

IGWA Bulletin



Members of the Idaho Ground Water Association,

I am sure many of you are ready for the weather to start cooling down. I know I am. I hope you have had a productive summer season so far.

The Board has been busy working with the Idaho Department of Professional Licensing (IDOPL) on the development of our new Electrical Exam. We are still waiting for the first draft, which should be ready soon. As many of you are aware, there have been recent changes regarding sealing procedures through the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR). These are not major changes, but rather an increased enforcement of the existing Minimum Construction Standards already in place. IDWR seems willing to work with drillers this year to ensure seals are placed correctly according to current rules.

Water curtailment remains in effect in South Central and Eastern Idaho. In addition, the new ruling on water usage in areas of concern is creating challenges, particularly in Eastern Idaho. The Board was heavily involved in exploring all solutions before the matter was sent to the legislature. I do not believe there is much we can do to change it, so we will have to do our best to adapt to the situation.

The Northern Idaho Workshop is coming up in a couple of weeks, and I look forward to meeting some of you there. Three members of the Board of Directors will be attending, and we hope to hear your concerns from the northern part of the state. I do not often have the chance to visit with you directly, but I truly value your input and look forward to the conversations.

We have moved the 2026 Eastern Idaho Workshop to the Shoshone-Bannock Casino, and I hope to see many of you there as well.

IGWA has worked with IDWR and released a couple of new videos explaining surface seal procedures. The Board has previewed them, and I think everyone will find them helpful. Dennis Owsley at IDWR did an excellent job putting these together.

The Board is also working on identifying classes for our January Convention. If you have ideas for topics that would be of interest or benefit to our members, we would love to hear them. Your input helps us make the Convention more valuable for everyone.

That is all I have for now. I hope you continue to have a productive and safe summer season as we move closer to fall, and for many of us, hunting season. Hopefully, we will all get a chance to relax a little after another busy stretch.

Sincerely,
Bill Tanner
IGWA President





Executive Director Report

On August 26 I participated in a water tour hosted by several water user organizations. There were about 100 people of which about 40 were members of the Idaho Legislature (from all over the state). Most of the discussions centered around aquifer management, domestic use, and our water supply. There is a LOT of interest in water across the state - more than I've ever seen. There is even more concern about the future of our water supply from our elected officials. Yesterday's tour reminded me of the changes we are seeing as our state continues to grow in population creating more competition for water use. With our population increase we have also seen significant turnover in the Legislature the past two elections. This has created different dynamics and an opportunity to educate people who do not understand our industry. In my opinion the IGWA immediately needs to begin taking the opportunity to get folks out into the field and build new champions for our industry. Doing so will help the IGWA continue to utilize those opportunities to have a seat at the table and help direct the outcome of water policy discussions and help protect your business interests.

On May 7 several members of the IGWA held an all-day meeting with IDOPL in Boise to review the current electrical exam and to set standards for a new water pump installers exam. The May 7 meeting will soon result in a first draft of a brand-new exam specific to water pump installers. At our next meeting, the working group will review the standards and draft exam and offer additional input and guidance. The goal is to have a new exam for water pump installers available for the industry by the end of 2025.

On September 2, the IGWA will be hosting its annual North Idaho workshop at the Best Western in Coeur d' Alene. There is an excellent agenda setup for the workshop and it is anticipated that we will receive a great turnout.

Thank you for being members of the IGWA. If you have any issues you want the IGWA to work on, please contact our office or a board member so that we can continue to work for you and make sure your business continues to grow and help the industry to remain strong.

Roger Batt
Executive Director, IGWA



CEC Opportunities

The Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) has statutory responsibility for regulating the drilling of wells and the licensing of drillers and operators in Idaho. As part of this process, drillers must submit continuing education credits (CEC) to IDWR during the two-year licensing period preceding their renewal application. A total of 12 credits are required, including at least two credits specifically Idaho Rules and Regulations.

Opportunities to earn credits are regularly posted on the Idaho Ground Water Association (IGWA) website. Upcoming options include:

IGWA Annual Meeting – 12 credits available

IGWA Eastern Idaho Workshop – 6 credits available

IGWA Virtual Workshop – 6 credits available

Drillers are encouraged to plan ahead and avoid waiting until the last minute to complete their continuing education requirements. Be sure to check the IGWA website (igwa.info) frequently for updated dates and details.

NORTH IDAHO FALL WORKSHOP

WHEN: SEPTEMBER 2nd 2025

TIME: 8:00AM-3:00PM

WHERE: BEST WESTERN PLUS

COEUR D'ALENE, ID

6 CEC CREDITS AVAILABLE

1 IDAHO & 1 WASHINGTON RULES & REGS

REGISTER ONLINE:

<https://igwa.info/main-events/>



Amending Idaho’s Domestic Use Exemption Statutes: Collaboration in Action

For three years, stakeholders from throughout Idaho have engaged in discussions about Idaho’s domestic exemption statutes. During this time, many stakeholders asked the question: Considering all the money spent and disputes over declining water supplies, is it time for a change in the way Idaho’s treats domestic wells?

During the 2025 Legislative session, S1083a was introduced to create some sideboards on the use of the domestic exemption in Idaho. S1083a passed the Senate (32-1-2) and House (63-2-5) and was signed into law by Governor Little. Below is a summary of S1083a.

Background

Under Idaho law, an application for permit is required for any new uses of water. Following a lengthy process, which may include legal challenges, the permit becomes a vested water right that is administered in priority – including potential curtailment in times of shortage.

Importantly, Idaho’s legislature has carved out an exemption to the permitting requirements for “domestic uses.” Idaho code defines these uses to include water for 1 home, ½ acre of irrigation and up to 13,000 gallons per day. If a use meets each these criteria, a permit is not required, and the use will not be subject to any management by the state – including priority administration. Such uses are often referred to as “domestic exempt uses.”

In recent years, Idaho has seen a dramatic increase in domestic exempt uses, with over 55,000 originating since 2004. Considering that each use authorizes up to ½ acre of irrigation, this equates to over 27,500 acres of unregulated irrigation.

For many in the water user community, this level of unregulated use is unacceptable. Idaho faces groundwater challenges throughout the state – including

Year	Dom. Wells
2004	4,184
2005	4,508
2006	4,143
2007	3,805
2008	2,449
2009	1,650
2010	1,344
2011	1,131
2012	1,144
2013	1,665
2014	1,955
2015	2,120
2016	2,338
2017	2,319
2018	2,512
2019	2,859
2020	3,520
2021	4,295
2022	4,102
2023	3,653
TOT.	55,696

the Eastern Snake Plain, the Wood River Valley, Mountain Home, and several North Idaho aquifers. In many of these areas, the Idaho Department of Water Resources has designated Ground Water Management Areas or Critical Ground Water Areas or has issued moratoriums on new water right development. Further, the State and water communities have spent tens of millions of dollars addressing declining aquifer through recharge, infrastructure upgrades, and fallowing acres.

Summary of S1083a

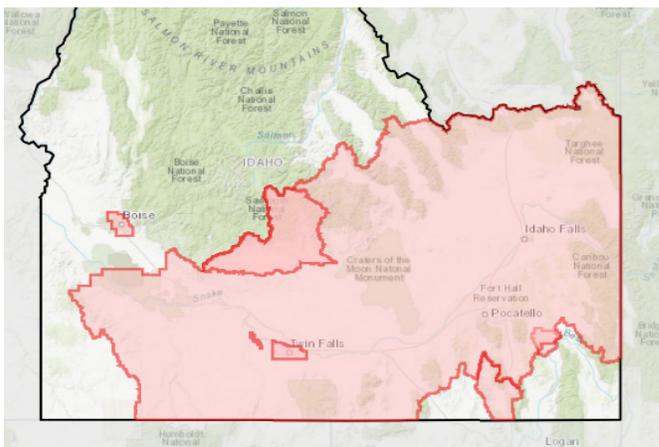
After extensive discussion on these challenges, the stakeholder workgroup determined that it was time to do something different. Four issues were identified and resolved through S1083a.

Issue #1 - Fairness in Administration: Each year, the State and water users spend millions of dollars to address declining ground water supplies. Since 2004, over 27,500 acres of domestic exempt irrigation has been developed in Idaho. These domestic exempt uses are not subject to administration and do not contribute to efforts to resolve ground water challenges. This creates concerns about fairness – consider the farmers told to shut off their wells, while thousands of homes continue irrigating lawns and landscaping in the same area. To address this, S1083a does the following:

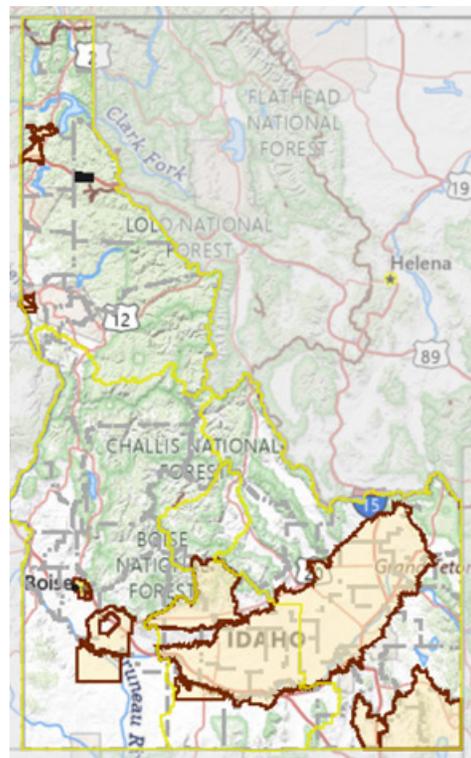
-In areas designated as Ground Water Management Areas, Critical Ground Water Areas, or Moratorium Areas, the domestic use exemption in subdivisions will only apply to in-home and livestock uses.

-In these areas, any irrigation or other uses would require an Application for Permit, including possible mitigation, and will be subject to administration.

-Outside of these areas (and outside of subdivisions in those areas), the domestic use exemption will remain unchanged.



Moratorium Areas in Idaho



GWMA/CWMA in Idaho

Issue #2 - Water Quality: Concern was raised that each new unregulated well an additional opportunity for contaminants to reach Idaho's aquifer. To address this issue, S1083a does the following:

- Creates section 42-111(3) to allow multiple domestic exempt uses for in-home purposes to be combined into 1 well. Historically, separate wells were required for each use.
- Permitting requirements for shared / community wells and public water systems remains unchanged

Issue #3 - Enforcement: Workgroup members questioned by IDWR doesn't do more to enforce compliance with the domestic use exemption. In discussing this concern, the workgroup learned that current statutory authorities are ineffective at enforcing compliance with the domestic use exemption. S1083a does the following to address this concern:

- Creates new section 42-1701C, which establishes a streamlined process for ensuring compliance with the domestic use exemption. Elements include:
 - Notice of possible violation
 - Opportunity to respond and correct any violation
 - Increased penalties for failure to correct noncompliance

Issue #4 - Local Government Clarity: The workgroup identified a need to clarify local government authorities relative to development and water. S1083a does the following:

- Requires compatibility for systems installed within 1-mile of municipal service area
- Requires that irrigation water remain with the land following development
- Authorizes local governments to consider water conditions in planning efforts

Next Steps

As is the case with many legislative enactments, implementation identifies additional tweaks that are needed. For example, the workgroup's intention was that the new sideboards on domestic exemptions only apply to new developments. In 2026, an amendment will be introduced to clarify this point.

Conclusion

It is humbling to see the hard work of many lead to success. This was truly a team effort. Appreciation is warranted for the following:

- Speaker Moyle, Pro Tempore Anthon, Senator Harris and Representative Pickett – who sponsored the legislation and led the way in advocating for S1083a in the legislature.
- Representatives from the water users, cities, counties, well drillers, home builders, realtors, Farm Bureau and others who engaged on this process for three years.

Paul L. Arrington
Executive Director & General Counsel
Idaho Water Users Association

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IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

Hello well drilling community. The Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) has implemented revisions to its Well Driller's Report and related decommissioning forms to improve reporting accuracy and compliance. The significant changes are as follows:

Well Driller's Report Updates

Well Development Section:

Redesigned to provide a more accurate and complete representation of how the well was developed (e.g., methods used, duration, and discharge rate).

Water Level Information Section:

Modified to better identify artesian conditions, improving data on subsurface pressure and flow conditions that may affect well design and construction.

Instructional Guidance Document Added:

A new one-page instruction sheet was created to clarify the requirements and expectations for each section of the report. This promotes consistent and complete reporting across the state.

Decommissioning Forms Updates

Authorization Form:

Now provides drillers with an official format to describe the proposed decommissioning plan, supporting pre-job review and approval.

Completion Form:

Enhanced to include a structured summary of the actual decommissioning work performed, improving documentation and regulatory compliance.

All revised documents, including the updated Well Driller's Report and instructions, are available at the following links and on the IDWR website. Drillers are encouraged to use these updated forms for both drilling and decommissioning submissions.

[Well Driller's Report](#)
[Instructions for Well Driller's Report](#)
[Application for Authorization to Decommission a Well](#)

All of these resources can be found on <https://idwr.idaho.gov/wells/>.

OPINION: THE REAL COST OF CUTTING PRICES

Hello everyone,

I hope you are having a great summer and taking some time to enjoy it as well.

I wanted to take a moment to talk about well pricing. I wrote an article in a past newsletter reminding everyone who notices things slowing down to keep their prices up. I believe that was last fall or winter.

As I expected, price cutting has already begun. My first question is, "Why?" As I said before, I am no expert, but when you drop your price, it forces someone else to drop theirs, and then others follow until nobody is making any money. After everyone is forced to lower their prices, we are all right back where we started, only with less money.

If you pencil it out, you may see your gross is still high by doing more wells for less, but your profits will not be. You have to ask yourself: will I be able to repair that rig when it breaks down? What about my other bills such as insurance, power, fuel, and payroll? They are still the same, but will I have the money to pay them?

From January 1 to August 11 of this year, there were 1,955 domestic wells drilled in Idaho. During the same period in 2024, there were 2,078. In 2023, during the same time frame, there were 2,256. That is a drop of 178 wells from 2023 to 2024, and 123 wells from 2024 to now. There are approximately 152 active drilling companies in Idaho right now, and several of them have more than one rig operating.

Look at it however you want, but it appears that if everyone maintained their pricing as before, you would only drill one or two fewer wells a year. I do not think dropping your prices five to ten dollars per foot will make up the difference. I have even heard of companies dropping more than that.

You all know what you need to stay in business, as many of you have been doing this for years. For newer companies, dropping prices could be devastating, both for themselves and for the effect it has on other drillers and the industry.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope you will consider everything before making a decision that affects us all. Enjoy the rest of your summer, and I look forward to seeing you in January at our IGWA Annual Winter Convention.

Be safe out there,
Sam Kingrey, Down Right Drilling & Pump Inc.

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