

# Galena Ground Water District

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Dear Galena Ground Water Member:

As Galena Ground Water District's (GGWD) Board of Directors, we want to provide you with a recap of the 2025 irrigation year as well as additional information regarding the upcoming 2026 irrigation year. As you know, the 2025 irrigation year started with an adequate amount of snowpack in the mountains and it looked like it was shaping-up to be a standard year of water supply however, by June it was becoming apparent that the actual runoff was going to be less than what was projected. The summer wore-on with few rainstorms, negatively impacting the surface water flows in the Big Wood River. Any irrigation over ½ acre that occurred after July 28<sup>th</sup> either 1) had surface water rights older than August 1, 1882 or 2) ground water rights. Meanwhile in Eastern Idaho, a different story was unfolding.

The Eastern Snake Plain had accumulated less-than-average snowpack with similarly average temperatures. By June, the area showed indications of a dramatic shortfall to the water supply to the Aquifer. Nearly 6,400 wells were threatened with curtailments and the owners of those wells were required to join an established mitigation plan. Basins that had previously been unaffected by the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan (ESPA CAMP) were annexed into the area and forced to abide by the terms of this agreement. This meant that these newly-acquired water users were not able to determine the manner in which they could contribute to the water supply shortfall, they instead were instructed to comply with a set of pre-determined requirements.

GGWD strives to keep our water issues local. Our basin was not affected by the expansion of the ESPA because we are part of a separate Management Plan<sup>1</sup> which allows the Local Water Users to collectively determine the best way to take action with regard to water supply and usage. The cooperation between the Local Water Users is crucial in maintaining our self-determination and local control of our water usage. Your participation with GGWD's obligations with respect to the Management Plan will ensure the longevity of our agreement. Specifically, we'd like to bring light to the following requirements:

- **ABBREVIATED IRRIGATION SEASON**

In order to augment the Big Wood River Aquifer, all GGWD members are required to limit their irrigation season. Specifically, no irrigation water right with a ground water source may be used before May 1 or after September 15 in any year. Failure to abide by this limited irrigation season constitutes non-compliance and the water right holder will not only receive a Notice of Violation from GGWD but will also be reported to IDWR, which may subject the holder to a fine.

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<sup>1</sup> The following are parties to the Management Plan: GGWD, South Valley Groundwater District, Bigwood Canal Company, Big Wood Little Wood Water Users Association, Sun Valley Company, Water District 37B Ground Water Association, City of Bellevue, City of Hailey, City of Ketchum and Sun Valley Water and Sewer District (collectively, the Local Water Users).

- **FALLOWED ACRES**

As part of GGWD's water conservation efforts, we encourage our members to fallow acres to reduce consumptive water use. Additionally, the Management Plan requires GGWD to commit a minimum of 200 acres toward fallowed land each year. As an incentive for members to fallow, GGWD is offering any member who commits to fallowing<sup>2</sup> a discount on his/her GGWD annual assessment, the amount of which increases with the more acres that are fallowed. All fallow is welcome, even if it is only for a portion of a given water right. Fallowing is preferred by GGWD rather than leasing water to the Idaho Water Resource Board's Water Supply Bank as it will assist GGWD in meeting its fallow requirement in the Management Plan. If GGWD fails to find fallow contributions amounting to 200 acres for the 2026 irrigation season, GGWD will be in violation of the Management Plan and may be subject to inclusion in the ESPA CAMP.

- **PAYMENT OF ALL GGWD ANNUAL ASSESSMENTS**

GGWD uses a portion of its members' annual assessments to increase efficiencies within the system and purchase water, when necessary, for surface water users. In addition, your assessments contribute to GGWD's ability to continue learning about and understanding the intricate hydrology within our basin which allows us to better manage our water usage and delivery. Non-payment of your annual assessment can lead to additional fees/costs, property lien, and upon petition to IDWR, curtailment on ground water pumping on the associated property.

The Board of Directors of GGWD meets on the first Tuesday of each month. Agendas and Meeting Minutes can be found on our website <http://www.galenagwd.com>.


Questions regarding billing, fallow, compliance or water rights can be sent to: [Galenagwd@gmail.com](mailto:Galenagwd@gmail.com)

As we all turn our eyes toward winter, whether you enjoy the snow or not, we all should remember that the precipitation received during these next five months will determine the water supply for the coming summer so as they say: Pray for snow!

Thank you for your time and cooperation,



Judd McMahan  
GGWD Chairman & South Division Director



Peter Atkinson  
GGWD Middle Division Director

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<sup>2</sup> Please note, water rights that are fallowed are not subject to forfeiture due to non-use.