IWUA Members go to Washington, D.C.  IWUA members attended the National Water Resources Association (NWRA) Federal Issues Conference in Washington, D.C. on March 26-28. Speakers included Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, Assistant Secretary Mark Limbaugh, Representative Grace Napolitano (CA-38th), the new chairman of the House Water & Power Subcommittee, and former (1959-1969) Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Floyd Dominy (97 years young). While in the Nation’s capitol, IWUA members took the opportunity to visit and discuss water issues with Idaho’s Congressional delegation and staffs, as well as officials at Interior, the Bureau of Reclamation and EPA. IWUA’s delegation included President Keith Erikson of Rexburg, National Board member Dale Swensen of St. Anthony, NWRA Policy Development Committee Chairman Roger Ling of Rupert, NWRA Water Quality Task Force Chairman Scott Campbell of Boise, and IWUA Executive Director/National Board member Norm Semanko. Highlights from Washington, D.C. include:

- High priority issues for NWRA include federal funding of water projects and programs, Clean Water Act jurisdiction and implementation, aging infrastructure and security costs. Also of interest are modernization of the Endangered Species Act and title transfers.
- NWRA opposes proposed legislation by Representative James Oberstar (D-MN), the “Clean Water Authority Restoration Act”, which would significantly expand the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. Members are encouraged to contact their Congressmen and ask them to oppose the bill.
- The Bureau of Reclamation is in the process of developing a loan guarantee program authorized by Congress last year to assist with aging infrastructure needs at Reclamation projects. NWRA supports this program.
- H.R. 1662 has been introduced by Representative Grace Napolitano. The bill would amend the Reclamation Safety of Dams Act to provide a framework for sharing security costs at Reclamation dams. Since September 11, 2001, more security costs have been shifted from the federal government to water and power users. The bill would limit the share paid by water and power users to 15% of all security costs.
- EPA and the Corps of Engineers are preparing to issue guidance regarding the definition of “waters of the United States” to clarify issues raised by the U.S. Supreme Court last summer. The Corps is also finalizing a regulatory guidance letter regarding operation and maintenance activities.
- NWRA and its member State Associations continue to participate in critical litigation involving interpretations under the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.
Idaho Legislature Wraps Up 2007 Session. The Idaho State Legislature adjourned on Friday, March 30. Among the items dealt with by legislators were several bills of importance to water users. Under the leadership of its Legislative Committee and Chairman Ted Diehl, IWUA sponsored several bills brought by its members. IWUA was successful in securing passage of all of these bills. In addition, every bill that IWUA opposed was unsuccessful. For the second year in a row, IWUA achieved a 100% record of success in the Idaho State Legislature. Director of Government Affairs Jonathan Parker and Executive Director Norm Semanko are both registered lobbyists for IWUA. For a Final Legislative Report, please access IWUA’s website at www.iwua.org.

IWUA Concludes Successful Workshops. Under the leadership of Program Manager Karen Edwards and the assistance of our legislative intern Anthony Berrett, IWUA again hosted its successful series of ditch rider and pesticide applicator workshops throughout the state during February and March. Many thanks to all of our speakers and participants. As always, we welcome your comments and feedback on these important educational sessions.

Governor’s Water Summit to be Convened. Governor Butch Otter has called a Water Summit, to be convened from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m on Tuesday, April 17 at the Best Western Burley Inn. Participation will be by invite only, but the public will be allowed to attend as observers. Details are yet to follow from the Governor’s office. The Governor has called the summit to address short and long-term water management issues.

IWUA Board and Tri-State Meetings. IWUA’s Board of Directors will meet at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 24 at the Best Western Sawtooth Inn in Jerome. In addition, the Tri-State (Idaho, Washington and Oregon) water users will meet at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, April 27 at the Airport Ramada in Spokane.

IWUA Summer Water Law Seminar Set. IWUA’s Annual Summer Water Law Seminar will be held on June 18-19 at the Sun Valley Resort. Watch for the program and registration materials in the mail soon. In the meantime, mark your calendars.