

# Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer — Development of a Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan

In the southeastern corner of Idaho, an aquifer covering approximately 10,800 square miles plays a critical role in helping farmers produce an estimated \$10 billion per year in goods and services. When conflict between water users related to declining aquifer levels reached a boiling point in 2006, the Idaho Water Resource Board (the Board) embarked on the preparation of a Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan (CAMP). CDR Associates, experts in natural resource conflict resolution, conducted over 90 interviews with stakeholders and facilitated public meetings to craft a framework for the plan. In 2007, the Idaho Legislature approved a Framework containing one central goal with five supporting objectives. To implement the Framework, the Legislature selected an Advisory Committee representing water users and other interests in the basin. For two years, this committee met, debated, and eventually created a CAMP for the aquifer that the Legislature approved in 2009.

Both the political need of the Legislature and Board to follow their Framework with action and the increasingly dire water situation in the aquifer kept pressure on the group to find common ground. From the beginning, the focus on stakeholder involvement brought divergent interests to the table as equal partners. The facilitators communicated constantly with stakeholder representatives, and almost all parties chose to stay involved throughout the process. Consequently, new relationships formed and participants with divergent interests began long-term dialogues. A broad coalition emerged to support the Committee's work, influencing Legislators and ensuring adoption of the CAMP. Observers credited this success to the high level of constituent involvement over the 3 year development process.

For more information on this process, visit the Idaho Water Resource Board at <http://www.idwr.idaho.gov/waterboard/WaterPlanning/CAMP/ESPA/>.

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