



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER  
GOVERNOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **GOVERNOR OTTER ADDS TO WATER SUSTAINABILITY BUDGET REQUEST**

(BOISE) – Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter asked legislative budget writers today to augment his Executive Budget request for fiscal 2017 with additional funding to reverse the decline of Idaho aquifer levels – especially the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer.

"After additional discussions with the Idaho Department of Water Resources on the funding necessary to meet the State's commitment under the settlement agreement for the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), I am revising my budget recommendation to fully fund its accelerated implementation," the Governor wrote in a letter to members of the Legislature's Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee. The letter was presented to the panel today by Jani Revier, administrator of the Division of Financial Management.

The revision calls for transferring \$6.5 million in one-time funding to the Secondary Aquifer Planning, Management and Implementation Fund – increasing the total transfer to that fund to \$16.5 million. It also would increase ongoing funds for water sustainability projects throughout Idaho by \$3 million – increasing the total for those projects to \$5 million.

In his State of the State and Budget Address on January 11, Governor Otter praised House Speaker Scott Bedke, Senate Resources and Environment Committee Chairman Steve Bair and Chairman Roger Chase of the Idaho Water Resource Board for bringing two water-user groups together last fall to resolve disputes over water rights from the ESPA. "This historic settlement between the Surface Water Coalition and groundwater users will help ensure that the aquifer is a healthy and reliable resource now and well into the future," the Governor said.

"All water users understand that this is about sustainability and the health of the aquifer," Bedke said. "I appreciate Governor Otter revising his budget recommendation to reflect the urgent need to address this critical issue."

"This action will accelerate crucial water recharge efforts and enhance our aquifers so they become truly sustainable resources for Idaho citizens, municipalities, businesses and agriculture," Bair said.

Brian Olmstead, manager of the Twin Falls Canal Co., a member of the Surface Water Coalition, said, "We appreciate the Governor's ongoing efforts to assist the water users in sustaining and restoring our water supplies. Additionally, Speaker Bedke and Senator Bair should be applauded for their leadership."

Tim Deeg, director of the American Falls Aberdeen Ground Water District and president of the Idaho Ground Water Appropriators, said the request made it clear that "Governor Otter recognizes what the department needs to meet our sustainability goals."

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