

Water Quality Trading Initiatives in Idaho and Our Neighboring States

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During the past 40 years the Clean Water Act has made a huge impact throughout the United States in reducing point-source contaminants. However, much work remains to reduce non-point source contaminants. Incentive based watershed approaches are needed to engage the unregulated non-point source community. The effectiveness of an incentive-based watershed approach is enhanced if the agricultural community becomes engaged in a partnership role. As a partner the agricultural community can financially benefit from voluntary participation in programs and share in the leadership of the process. For a number of reasons engaging agriculture in this role has historically been difficult to attain – yet it is an imperative for a successful watershed approach to improve water quality. Integrated Watershed Solutions, Inc. (IWS) (formerly Idaho Watershed Solutions, Inc.) is a relatively new non-profit corporation dedicated to improving water quality through a watershed approach. Primary components of a watershed approach are (1) automation of irrigation diversions, (2) water reuse, (3) precision agriculture, and (4) natural treatment using sedimentation ponds and wetlands. These components are integrated through a specially developed watershed basin plan which relies on *economic incentives* rather than *regulatory threats*. The IWS team consists of experienced scientists, engineers, technical experts, academic researchers and senior managers. IWS is actively pursuing opportunities in the Boise River Basin, the Middle Snake River Basin in the Twin Falls, Idaho area, the Spokane River Basin and the Portneuf River Basin. IWS is interfacing with the agricultural community, municipalities, state and federal agencies, The Willamette Partnership, the Freshwater Trust, and many other members of the environmental community to initiate mutually beneficial projects. IWS intends to assist with implementation of water quality trading as a mechanism to provide financial incentives and measured and certified improvements to water quality in a cost-competitive manner.