

IN THE SENATE

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 110

BY STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 STATING FINDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO CONTINUE ACTIV-
2 ITIES BY WATER USERS AND THE IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD TO IMPROVE SNAKE
3 RIVER REACH GAINS BETWEEN BLACKFOOT AND THE MINIDOKA DAM, RESOLVING
4 TO SUPPORT THE 2024 STIPULATED MITIGATION PLAN ENTERED INTO BETWEEN
5 THE SURFACE WATER COALITION AND PARTICIPATING GROUNDWATER DISTRICTS,
6 AND RESOLVING THAT THE STATE OF IDAHO ESTABLISH A STATE-FUNDED EASTERN
7 SNAKE PLAIN AQUIFER MANAGED RECHARGE GOAL OF 350,000 ACRE-FEET ANNUALLY
8 ON AVERAGE.
9

10 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Idaho:

11 WHEREAS, the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) supplies groundwater
12 to approximately one million acres of irrigated farmland and to numerous
13 cities, businesses, dairies, companies, and individual homes across south-
14 ern and eastern Idaho; and

15 WHEREAS, the ESPA is hydraulically connected to the Snake River such
16 that springs from the ESPA supply surface water to approximately 600,000
17 acres in the Magic Valley and contributes to aquaculture, hydropower, and
18 other beneficial uses; and

19 WHEREAS, since 1952, the total volume of water stored in the ESPA has de-
20 creased due to more-efficient surface water irrigation practices, groundwa-
21 ter development, and other factors; and

22 WHEREAS, declines in the volume of groundwater stored in the ESPA have
23 decreased spring flows and surface water supplies from the Snake River for
24 irrigation and other beneficial uses, resulting in water delivery calls,
25 protracted litigation, and curtailment orders issued by the Idaho Depart-
26 ment of Water Resources; and

27 WHEREAS, the Sixty-third Idaho Legislature, through Senate Concur-
28 rent Resolution No. 136, resolved that the State of Idaho establish a
29 state-funded ESPA managed recharge goal of 250,000 acre-feet on an average
30 annual basis; and

31 WHEREAS, the ESPA managed recharge goal of 250,000 acre-feet is docu-
32 mented in State Water Plan policies 4B, 4D, and 4E and the ESPA Comprehensive
33 Aquifer Management Plan; and

34 WHEREAS, the Sixty-third Idaho Legislature, through Senate Concur-
35 rent Resolution No. 138, expressed support for the settlement agreement
36 entered into on June 30, 2015, between A&B Irrigation District, American
37 Falls Reservoir District 2, Burley Irrigation District, Milner Irrigation
38 District, Minidoka Irrigation District, North Side Canal Company, and Twin
39 Falls Canal Company (collectively known as the Surface Water Coalition),
40 and Aberdeen-American Falls Groundwater District, Bingham Groundwater Dis-
41 trict, Bonneville-Jefferson Groundwater District, Carey Valley Groundwater
42 District, Henry's Fork Groundwater District, Jefferson-Clark Groundwater
43 District, Madison Groundwater District, Magic Valley Groundwater District,

1 and North Snake Groundwater District (collectively referred to in this reso-
2 lution as the Groundwater Districts); and

3 WHEREAS, the 2015 agreement was implemented to resolve litigation,
4 avoid curtailment, maintain and improve groundwater and surface water sup-
5 plies from the ESPA, minimize harm to Idaho's economy, and ensure ESPA water
6 supply issues are timely addressed; and

7 WHEREAS, ESPA groundwater levels, Snake River reach gains, and ESPA
8 spring discharges increased from 2015 to 2020, but have since declined to
9 near 2015 levels despite considerable groundwater conservation, managed
10 aquifer recharge, and cloud seeding activities, resulting in renewed wa-
11 ter-related conflicts; and

12 WHEREAS, on November 15, 2024, the Surface Water Coalition and the
13 Groundwater Districts executed the 2024 Stipulated Mitigation Plan to su-
14 persede the 2015 agreement and continue groundwater conservation, managed
15 aquifer recharge, and mitigation activities by water users; and

16 WHEREAS, increased aquifer recharge by the Idaho Water Resource Board
17 is also needed to improve reach gains to the Snake River between Blackfoot
18 and the Minidoka Dam, protect existing surface water and groundwater rights,
19 and minimize harm to Idaho's economy arising from water supply shortages.

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the First Regular
21 Session of the Sixty-eighth Idaho Legislature, the Senate and the House of
22 Representatives concurring therein, that the Legislature supports the 2024
23 Stipulated Mitigation Plan.

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature supports the Idaho Water Re-
25 source Board revising State Water Plan policies 4B, 4D, and 4E and the ESPA
26 Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan to establish a state-funded ESPA man-
27 aged recharge goal of 350,000 acre-feet on an average annual basis.