

## Background

In 2003, the Idaho Legislature passed HB 110 which created the Lake Pend Oreille, Pend Oreille River, Priest Lake, and Priest River Commission clearly defining the duties and membership. The Commission is comprised of seven (7) members appointed by the Governor, four (4) residents from Bonner County, the regional director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and a representative from the office of the Idaho Attorney General. In addition, the Office of the Governor of the State of Montana is cited as an ex-officio member of the Commission.

The duties of the Commission are to “study, investigate, and select ways and means of controlling the water quality and water quantity as they relate to waters of Lake Pend Oreille, Pend Oreille River, Priest Lake and Priest River for the communities’ interests and the interests of the State of Idaho” and for the survival of the native species fish contiguous to the Pend Oreille/Priest River Basin. The statute further authorizes the Commission to develop and select strategies with the Department of Water Resources, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Corps of Engineers (COE) for the preservation of native fisheries, scenic beauty, health, recreation, transportation, and commercial purposes necessary and desirable for all the inhabitants of the State.

The legislation further establishes the authority of the Commission to have oversight for planning and selecting the best management plans for on-the-ground water quality and water quantity improvement projects serving the best interest of the Pend Oreille/Priest River Basin. The legislation passed both the House and the Senate and was signed by Governor Kempthorne. There was no funding attached to the legislation.

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By Jon Sandoval, IDEQ Chief-of-Staff