



IDAHO WATER USERS ASSOCIATION

Quarterly Newsletter



December 2015

IWUA's 79th Annual Convention Runs January 19-21 At The Riverside Hotel in Boise

The 79th annual convention and general meeting of Idaho's largest water user group is set for January 19-21 at The Riverside Hotel in Boise.

The three-day gathering traditionally features a broad range of speakers and panels examining a wide range of water and environmental topics. IWUA will also elect new officers during the convention, and decide on resolutions that will guide the Association's activities during the coming year.

"The Convention provides water users with an excellent opportunity to meet and discuss important water issues with their professional counterparts from around Idaho and the Northwest. We will also have a wide variety of panel discussions on current top burner water issues including a look at the water supply outlook for the coming irrigation season," said Norm Semanko, IWUA Executive Director and General Counsel.

The convention begins January 19 with standing committee meetings during which resolutions, legislation, water quality issues, education, rural and urban affairs and other Association activities will be discussed in detail.

The main convention program will begin January 20. IWUA officials will also present a series of water related awards at a special luncheon the same day. The convention will end the evening of January 21 with the Association's annual Legislative Banquet, according to Semanko.

Early convention and hotel registration is now open; however, people who want to attend will also be able to register at the door. More information about the convention, including an on-line hotel reservation link, can be found at the IWUA website: www.iwua.org. You can also call the Association at (208) 344-6690.

2016 WaterSMART Grant Deadline Nears

Grants of up to \$1 Million Available for Water and Energy Efficiency Projects

Applications Due By January 20, 2016

Time is slipping away for organizations interested in applying for WaterSMART grants from the Bureau of Reclamation. The deadline for submitting applications is January 20, 2016.

Last month, the Bureau of Reclamation invited states, tribes, irrigation districts, water districts and other organizations with water or power delivery authority to participate in its latest WaterSMART grant opportunity. A total of \$21 million in cost-shared funding is available for water conservation and energy efficiency projects that help move the West towards resilience in the face of a drought and ongoing imbalances between water supply and demand.

Three Idaho irrigation entities were awarded \$1.9 million in WaterSMART grants this year, part of more than \$23 million the Bureau of Reclamation awarded for a total of 50 Water and Energy Efficiency Grants.

Grant proposals must seek to conserve and use water more efficiently, increase the use of renewable energy, improve energy efficiency, benefit endangered and threatened species, facilitate water markets, carry out activities to address climate-related impacts on water, or prevent any water-related crisis or conflict.



Examples of previous successful applications, including projects with a wide-range of eligible activities are available on line at www.usbr.gov/watersmart/weeg.

Applications may be submitted under one of two funding groups:

- Funding Group I: Up to \$300,000 will be available for smaller projects that may take up to two years to complete.

- Funding Group II: Up to \$1 million will be available for larger, phased projects that will up to three years to complete.

The funding opportunity announcement is available at www.grants.gov using funding opportunity number R16-FOA-DO-004.

North Side Pump Company in Jerome received a grant of \$600,000 this year to help offset the project costs of closing this pump station and eliminating 20.5 miles of open pump ditches.

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IWUA One of 130 Organizations Calling on Congress to Pass Drought Legislation

The Idaho Water Users Association is one of more than 130 Western water user organizations, commodity groups, and state farm bureaus that have signed on to a letter to U.S. Senators, urging that a bipartisan approach be employed to produce compromise legislation that can be passed by both the Senate and the House, and signed into law by President Obama this year.

Here are some excerpts from the letter:

“Water challenges in the West are significant and daunting. The Colorado River Basin has experienced the driest 15- year period since the 1960s with above-average flows in only three of the last 15 years. According to research evaluating tree rings the ongoing drought in California is the worst to hit the region since the 13th century. Drought conditions in the Pacific Northwest are the worst seen in decades with no end in sight. Drought also exacerbates already declining forest health, increases the risk and severity of devastating mega-fire and threatens the origin of water supplies for millions in the West.”

“...Congress must provide federal agencies with more flexibility under existing environmental laws and regulations to encourage a more cooperative approach toward achieving multiple goals. And, where such flexibility currently exists in laws, Congress should demand that agencies use those flexibilities to act with the urgency and promptness that this drought crisis demands.”

“...We must move toward an approach that encourages cooperation and innovation to produce better results for both agriculture and the environment. This includes promoting the use of new technology in water management. Real-time monitoring and data collection can be used to more closely align water supply operations to actual fishery and environmental needs.”

“...Our existing water infrastructure in the West is aging and in need of rehabilitation. We need new water storage in order to adapt to a changing hydrology and develop usable and sustainable supplies to meet growing demands for water. Failing to improve infrastructure and expand useable supplies will inevitably result in more conflict as pressure grows to ‘solve’ urban and environmental water problems by taking water from agriculture.”

“Streamlining permitting processes and alignment of regulatory agencies will help increase water storage and improve water management. The federal government can continue to be a partner in solving these water problems in the West by using financing mechanisms that have a very low cost to the Treasury and make water resources investment more attractive and affordable for non-federal interests.”

“... We’re counting on you to ensure that Western water users have every tool available to survive and recover from the current drought and to prepare for the hard, dry years that the future may hold.”