

Key advantages of the 2024 Mitigation Plan:

- Bingham Ground Water District's irrigators are guaranteed an annual base allocation of 1.64 acre-feet per acre, on average. **This base allocation is fixed and will not decrease.**
- On top of this base allocation, every acre-foot of recharge the district performs adds an additional acre-foot to irrigators' allocation.
- Compliance is measured in four-year periods. This gives groundwater users the ability to average activities (pumping and recharge) over multiple years. This aligns incentives with desired activities—**it gives us the opportunity, and the incentive, to maximize conservation as we look to the future.**
- Groundwater irrigators are still required to provide water to Magic Valley users to mitigate periodic shortfalls, but with two key differences:
 - Mitigation water is only provided in years when surface water users experience an actual shortfall.
 - Groundwater users have the flexibility to mitigate in ways other than leasing and delivering water stored in reservoirs. BGWD is working with partner canals to free up “natural flow” water that can be sent to Magic Valley users in specific quantities and at the specific times that they experience shortfalls. **This form of mitigation has the potential to more effectively alleviate shortfalls while significantly decreasing risk to BGWD and to reservoir space-holders.**
- Groundwater irrigators' obligations and compliance are not tied to, or determined by, groundwater modeling. The plan incentivizes activities that benefit the Snake River system (including the East Snake Plain Aquifer), but irrigators are not placed under any obligation to artificially raise the aquifer.
- The plan is composed of renewable, four-year terms. This gives parties on both sides the ability to address issues, if and when they arise, and make appropriate adjustments.

In contrast, the 2016 Plan:

- Required groundwater irrigators to artificially increase aquifer levels by about 5,000,000 acre-feet. Department estimates have suggested that hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland would need to be permanently dried up to achieve that goal.
- Would have given Bingham irrigators a 1.59-acre-foot-per-acre allocation in 2024. That allocation was slated to decrease steadily every year into the foreseeable future.
- Did not allow for multi-year averaging. This was widely seen as a glaring weakness, placing irrigators in dire straits during drier-than-average years and failing to incentivize maximum conservation in wetter-than-average years.
- Required groundwater users to lease and deliver 50,000 acre-feet of reservoir water every year, regardless of need. This created significant long-term risk for both canal and groundwater users.

The 2024 plan gives us the freedom and flexibility to pursue long-term solutions that hold tremendous promise. Our district is already working with our partners and neighbors to expand groundwater recharge and make the best use of our water resources. As we implement our natural flow project and expand our recharge capacity over the next several years, irrigators will enjoy a level of security that the 2016 Plan could never offer.