Z; Janet Cherry, ERG/EPA

**Action Item:** Judy Anderson moved to approve minutes from the April Board Meeting. Bill Leaf seconded and **motion carried** with all in favor.

**Additional Action Items:**

1. **Action Item: Big Payette Lake WAQ Letter of Support:** Judy A. made a motion to support the Big Payette Lake WAQ letter of support for the McCall lot grant of $12,000 for nearshore water quality testing. Bill L. seconded it and **motion carried with all in favor**. It was noted that the application was due the previous day and the letter should be submitted as soon as possible.
2. **Action Item: IDWR/DEQ State Water Quality Hot Springs Phase 2 Application BAG Presentation:** Judy A. moved for the board to approve sending a board member to the BAG presentation on May 15th. Bill L. seconded and **motion carried with all in favor.** Discussion occurred regarding attending the presentation scheduled for May 15th in Boise, with a Zoom option available. Meghan Brooksher requested supervisor attendance. A recommendation was made to attend in person rather than via Zoom.
3. **Action Item: Payment for Seedling Invoice:** Bill L. moved for VSWCD to pay John Lillehaug for the seedling invoice from last year. Judy A. seconded **and motion carried with all in favor**.
4. **Action Item: Defer April Treasurer's Report:** Judy A. moved to defer the April Treasurer's report to the June meeting due to lack of time to complete bank reconciliations. Bill L. seconded and **motion carried with all in favor**.

**Reports and Presentations:**

1. **Carter Borden, Ph.D. - River Basin Modeling:** Carter Bordon was introduced to discuss setting up a river basin model for the North Fork Payette River. He has 25 years of experience looking at river basin models, primarily in the upper Salmon area (Lemhi, Stanley Basin) for purposes including general flow characterization, water rights assessment, project evaluation, minimum stream flows, and supporting legislation like the Lemhi settlements. He also used modeling for his dissertation on sustainable water resources at the University of Idaho and for IDWR regarding the Fort Hall agreement and the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer. He has applied similar modeling internationally. A river basin model is a simplified representation of a basin, representing elements like rainfall runoff, cropped areas (nodes for consumption/return), and domestic/industrial uses (also nodes tracking groundwater/surface water use). It functions as an accounting system. These models are typically planning level, not physically based models that route water based on geometry. While simplified, they can deal with groundwater, often using information from more sophisticated groundwater models as a boundary condition. Forest areas are usually incorporated into the rainfall runoff model component. Climate change impacts (e.g., less snowpack, lower runoff) can be modeled by changing the water input scenario. The model routes water through a system of nodes representing sources (catchments), junctions, and water users (municipalities, irrigated areas). It tracks water delivery and identifies deficiencies. The output is time series data for river flows and water delivery at each point. Wells can be incorporated by accounting for groundwater use as a source for a node's demand, tracking how much comes from wells versus surface water. However, modeling the *impact* of groundwater use on river flow requires a more physically based groundwater model, not this planning-level tool. The model can evaluate scenarios like population growth (increasing demand). Complexity can be added (reservoirs, hydropower). Ecological factors (like fisheries) are typically evaluated by post-processing model flow outputs against habitat suitability curves or flow targets. Economic impacts can also be assessed by looking at water delivery reliability for industries. Regarding groundwater/surface water interaction, there is a significant time lag, requiring separate model runs for sophisticated groundwater models (like the Eastern Snake River Plain model) and surface water models. Valley County lacks a groundwater model and sufficient data (only four long-term wells) to create one. The Northwest River Forecast Center model includes groundwater components but starts at Cascade Dam and lacks gauge data for tributaries like Gold Fork, Boulder Creek, and the North Fork Payette entering Payette Lake, making accurate modeling difficult due to data scarcity. In the data-scarce Lemhi basin, a water accounting model was developed and used effectively. Ungauged basins required rainfall runoff models for prediction. The model can be used to evaluate basin performance based on various metrics (drinking water reliability, storage, hydropower, agriculture) and compare scenarios. An example from the Lemhi showed how modeling piping systems could evaluate water savings and their impact on drying creek sections, demonstrating the potential for projects to put water back into the creek. This allows for scenario analysis to determine if a project is worthwhile. Another application involved comparing model flows to fishery habitat suitability targets to identify where restoration or diversion management might be needed. The model has been used for cumulative impact assessment, evaluating individual diversions, habitat modeling, project evaluation (e.g., optimal location for flood-to-sprinkler conversions), and informing legislation like the Lemhi settlement (flushing flow targets). A potential North Fork Payette model could leverage the existing Snake River planning model (Riverware) used by the Bureau of Reclamation, IDWR, and Idaho Power, which includes the Payette system but at a coarser scale. The approach would involve trimming the larger model to focus on the Payette, adding detail for tributaries, collecting data, calibrating, and developing output formats. Advantages include creating a data platform, scenario analysis (sprinkler conversions, canal lining, cumulative impacts), linking to ecology, supporting inter-agency collaboration, showing results to the community, and helping people understand their water system. **Examples of irrigator use in the Lemhi included evaluating the impact of turning off water rights for flushing flows as part of the Lemhi Settlement (showing it was a small percentage of their time) and informing the IDWR rental pool program to meet flow targets**. This ties into the water transactions program. The model is primarily a flow tool. While it can provide input flows for other models, it is not a physical model for nutrient loading, sediment, or temperature routing. However, it can be used to determine flows needed to meet temperature thresholds if temperature-discharge relationships are known. **The model can help identify which projects (e.g., improving irrigation efficiency) would provide the most benefit ("bang for our communities") by evaluating predicted impacts, providing backing for grant applications**. Currently, project ranking is opportunistic or based on DEQ load reduction calculations. The existing Snake River planning model developed by the Bureau of Reclamation has been adopted by IDWR and Idaho Power. It operates on a daily time step, includes demands, reach gains, rules for reservoirs, and is used for water accounting and planning (fisheries, climate change, cloud seeding, recharge analysis). Instead of building a new model from scratch, the proposal is to modify the existing Riverware model by trimming it to the Payette system and adding detail for tributaries like Boulder Creek and Gold Fork. Neil Shipley noted that IDWR is adding more natural flow into the system by bringing more water rights into administration, aiming to include most irrigation rights in the basin over the next 10-15 years. This is part of the accounting model, which is more detailed and used for administration, differing from the planning model discussed. Discussion on flood-to-sprinkler conversion: Can reduce polluted runoff. However, it can decrease groundwater recharge, potentially impacting local wells and reach gains in the river. This complexity means water savings upstream might result in negative impacts downstream or later in the season due to reduced return flows. Sprinklers require early season irrigation to build soil moisture for later use. An exchange deal might be needed to incentivize leaving water in the river. Converting agricultural land to development also reduces recharge and can lead to negative reach gains. Bureau of Reclamation uses the same Riverware model as IDWR/Idaho Power. Melissa offered to connect with Bureau of Reclamation water operations team for more details on their use of the model. Pam was interested in differences between models and potential funding for adding tributaries. Melissa suggested incorporating recharge ponds into sprinkler conversion projects to offset lost recharge. The Idaho Water Resource Board's water transactions program, funded by BPA, purchases water rights for instream flow, and may broaden beyond anadromous waters. The cost of a modeling project depends on existing data and model components. An Applied Science grant (like Water Smart grants) could fund studying the effects of conversions. Reach Carter at (208) 972-7906 carterbwater@gmail.com | www.centeredconsulting.com
2. **Janet - Closing the Wastewater Gap Grant Update:** Janet provided an update on the South Lake Recreational Water and Sewer District project under the EPA's Closing the Wastewater Gap grant. The district decided to focus initially on the West Mountain subdivision (Phase 1) as it is the most developed area with the most on-site systems. ERG is subcontracting with Keller Associates for an in-depth study of West Mountain. **Funding from EPA supports this study at no cost to the South Lake Recreational Water and Sewer District**. The study will assess on-site systems, define the problem, develop anticipated flows for a centralized sewer system, and explore treatment options (lagoon or sending wastewater to Cascade). **The study must be completed by December 31, 2026**. ERG will help the district apply for Idaho DEQ Clean Water State Revolving Fund planning grants for the remaining portions of the district. **The district board decided to hold a community outreach meeting on June 20th**, likely hybrid at the EOC facility, as Fridays work well for weekend cabin owners. Topics will include history, background, and the initial study plan. Commissioners Caldwell and possibly Cynda from the county may attend. A need exists for cost-sharing for sampling pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PCPs) in West Mountain wells, Cascade's well, and the lake to document impacts from on-site systems. **Six samples are proposed at $1500 each, totaling $9,000**. The county commissioners are willing to cost-share. Janet requested ideas for other funding sources (DEQ, federal, philanthropy). Melissa and Megan did not have immediate ideas for specific water quality or federal funds due to budget uncertainty. Using remaining North Fork Payette River Watershed Coalition funds for this testing is unlikely without a significant change in scope. The sampling is planned for August. The EPA grant cannot be used for analytical sampling costs. A Philanthropy Northwest funding opportunity (due May 30th) was forwarded, which could be submitted by a governmental or nonprofit entity like the Valley Soil & Water Conservation District, the county, or the sewer district. The district had already submitted one application to Philanthropy Northwest. South Lake Recreational Water and Sewer District could potentially apply with assistance from the county grant writer. Janet C. will follow up with Cynda H. and the county grant writer (Hengel). **Janet C. requested someone from VSWCD attend the June 20th community meeting**. **Lenard L. will attend.**
3. **Cynda Herrick – Valley Co. Planning and Zoning Updates:** Upcoming Planning and Zoning agenda items. **May 8th Agenda:**
	1. Final plats for Tamarack phases.
	2. New Business: Camp Modern report, Wilderness Retreat conditional use permit (CUP) for cabins (fire plan needed), Whispering Creek Estates extension (on city sewer, not septic, uses West Rock reuse site water), Schaefer subdivision extension (log cabin school/mill), Health Canyon Rafting storage (raft storage at existing buildings in McCall Landing), Lex Multiple Residences CUP (converting ag barn to residence, seeking CUP for multiple residences on one parcel). Discussion regarding Forge Landworks CUP for excavation storage: operating before permit (stopped), concern about culvert draining into neighboring pond, requires site grading/stormwater management plan. High Mountain Cabinets expansion CUP (existing cabinet shop since 80s). **May 15th Agenda:**
	3. Heinrich and Norwood subdivision: 8 lots on 15 acres at the intersection. Will be on individual wells and septic systems with shared driveways. Concerns about wetlands/drainage and a ditch through the property. Property is in Lake Irrigation District, requiring developer to work with them and obtain a letter of approval. Low ground at the intersection noted.
	4. Circle P subdivision: Splitting two 10-acre lots on Barker Lane into four pieces with a shared driveway. Property is in Roseberry Irrigation District. Need to hear from Roseberry Irrigation District.
	5. Woodrun Heights: 14 lots on 27.6 acres off Norwood. Individual wells and septic systems.
	6. Saddle Rock phase 5: Extension of existing development on Heric Hill. 18 lots on 57 acres. Individual wells and septic systems. Biggest issues noted are fire and Highway 55.
	7. Ashton Corner and Jug Handle View: Two small subdivisions proposed by David Kerry. Ashton Corner is 2 lots on 4.5 acres. Jug Handle View is 3 lots on 6.4 acres. These were not included in a conservation easement. **Discussion on state-issued water rights:** Neil S.noted state-issued water rights separate from irrigation districts exist for the Jug Handle property (Water Basin 65D, Boulder Creek district). These rights are under the same requirements as irrigation districts regarding providing water access to every parcel, unless abandoned or transferred. Cynda H. was not aware of Water Basin 65D on their agency list and requested contact information to send notice. Neil S. offered to provide contact info and the link to IDWR's irrigation water rights map. **Cumulative impact of septic systems and wells from new subdivisions was noted, highlighting long-standing concerns**. Cynda H. stated they rely on Central District Health and DEQ for guidance on approving septic systems. **Comprehensive Plan Update:** Cynda H. is working on incorporating comments, including those from Valley Soil & Water Conservation District. Progress is slowed by workload (comp plan, impact areas, applications, fire info). Pam P. noted that recent Senate Bill 1083 requires considering the effect on groundwater quantity and quality when amending or adopting a comprehensive plan, requiring consultation with IDWR. Cynda H. is reviewing relevant legislation. **Impact Area:** VSWCD asked about plans regarding the impact area, whether codes would be updated to protect water quality, and applicability of their suggested amendments/ordinances if the county takes over the impact area. Cynda H. confirmed she is carefully reviewing all comments to incorporate them into the comp plan and ordinances, regardless of decisions on the impact area. Lenard L. mentioned a U of I Extension soil erosion/SEEP training in May and asked if a poster could be put on the county website and social media. Cynda H. agreed.
4. **Neil Shippy - District 65 Update:** Update on water accounting for the season. **Mud Creek, Gold Fork, and Clear Creek tributaries are now included in the accounting**. Starting next year (2026), they will begin looking at tributaries from Cascade down to Banks, including Big Creek, with accounting planned for the 2027 season. They are exploring telemetry units for efficiency and accuracy. Boulder Creek is in a separate district (65D). Neil S. does not work directly with Roseberry Irrigation District but will get updated contact information for Cynda H. for Water Districts 65A (Lake) and 65D (Boulder).
	1. **Pam Pace - Water Supply Update:** Pam presented a water supply update. **The Idaho Water Resource Board passed a resolution asking the Bureau of Reclamation to define steps to acquire the Young-Cactic water rights in Deadwood and Cascade** (related to the upper Payette storage project). **Senate Bill 1083, regarding domestic water use, includes a requirement for local governments to consider the effect on groundwater quantity and quality when amending or adopting a comprehensive plan**. This is complicated for the Payette basin due to the lack of a groundwater model, requiring consultation with IDWR. Snow water equivalent decreased significantly between March 16th and April 16th, with very little precipitation in April, leading to an earlier than normal peak on March 24th. ENSO is now neutral. Bureau of Reclamation had to reduce releases from Cascade Dam from 2,000 CFS to 1,000 CFS due to the rapid drop in water supply projections. Water supply projections have dropped significantly. Rapid changes make modeling difficult without a detailed groundwater understanding. **Eurasian Milfoil in Payette Lake was discussed.** The Department of Agriculture presented on their plan. Responsibility for the issue was transferred to the watershed advisory group without prior notice. A survey last fall found a solid "bathtub ring" of milfoil around the entire lake from 3 to 24 feet deep, raising concerns about mats at the surface. **It has quickly become a crisis**. The Dept of Ag plans herbicide treatment on a small portion of the lake in July. Concerns include the multi-year effort required, spread by boats/swimmers, lack of scientific data supporting the herbicide approach, and the potential impact of herbicide in a drinking water lake. It was suggested the county enforce the waterways plan and the 500-foot no-wake zone, but enforcement is a challenge. Lack of scientific data on milfoil's ecological impacts (warming water, phosphorus uptake, oxygen depletion) was noted. Nearshore water quality monitoring from the $12k grant is important for providing data. The Dept of Ag will conduct annual milfoil surveys. Addressing the source of spread (disturbing milfoil) is key. An educational campaign like "ride the core not the shore" was suggested. Dave Bingaman with the Recreation Department was suggested as a potential contact for an education campaign. Priest Lake saw success with herbicide initially but had less milfoil to start. Questions were raised about restrictions on water use (lawn watering, agriculture) during herbicide application.
5. **Ron Brooks - NRCS Update:** Report on NRCS activities. **Four EQIP contracts have been approved in the district**. These include forestry, high tunnel, and **a remote fencing project using virtual fence/GPS collars in Valley County**. This is new technology for NRCS. The virtual fencing project is working through details and aims to help with grazing management, potentially in areas affected by fire. Lenard L. expressed excitement and offered assistance with the virtual fencing project. Inflation Reduction Act EQIP funding for Fiscal Year 25 is on hold, meaning about half the anticipated budget is currently unavailable. Despite this, team-wide (six-county area), over $2 million in EQIP funding for new agreements has been approved in FY25. NRCS has experienced **staff reductions statewide, estimated at 25-30 people in Idaho**, due to involuntary separations (probationary employees), deferred resignation, and early retirement. Curtis (former Regional Conservationist) took early retirement.
6. **Meghan Brooksher/Bill Lillibridge - Commission Update:** Meghan B. provided updates from the Commission. **WQPA applications are due May 15th**. The Lake Irrigation District pipeline project application will be submitted. **The board was asked to rank the Lake Irrigation District project as high, medium, or low based on district priorities**. It was indicated the ranking would be High by John L. Potential off-site watering projects for cattle (keeping them out of TMDL streams) were discussed, including possibly Charlie Gibson or Josh Tullson. More project information (locations) is needed for these. The ranking for off-site watering projects addressing TMDL streams was suggested to be High. Delwin's retirement party is May 8th in Caldwell, with RSVPs due May 2nd. His last day is May 16th. **Matt Weaver (IDWR Director) will serve as the commission's acting administrator**. Meghan B. will be out of the office May 7-8 (staff meeting) and on vacation May 16-23. Loretta or George can be contacted during her vacation.
7. **Coalition Update:** Kim Thompson reported the Coalition is working on the restoration plan. Lenard L. stated the rough draft is approximately 60% complete and still needs work. The final semi-annual financial and performance reports have been submitted and are awaiting review by Melissa J.
8. **City of Cascade / Ag Protection Area:** Bill L. reported there was not much on the City of Cascade or Ag Protection Area agendas for their meeting later that day.

**P & Z MAY 8 6 P.M. VALLEY CO COURT HOUSE NEW** Business Review

1. CUP 22-16 Camp Modern Annual Review 3. CUP 23-19 Whispering Creek Extension

2. CUP 24-34 Wildernest Retreat 4. CUP 22-06 Schafer Subdivision

**P&Z May 15 6 p.m.** SUB 25-011 Ashton Corner

1. SUB 25-007 Smokejumper Drop Zone 4. SUB 25-010 Saddle Rock Phase 5

2. SUB 25-008 Circle P Subdivision 5. SUB 25-011 Ashton Corner

3. SUB 25-009 Wood Run Heights 6. SUB 25-012 Jughandle View

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:** Various events and activities the district participated in or supported were mentioned: Display board at McCall Harbor Day celebration, display board at Fire Preparedness Day, publicity for the seedling distribution program on social media, participation in the Payette Land Trust Pig Roast in McCall on June 20th, participation in the McCall Community Airport Open House, participation in the Valley County Weed Re-Certification Day. An Earth Day display created by Judy A. is currently at the McCall public library. The Department of Agriculture's presentation on Eurasian Milfoil in Payette Lake was discussed, noting Jeremy Varley would present again at the weed re-certification on May 8th. Discussion ensued regarding who would write the letter of support for the $12k nearshore testing grant application. Pam P., Lenard L., and Durena F. will coordinate drafting the letter.

**Date Reminders**

***May 3 Wildfire Preparedness Day Donnelly Fire Station***

***May 8 Valley Co P&Z (1 of 2); Valley Co Weed Recertification, ISDA Payette Lake and Millfoil Treatment***

***May 15 Valley Co P&Z (2 of 2)***

***May CAWAG Monthly meeting with City of Cascade and SLRWSD***

***May 29 BPLWAG Thursday 10:00 a.m. McCall Library Hershberger Room, thereafter 4th Tuesday 10:00a.m.***

**Meeting Adjourned by John L. at 11:54 AM.** Thanks were extended to attendees, particularly Bill L. for ensuring quorum. Durena F. received congratulations for a busy week.

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date Approved: June 5, 2025**

Minutes prepared by Mattie Bradford, VSWCD; Durena Farr