

## RECHARGE EFFORTS HEAL

# IDAHO AQUIFER

By joining forces with the region's canal companies and irrigation districts, the **Idaho Water Resource Board** is replenishing the **Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer**.

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**  
Capital Press

**S**HOSHONE, Idaho — This year's combination of bountiful reservoirs and slow-melting mountain snowpacks have been a blessing to the Idaho Water Resource Board as it returned a record amount of valuable water to the ground, recharging the enormous Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer that quenches a large portion of the state's farms and ranches.

Agriculture is Idaho's economic engine, generating nearly \$28 billion in total sales each year and more than 128,000 jobs. Nearly half of the state's \$7.2 billion in crop and livestock production comes from the Snake River Basin, where most of the state's 2.8 million irrigated acres are fed by the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer, one of the largest and most productive aquifers in the world. At about 10,800 square miles, it is larger than the surface of Lake Erie.

But farmers and water managers have faced a reckoning in recent decades as the aquifer's levels began to sink under the stress of higher water use and more efficient irrigation systems that didn't allow water to percolate back into the ground. Since 1952, the volume of available water had dropped nearly 13 million acre-feet.

"We had to do something; we couldn't just watch the aquifer be depleted," Vince Alberdi, a state water board member and former long-time manager of the Twin Falls Canal Company, said.

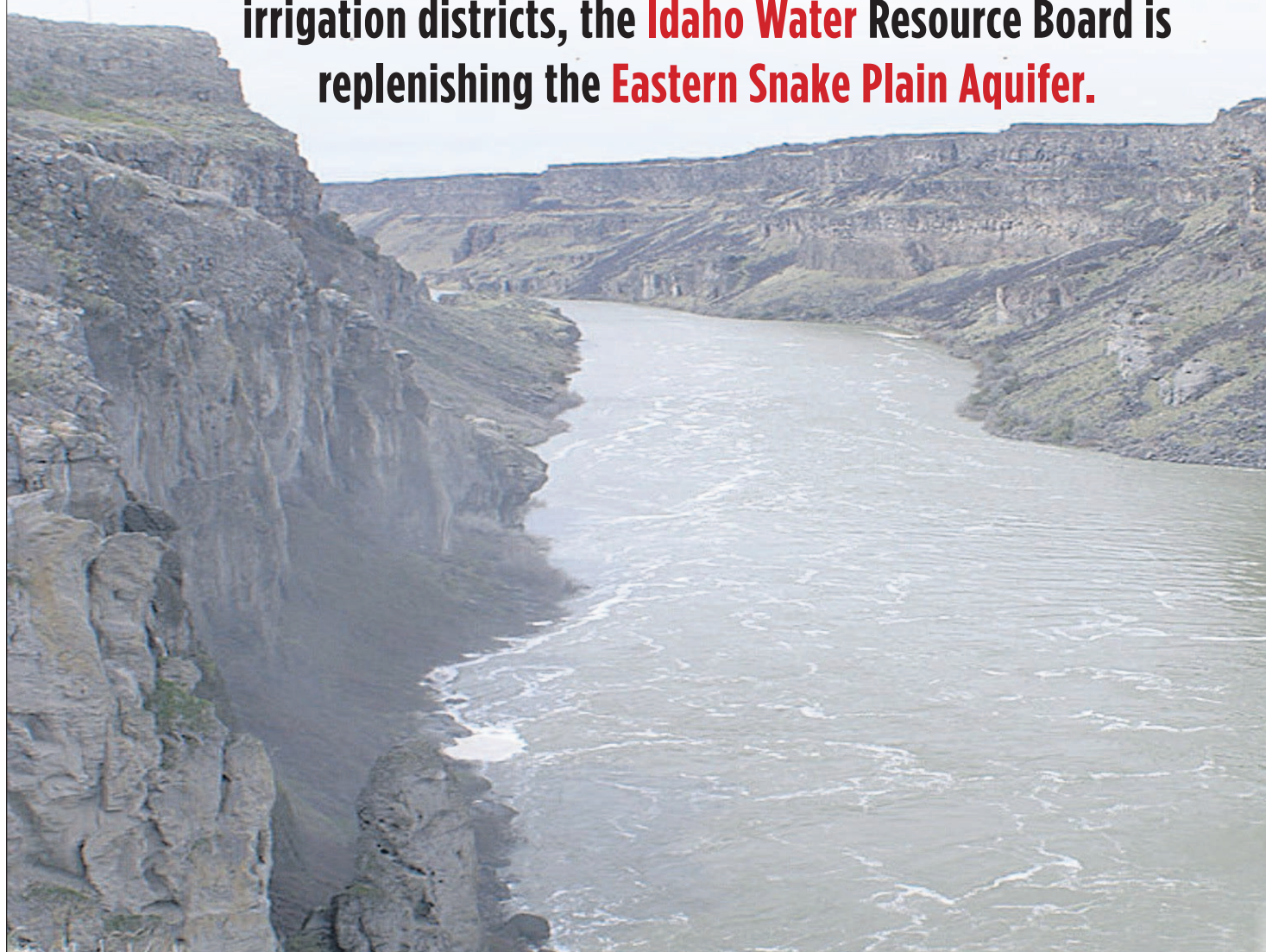
The board molded the state's 2009 Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan that took on the goal of restoring and sustaining the ESPA. The plan addressed what had to be done to arrest the depletion and to manage all available water and use it efficiently, he said.

This year's recharge efforts are expected to pay off handsomely, with 530,000 acre-feet — enough to cover 400,908 football fields with a foot of water — seeping into the underground reservoir.

This year's bounty more than doubles the board's goal of recharging 250,000 acre-feet annually, averaging wet years with dry ones — and far surpasses last year's record of 317,000 acre-feet.

In its goal to replenish the ailing

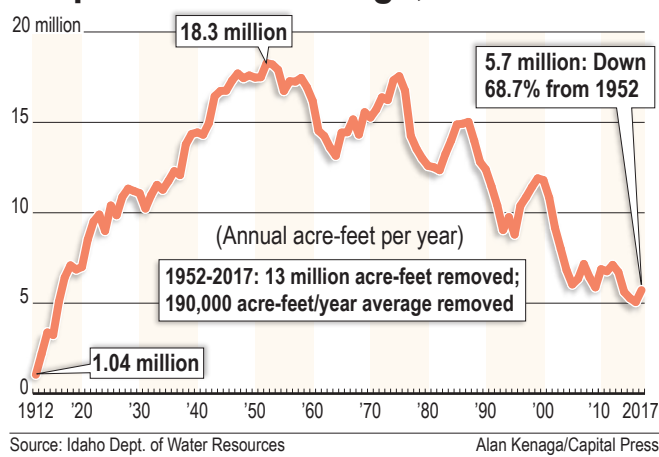
Turn to **RECHARGE**, Page 11



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

The Snake River flows downstream from Shoshone Falls in Twin Falls on April 19.

### Measurable Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer water storage, 1912-2017

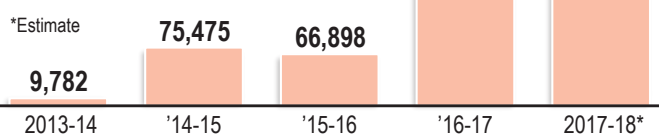


### Managed Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer recharge

(Acre-feet of water)

The 2013-14 season is considered the pilot season for Idaho Water Resource Board before full-scale, winter-long recharging began.

Source: IWRB, Idaho Dept. of Water Resources  
Alan Kenaga/Capital Press



## Judge upholds Klamath River injunction

### Motion for relief by irrigators denied

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
Capital Press

A federal judge in San Francisco will not suspend or modify a court injunction aimed at protecting threatened coho salmon from a deadly parasite in the Klamath River.

The ruling, handed down late Monday by Judge Wil-

liam Orrick, further delays the start of irrigation season for local farmers and ranchers heading into what is expected to be a difficult drought year.

Scott Cheyne, assistant director of the Klamath Irrigation District, said the holdup is already having a negative effect on agriculture across the basin — wheat fields are stunted, ranchers are worried about growing enough forage for cattle, and row crops, such as garlic, are especially under stress.

"We're looking at some higher temperatures coming," Cheyne said. "We did get some moisture over the weekend, but it's far from getting us where we need to be."

PacifiCorp, which operates a system of hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River, did agree last week to transfer 10,500 acre-feet of water to the Bureau of Reclamation to begin charging canals on the Klamath Project. Operators began releasing 100 cubic feet per second of water from

Upper Klamath Lake on April 26.

KID typically starts irrigation season on April 15, Cheyne said. He expects it will be at least another month before they get their water allocation this year.

"We're already more than two weeks past our start date," Cheyne said. "It's a crucial time. We're on a short season. It's not like we're going to pick up extra time at the end. We have a set number of growing days here, and you can't take a month out of it and expect that you will be OK."

The latest conflict in the basin centers on a parasite in the Klamath River known as *C. shasta*, which infects juvenile salmon on contact and can be fatal. The Hoopa Valley and Yurok tribes in Northern California sued the Bureau of Reclamation and National Marine Fisheries Service in 2017, arguing that

Turn to **JUDGE**, Page 11

## Farm groups hail EPA's new scientific method

### Democratic lawmakers decry proposal

By **DON JENKINS**  
Capital Press

The science behind Environmental Protection Agency regulations should be publicly available and detailed enough for independent verification, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said last week before signing a proposed rule on how the agency makes major decisions.

It's unclear how the proposed rule would affect agriculture, but Washington State Dairy Federation policy director Jay Gordon said he welcomed grounding EPA decisions in science that's the best and also available.

"Our experience has been that improvements can be made to improve the process," he said. "We should at least agree we can make good decisions based on good information, period. That is foundational to a democracy."

Pruitt signed the proposed rule at EPA headquarters in Washington, D.C., flanked by Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, and



Courtesy of Environmental Protection Agency  
Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt speaks to EPA employees Feb. 21 at the agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas. The lawmakers are sponsoring legislation similar to Pruitt's proposal.

The EPA said the rule is intended to make the agency's major regulations transparent and objective. The rule would bring the agency in line with the policies of scientific

Turn to **EPA**, Page 11



Attention Exhibitors

Sign Up Now FOR THE  
**2019 NORTHWEST AG SHOW**  
& RECEIVE **50,000 IMPRESSIONS** ON  
**CAPITALPRESS.COM** — a \$150 value.\*  
Call 800-882-6789 or email [events@eomediagroup.com](mailto:events@eomediagroup.com) for details  
\*Restrictions Apply