



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

LARRY CRAIG

[HTTP://CRAIG.SENATE.GOV/PRESS/](http://craig.senate.gov/press/)

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
March 20, 2008

Susan Irby (202) 224-8078
Will Hart (208) 342-7985

IDAHO NECESSITIES

Water, Water Everywhere – But Not a Drop to Drink **by Senator Larry Craig**

This is the first in a series of editorials addressing the availability and the rising costs of water, food and energy in Idaho.

Population growth in Idaho and the West continues at an unprecedented rate and is placing additional demand on an already limited resource – water.

Water is the lifeblood of the West because it is used to provide recreation, power, irrigation and waterways. A limited resource, water is a major issue of contention, and it has been since the first pioneers settled in Idaho.

The lack of water may be less burdensome this year, with the remarkable amount of snow Idaho has seen this winter. Across the state, snowpack levels are approaching or have already exceeded the average percentage for this year.

This snowpack could mean more water for our crops this summer, steady stream flow for our anglers and other recreationalists, and could stave off a fire season like the one we saw last year.

However, we are not out of the clear.

I know that Idahoans across the state are concerned about what an unusually hot spring could bring. While this snow is a blessing for skiers, snowmobilers and others who enjoy the white stuff, many of us are apprehensive about spring runoff and potential flooding.

[MORE]

CRAIG Page 2 – Idaho Necessities: Water, Water Everywhere – But Not a Drop to Drink

I have asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to be at the ready to work with and assist communities before, during and after flooding to minimize damage due to a surprising surge of water.

The key to avoiding potential flooding while at the same time utilizing this resource to its maximum extent, rests on our water infrastructure. Right now there is a tremendous need in Idaho for assistance in upgrading or replacing aging water infrastructure. This need arises not just because of the age of our facilities, but because of new and ever expanding federal regulations that place a huge burden on the budgets of small communities.

This need comes at a time when communities are also dependent on another limited resource -- federal appropriations. I recently addressed these issues and others twice with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) when he testified to the integrity of his agency's budget, in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and again in the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. During both these hearings, I asked Administrator Stephen L. Johnson to: First, rework current clean water and drinking water regulations to provide leniency to communities financially incapable of meeting these rigorous standards. Second, assist, as opposed to simply regulating, communities that are working to comply with safe drinking water standards. Third, increase the grant funding and state revolving loan funds -- two sources of aid that have the greatest effect in Idaho. And finally, adjust his budget to provide \$16.8 million for technical assistance, source water protection and ground water protection for rural water associations.

Even with these improvements, one thing won't change. As Idaho's population continues to grow, the demand for water will grow, too. Rest assured that I will continue to work to see that Idahoans receive the assistance they need to manage our most precious resource – water.

NOTE: To link directly to this release, please use the following address:
<http://craig.senate.gov/releases/ed032008a.cfm>.