

Glossary of water terms

ACRE-FOOT — One acre-foot is enough water to cover one acre of ground one foot deep. An acre-foot contains 43,560 cubic feet, 1,233 cubic meters, or 325,829 gallons.

ADJUDICATION — A court proceeding to determine rights to the use of water on a stream or river basin.

APPROPRIATE — To put water to use and gain the legal right to use it.

AQUIFER — Underground water-bearing permeable rock, sand or gravel.

BENEFICIAL USE — The legal uses for water, including: domestic use, irrigation, recreation, fish and wildlife, navigation, power, and industrial use as defined by statute.

CALL — The act of water users who are not getting their legally permitted amount of water to demand that users with newer water rights stop diverting water so more water is available to the senior users.

CONSUMPTIVE USE — The actual amount of water for crops or other uses that does not return to a waterway or evaporate.

CONJUNCTIVE MANAGEMENT — Management of groundwater in conjunction with surface water.

CUBIC FEET PER SECOND — A unit expressing the rate of flow of water. One cubic foot per second (cfs) is equal to a discharge one foot wide and one foot long flowing at an average velocity of one foot per second. One cubic foot per second equals 448.8 gallons per minute, and 1.98 acre-feet per day.

DIVERSION — To take water from a river, stream, lake or aquifer.

FLOOD IRRIGATION — Using surface water to water crops by flooding a field or running water down furrows.

FORFEITED WATER RIGHT — A water right that has been canceled, usually because of five years or more of non-use.

FUTILE CALL — A call to shut down a junior user that would not result in more water for senior users.

FULL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT — A legal concept that requires the state to manage water to its maximum utilization to ensure none is wasted.

GROUNDWATER — Water found underground in an aquifer that supplies wells and springs.

HEADGATE — The gate that controls water flow out of a stream, irrigation canal or ditch into other canals or fields.

HYDROELECTRIC POWER — The production of electricity using falling water.

HYDROLOGY — The science of movement and circulation of water.

IRRIGATION — Watering crops or rangeland by artificial means, such as pumping water onto crops where rainfall is insufficient.

JUNIOR USER, SENIOR USER — A water user whose right is newer and has a lower priority is a junior user. A person with an older right and a higher priority is a senior user. For instance, a person with an 1885 water right is senior to another user with an 1890 right.

MINIMUM STREAMFLOW — Water left in a stream to support fish and other aquatic life, reduce pollution, allow recreation or protect other flow rights like hydroelectric power. Water rights established before a minimum flow is set are not affected.

NATURAL FLOW — The water from a natural stream and its drainage area. It does not include water stored in reservoirs or imported from other manmade sources.

PLACE OF USE — The specific location where water is used. A water rights holder cannot use water at another place without transferring the right or getting a new one.

PRIORITY DATE — The date attached to a water right that represents the first time water was put to beneficial use. The priority date indicates how senior the right is and therefore how valuable the water right is.

RECHARGE — The water that soaks into the ground from precipitation, infiltration from streams, or irrigation canals and ditches. It can be either natural or artificial, incidental or intentional.

RESERVOIR — An artificial lake where water is stored until it is needed.

RETURN FLOW — Water left over after all users on a canal or ditch have taken what they need. The

remaining water flows back into the waterway.

SNOWPACK — Snow that accumulates in mountain areas.

SPRING — Groundwater seeping or flowing out of the aquifer where the water table reaches the surface.

Surface Water — All water flowing on the surface in rivers, lakes, streams, canals, drainage ditches and springs.

WATER BANK — A water exchange market for leasing of water rights to natural flow water or water stored in Idaho reservoirs. Users with extra water can lease it to others by marketing it through the bank.

WATER RIGHT — The right to use or divert water and put it to beneficial use.

WATERMASTER — The person authorized to distribute available water at the request of water right holders; also collects hydrographic data.