

## **DRAFT: Wood River Water Collaborative goal/mission**

### Background

We find ourselves on the threshold of a major shift in water management in the Wood River basin. Under conjunctive management of water rights, groundwater will now be administered according to seniority along with surface water. This practice will put at risk investments in groundwater-supplied uses of water, such as residential and commercial landscaping, municipal parks, school grounds and many farms. The rigid application of water right priorities may lead to severe impacts on developed groundwater-using economies--including recreation and tourism--in the upper basin. These risks and impacts will be felt more acutely if water supplies continue to decline, while demand continues to grow. At the same time, decreasing flows to the lower basin threaten both the agricultural economy and the natural and recreational values throughout the Big Wood River, Little Wood River, Silver Creek and their related fisheries and riparian habitats.

The Wood River Collaborative is a grassroots effort to tackle these challenges. Its many, basin-wide participants include private citizens, representatives of water agencies, non-profit organizations, private interests and the public sector. The outcome of the collaboration would be a legally defensible water management plan that prioritizes and preserves the most important shared public and private values.

The goal of the Wood River Water Collaborative is to create a long-term, practical water management framework providing new tools to help balance the consumptive needs of upstream and downstream users in order to provide water for people, crops and fish both now and in the future.

The mission of the Wood River Collaborative is to preserve core community values which include:

- Safe, clean, drinking water to meet the needs of the watershed.
- Sustainable water use for farming and ranching.
- Healthy riparian habitat for fish and wildlife that rely on the Big Wood River, Little Wood River, Silver Creek and their tributaries.

### **Draft: Objectives**

- a) Mitigate for material injury to senior surface water rights that rely upon natural flow in the Big and Little Wood Rivers to provide part of the water supply for the senior surface water rights.
- b) Provide “safe harbor” from curtailment to members of ground water districts that divert ground water from the Wood River and Silver Creek aquifers for the term of the Settlement Agreement and other ground water users that agree to the terms of this Settlement Agreement.
- c) Minimize economic impact on individual water users and the state economy arising from water supply shortages.
- d) Increase reliability and enforcement of water use, measurement, and reporting.

- e) Protect and restore ecologically important instream flows in the Big Wood River and Silver Creek.
- f) Ensure that measures taken to address current water shortages are not compromised by permitting of any future water rights.

**Draft: Strategies to achieve the Big Wood River Basin water objectives:**

- Develop an adaptive water exchange to allow for the voluntary implementation of water use changes to meet socially, economically and ecologically important water needs.
- Pursue holistic land management strategies as water conservation and water use reductions are implemented.
- Develop an adaptive groundwater management plan to stabilize and enhance the Wood River basin's water levels to meet existing and future water right needs.
- Increase water conservation through education and local awareness.