

Water Management on the Palouse: Lessons Learning

Steve Robischon, Idaho Water Resources Research Institute

The Palouse Ground Water Basin (Basin) underlies a 500-square mile area of eastern Washington and northern Idaho. The aquifer systems in the Basin provide the sole source of drinking water for nearly 60,000 residents of two states, including two universities, three cities, and several rural communities.

Ground water levels in the Basin have been declining approximately 1 to 2 feet per year for decades. In the late 1960's, local concern over the ground water decline led to the formation of a committee to study the problem and provide management recommendations to the cities and universities. In 1992, in response to encouragement from the State regulatory agencies, a Ground Water Management Plan was developed to provide a more formalized framework for management of the resource.

Over the course of the past 40 years a variety of efforts have been made to better manage the ground water resource and identify potential sources of supplemental water supplies. This oral presentation will review the history of ground water management on the Palouse and highlight choices made in the past that might serve as "lessons learning" to better guide actions in the future, both in this Basin and in others experiencing similar challenges.