



News Release

IDAHO WATER USERS ASSOCIATION, INC

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IWUA WARNS THAT SENATE LEGISLATION POSES THREAT TO IDAHO WATER SOVEREIGNTY

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Legislation passed today by a Senate committee puts at dangerous risk the sovereignty of Idaho irrigation water in the Snake River in Eastern Idaho, the Idaho Water Users Association said today.

Among other things, the Snake Headwaters Legacy Act of 2007 would apply Federal protected river “recreational” and “scenic” designations for 42 miles of the Snake River between Jackson Lake Dam and Palisades Reservoir.

“That small portion of the proposed law deals with just 10 percent of the total miles and clearly poses a completely unacceptable risk for thousands of Idaho water users from Idaho Falls to the Magic Valley who own and rely on the water stored behind Jackson Lake dam. We are dead-set against any Federal protection designation for that 42-mile stretch of the Snake River below Jackson dam,” said Norm Semanko, IWUA Executive Director.

The central danger to Idaho is what happens when federal bureaucrats decide – or are forced by environmental lawsuits -- to use the Federal protected river status to pressure the Bureau of Reclamation to change its management practices for the water stored behind Jackson Lake dam.,

“These pressures already exist to some extent, but new Federal designations gives them new legal standing and citizen lawsuits by radical environmental groups will certainly take advantage of that if the designations below the dam are approved. Make no mistake about it. We will fight this threat to Idaho’s water every step of the way,” Semanko said.

The federal government is currently arguing that existing Federal protected river designations in Central Idaho, and the associated federal reserved water rights, preclude Idaho water users’ long-standing water practices in that basin. The proposed designations below Jackson Lake Dam would provide a new avenue for these same types of arguments in the Snake River Basin, the IWUA official added.

“Idaho’s water user community has a long, painful history of dealing with federal bureaucrats and environmental groups who try to manipulate policies, statutes or rules to achieve results never intended. Given that track record, it is only a matter of time before those same forces attempt to use any Federal protected river designation to drive Jackson Lake water management, resulting in reduced water storage supplies for Idaho irrigators,” Semanko said.

IWUA Opposes Snake River Designation – Page 2 of 2

IWUA has no problem with proposed protected river designations above Jackson Lake, provided the statute contains clear provisions protecting the operation of Jackson Lake Dam and its reservoir. But it is the 42-mile segment of the Snake River below Jackson Lake Dam – just ten percent of the total river miles included in the bill – that poses this enormous risk to Idaho water users, the IWUA official added.

“Mismanagement of Palisades Reservoir, just downstream of Jackson Lake Dam, during this past storage season resulted in significant losses of storage water; Federal protected river designations below Jackson Dam will only provide additional pressures on this crucial piece of the Snake River storage system downstream of Jackson Lake,” Semanko said.

IWUA also lauded Idaho Senator Larry Craig for a pair of unsuccessful efforts to amend the legislation to include language that would have protected Idaho against the threats to its sovereignty over the water stored behind Jackson Lake Dam.

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