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## State Groundwater Designations

Two designations can be appointed by the State of Idaho to conserve groundwater supplies. These designations are known as a *critical groundwater area* and a *groundwater management area*.

A **critical groundwater area** is any groundwater basin, or designated part thereof, not having sufficient groundwater to provide a reasonably safe supply for irrigation of cultivated lands, or other uses in the basin at the then current rates of withdrawal, or rates of withdrawal projected by consideration of valid and outstanding applications and permits, as may be determined and designated, from time to time, by the director of the department of water resources (Idaho Code 42-233a).

A **groundwater management area** is any groundwater basin, or designated part thereof, which the director of the department of water resources has determined may be approaching the conditions of a critical groundwater area (Idaho Code 42-233b).

A groundwater management plan was implemented for the Grande Ronde aquifer by the City of Moscow in 1992. According to the Coalition of Concerned Citizens (made up of local organizations and individuals concerned with our area's water supply), however, the City of Moscow has failed to comply with the plan. Because of this, the Coalition has filed a petition to the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) asking for designation of a critical groundwater area for the Grande Ronde aquifer as well as the designation of a groundwater management area for the Wanapum aquifer ([www.idwr.state.id.us](http://www.idwr.state.id.us)).

Currently, the IDWR decision is pending, and an order will not be issued until June due to legal complications in the adjudication of water rights in south Idaho ([www.webs.uidaho.edu/pbac](http://www.webs.uidaho.edu/pbac)). However, if the designations are granted, the management strategies are developed and implemented according to the conditions and community recommendations for the area. The Coalition of Concerned Citizens has suggested recommendations including imposing a moratorium on processing new applications for permits to appropriate water from the Grande Ronde and Wanapum aquifers. They are also recommending the order of all water rights holders withdrawing from the Grande Ronde aquifer to reduce withdrawals until a sustainable pumping rate is achieved. Finally, they recommend the requirement of all water rights holders within proposed designated areas to report groundwater withdrawals to IDWR. Recommendations have also been made by the cities of Moscow, Pullman, Potlatch and Colfax, Washington State University, Whitman County, the Latah Board of Commissioners ([www.idwr.state.id.us](http://www.idwr.state.id.us)).