

Monday, December 8, 2025

## Farmers Union Ditch Meeting

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Board Present:

Sam Rosti, Paul Akins, John Schram, Bert Browen, Corey Blaine

Seth Kettering, Sean Kettering, Dale Wood – Ditch Riders

Rosalie Cope, Secretary/Bookkeeper

Andrew Waldera, Attorney for FUD

Sam Rosti called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m.

Sam explained this time has been provided because at the November 12<sup>th</sup> regular meeting of the Farmers Union Ditch Company Board there were a couple of shareholders who attended to express their dissatisfaction with the Board entering into a water reuse agreement with Eagle Sewer District and were allowed approximately 2 hours to share their concerns with the Board at that time. Representatives from Eagle Sewer District were also in attendance and in the essence of time were not given an opportunity to respond to questions/concerns.

Sam Rosti turned the meeting over to Neil Jenkins, General Manager for Eagle Sewer District who introduced Ron Gearhart, Treatment Manager and Stephanie Bonney, Attorney for Eagle Sewer District. Mr. Jenkins started his presentation with a background on the partnership between Farmers Union Ditch Company and Eagle Sewer District, then he provided posterboards with bullet points.

- 1) Explanation/background of where drinking water in the Treasure Valley Comes from.
  - Water is diverted from the Boise River, cleaned and put into the drinking water system, individual well or community water system.
- 2) Where does the water go once you are done using it in your home or business?
  - Septic tank and drain field then back into groundwater. (*Water reuse*)
  - Community System or central sewer system. Eagle Sewer District has 240 miles of pipe used to collect wastewater, then it goes to their water renewal facility, gets cleaned up and sent to City of Boise for additional polishing before it goes back into the Boise River.

Before Eagle Sewer District served the area which is now the City of Eagle there were septic tanks with straight pipes to the river, canals, ditches, etc. Eagle Sewer District

was formed 61 years ago to collect and clean the water. Originally, they utilized a rapid infiltration system to recharge the aquifer, then most recently partnered with the City of Boise to finalize treatment and discharge of the water.

Question: If the water is already going to the river why go through the additional layers to put it into the canal?

Like all municipalities, Eagle Sewer District has a 20-year long-term master plan. Starting the process in 2008 there was discussion and consideration given to utilizing reuse. In the 2017 City of Eagle comprehensive plan the City's objective was to promote groundwater conservation through the use of surface water and treated wastewater affluent for irrigation in combination with development of water rates that encourage conservation as well as design a community that is a pinnacle of water conservation promoting limited use of extraction, reuse and innovation in irrigation and landscape design. In 2019 the topic was broached again and in 2023 Eagle Sewer District asked their patrons where they wanted the water to go through a series of public outreach opportunities. They did an online survey, staffed a booth at Eagle Fun Days, included a survey in bills, hosted open houses, etc. As part of that outreach they also asked patrons if they wanted the water to be cleaned up to drinking water standards and laid out the cost for different alternatives.

- 3) What is Class A irrigation quality water? The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality is the agency that defines the different classes of recycled water.

The question was asked what class of water the City of Boise is discharging into the river? Mr. Jenkins explained there isn't a class. The Boise River has been analyzed to see how much of what can go into it and not adversely affect itself. That is called TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load). Those that discharge into the river are given a permit with a limit to put certain amounts of things into the river. The DEQ determines the potential uses of recycled water and assigns classes. When it comes to the difference between water that has been cleaned and discharged and water that is used in a canal for irrigation there are two main differences. The first difference is that in the river we don't want aquatic plants growing and that has been tied to the fertilizer (nitrogen and phosphorus) content in recycled water. There are less stringent requirements on fertilizer in regards to irrigation water because the water is directly used to grow plants. The other significant difference is that there are lower levels of disinfection required for water going into the river because the river is full of bacteria already. Recycled water is highly regulated, highly monitored and has a frequent testing schedule.

What is in the Farmers Union canal water right now? Testing was done in 2024 for things like the cloudiness of the water, nitrogen, phosphorus, biochemical chloroform and ecoli. Mr. Jenkins stated from what they sampled the compounds such as viruses and pathogens will be lower than what is currently in the canal water.

- 4) Once they decided to upgrade ESD facilities to treat for Class A water the question was where to go with the water.
  - Tear up all the roads to put in a water system
  - The E.S.D. Board decided to reach out to canal systems that already provide irrigation water.
  - Neil directed stakeholders to the E.S.D. website to view the treatment master plan which lays out the alternative options for discharge of the water that were considered and the associated costs.

They are starting preliminary stages to clean up the water to make reuse quality water. Class A water is not being made today, it is on target for a few years from now. As they move forward with the capital investments for additional cleaning processes they are aware there are some unregulated substances at this time. Some of those things may need to be cleaned out of the water in the future which is common. As regulations change additional cleaning processes are added. Eagle Sewer District has already purchased land for future treatment processing facilities. There is a considerable amount of interest about some of these substances. Nampa is currently doing studies on elements such as PFOS and E.S.D. intends to do the same. They want to know what compounds are on the priority list for testing and are asking for public input on those compounds. Most of the PFOS comes from manufacturing processes and Eagle does not have many manufacturing facilities.

Question: Does the Boise treatment plant remove those chemicals and why would they not continue to send their water to the City of Boise? Boise's IPDES discharge permit is publicly available. Eagle Sewer District does not have disinfection at this time and Boise does. Eagle Sewer District is poised to spend over \$20 million to upgrade their facilities to treat to Class A standards. The City of Boise does not remove PFOS or other contaminants of "concern". Those things are not regulated and not part of any regulated permit under the pollutant discharge elimination system permit program nationally or in the state of Idaho and do go to the river or wherever the discharge is for each municipality.

Per the agreement, the initial discharge will be in the neighborhood of 5cfs and at full build out of the City they expect to produce 8cfs. The canal currently runs 110 cfs at the Hwy 55 discharge location making the 8cfs approximately 7% of the instantaneous flow of the canal. The 8 cfs is not going to significantly change the background water quality in the canal. Class A water is required to be 2.2 per 100 mils instead of 126 or swimming beach is 235. Andy Waldera explained that over the 100 days of storage water usage during the irrigation season Farmers Union uses 2cfs per day. The water from Eagle Sewer District could account for a total of 1,600 acre ft. of potential conservation savings of storage water.

Question: Was an environment review done? Before the master plan could be voted on, accepted and approved by the DEQ there was an environmental review conducted per State standards and the plan was approved by DEQ.

E.S.D. approached the Board because of the close proximity of their infrastructure to the Farmer's Union canal. The Farmer's Union Board researched the plan through their Attorney and through E.S.D. to make sure we were as currently meeting modern science according to DEQ and EPA. The state of Idaho is the largest user of reuse water in the United States. Andy Waldera has experience with reuse water and the Board asked him to put together a legal opinion letter. There is overlap between Farmers Union delivery area and Eagle Sewer District patrons. The 1,400 acre feet of potential storage water savings and a drought proof source of water is the benefit to Farmer's Union patrons. Farmer's Union has storage water accounts in Lucky Peak, Arrowrock and Anderson Ranch reservoirs. The potential value of 1,600 acre feet of water if it had to be rented is \$23 per acre ft. at this time which equates to \$37,000. What are other alternatives? Drill wells, file water right applications which would have very junior priority dates plus the costs of drilling wells and O&M on wells. The Class A water is a free source of water monetarily speaking. We don't need additional natural flow as we have good priority dates. We need access to additional storage water in hot dry summers where the storage water subsidy comes in. The cost to purchase additional storage water would be millions assuming someone would be willing to sell some storage water. In terms of a recent inquiry, Farmer's Union was offered \$3,000 per acre ft. The capital cost of Anderson Ranch construction and the marginal supply of water it would supply is the true avoided cost to buy space in the Anderson Ranch dam raise is closer to \$6-9 million to procure 1,000 acre ft. of storage water.

There have been some short seasons where cutbacks have been initiated. We need the water in part going into the future because the development of subdivision is decreasing drain flows and development and turf grass uses more water than agriculture. Farmer's Union owns drain flow credits where if the water return flows back to the Boise River fall below a certain level we start losing water that can be diverted out of priority into the canal. It is a very complicated system. Riverside Ditch Company is short and will make a water call in the near future. Their demands are not being met and that water will have to come from higher in the basin.

Andy explained the contract in place requires the acceptance of up to 8 cfs of Class A recycled wastewater during the irrigation season. On top of Class A, Eagle Sewer District is required to comply with all laws, rules and regulations governing its operations in order to discharge unless or until there are constituents that are regulated as emerging contaminants of concern that don't implicate Class A standards.

If the majority of the shareholders request the Board start the process to cancel the contract would the Board comply? Sam said there has not been a majority of shareholders at an annual meeting in many years, but yes, if that is what the majority of the shareholders wish the Board would comply. The Board agreed to reach out to shareholders with information and ask for a response.

John Schram moved to adjourn the meeting; motion was seconded by Paul Akins. Motion was unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

DRAFT