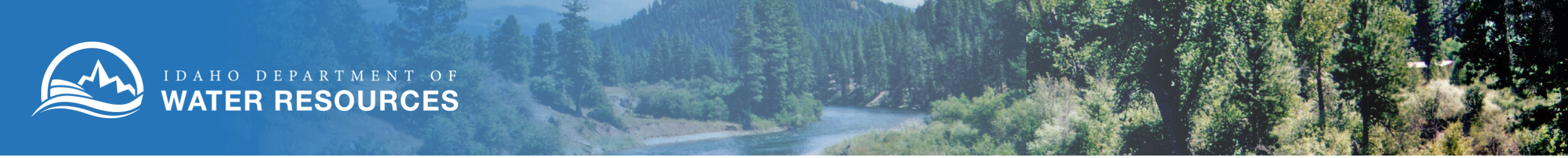
IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

Priest Lake Dam Operations Overview



Michelle Richman
Bill Cresse
May 2026

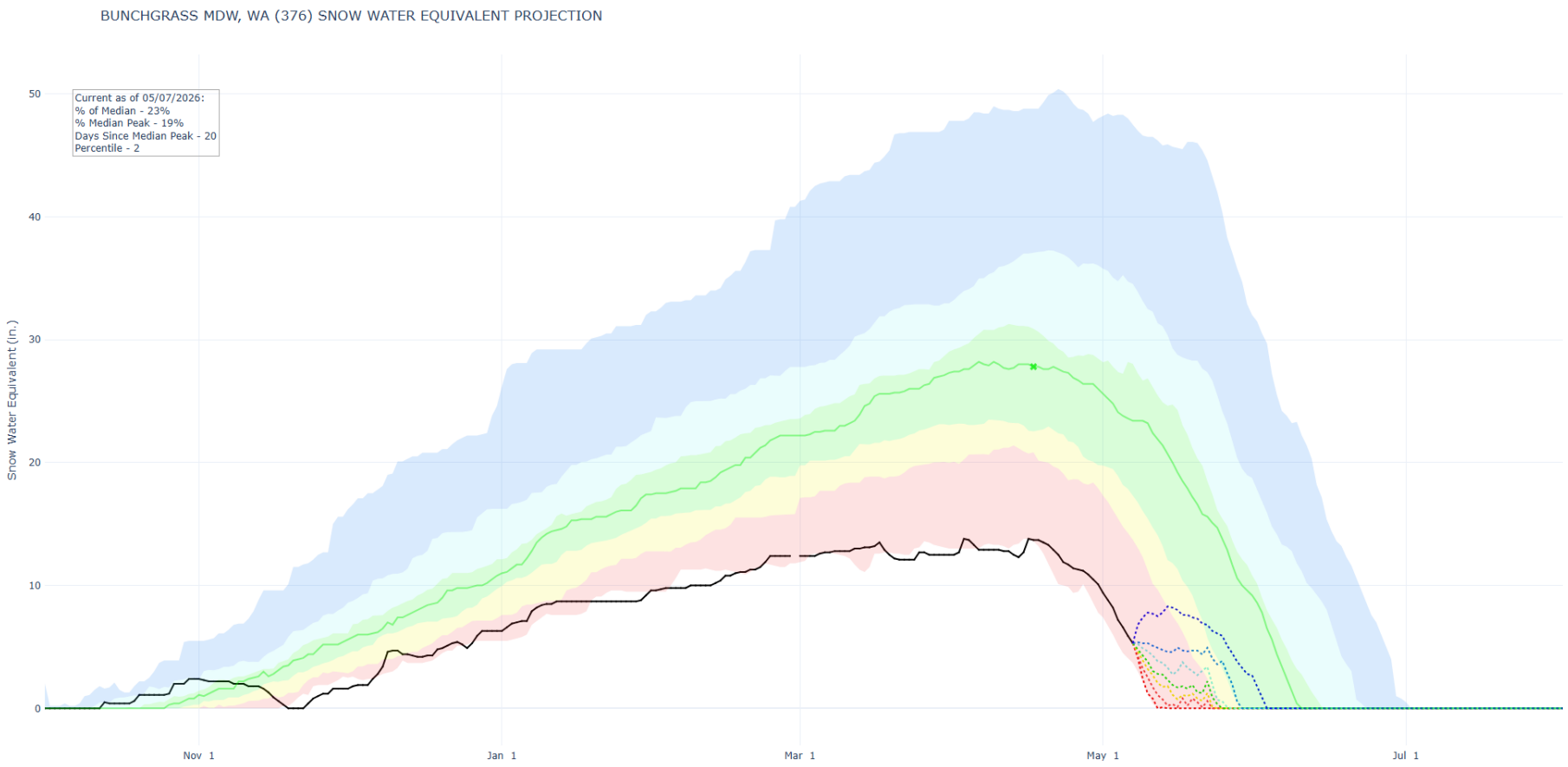


Purpose – To Discuss:

- Spring 2026 Dam Operations
- Dry Year / Spring Runoff
- Summer 2026 Lake Level & River Flow
- Fall 2026 Operations
- Stakeholder Feedback

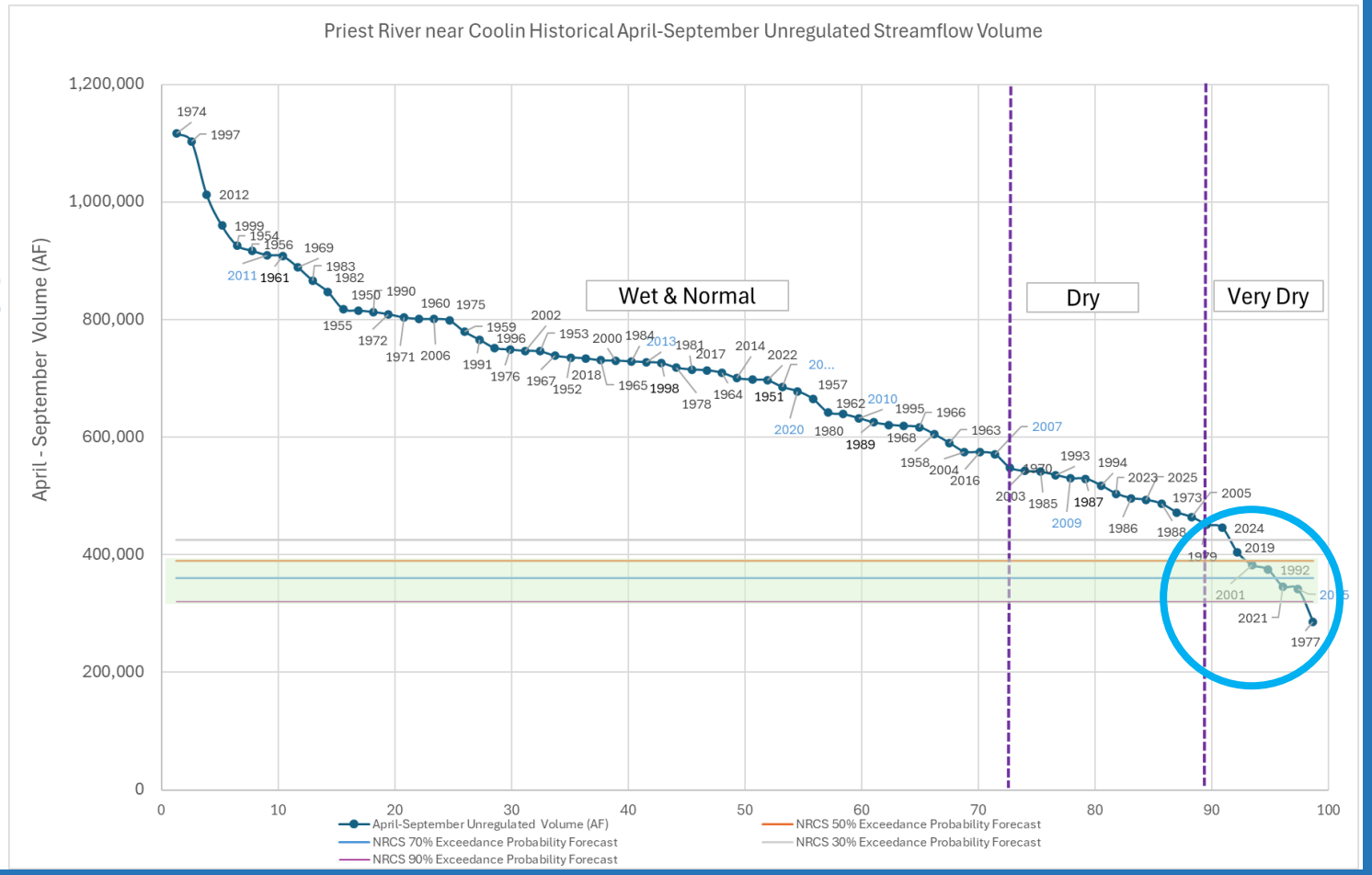
Monitoring Information – Spring

- NRCS SNOTEL
- NRCS Water Supply Forecasts
- Drought Monitor



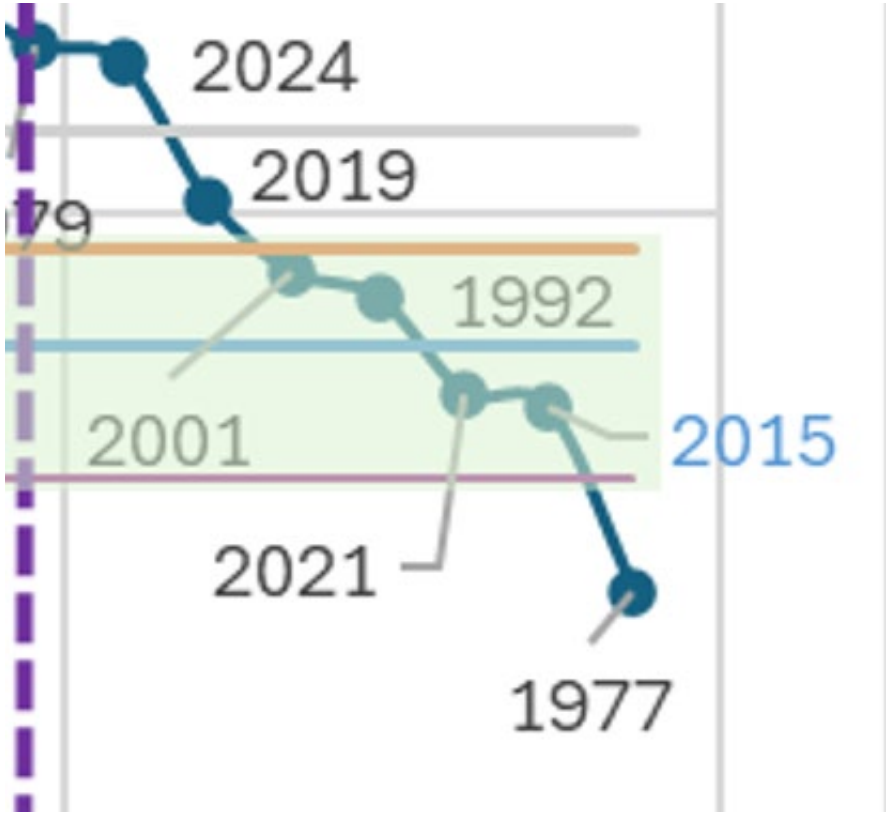
Spring 2026 – Type of Year

- Dry vs. Wet
- Determines lake level
  - Wet – 3.0 feet
  - Dry – 3.0 to 3.5 feet



Spring 2026 – Type of Year

- Other very dry years
- 2015
- 4 of 7 in last 11 years



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

State-wide Drought Declaration

BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

OF THE STATE OF IDAHO

IN THE MATTER OF A DECLARATION)
OF DROUGHT EMERGENCY FOR)
THE STATE OF IDAHO)
_____)

ORDER DECLARING
DROUGHT EMERGENCY

IT IS FURTHER HEREBY ORDERED that this order is effective upon approval of the Governor and expires on December 31, 2026, unless extended or terminated by order of the Director.

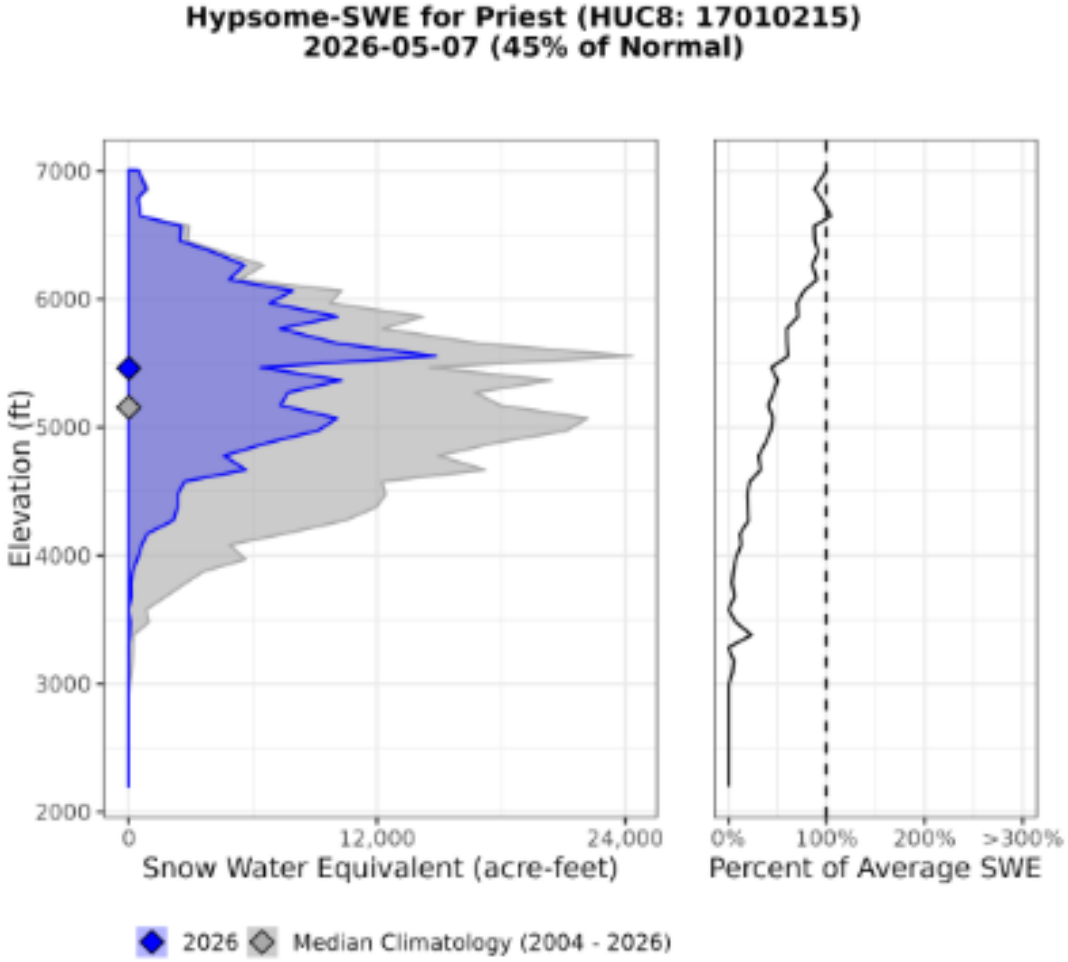
DATED this 13th day of April 2026.

MATHEW WEAVER
Director

APPROVED this 13th day of April 2026.

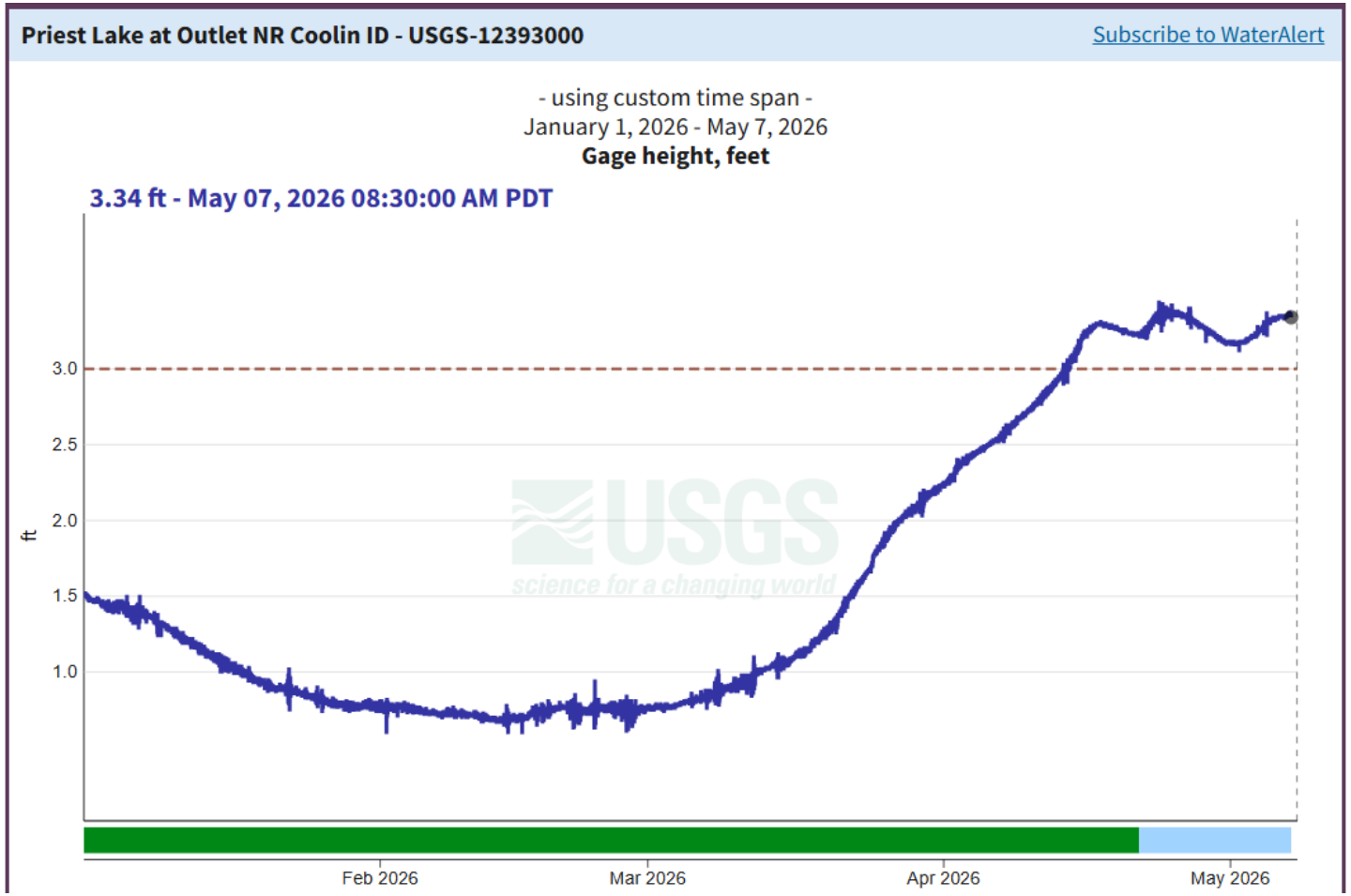
BRAD LITTLE
Governor

High-Elevation Snow Diagram



Lake Level – Year to Date

- Early lake level increase
- Caution Peak Runoff Timing
  - Velocity in Outlet Channel
  - Peak Lake Level
  - Docks



Operations - Lake Level 2026

- Lake Level
  - 2.5’ or more - Mother’s Day
  - 3.0’ or more - Memorial Day
- Manage Runoff
- Stabilize pool 3.0’-3.5’
  - Idaho Code §70-507
  - Main recreational season
  - “Very Dry” year



Photo courtesy of Greg Throop

Operations – Summer Outflow 2026

- Maintain Priest River flows
  - 300 cfs 97-7380 water right
  - Target flow in Priest River



Operations – Fall Drawdown 2026

- Capped outflow
- Start on Oct.1
- Done by Nov. 1
- Winter lake level



Operations – Best Practices

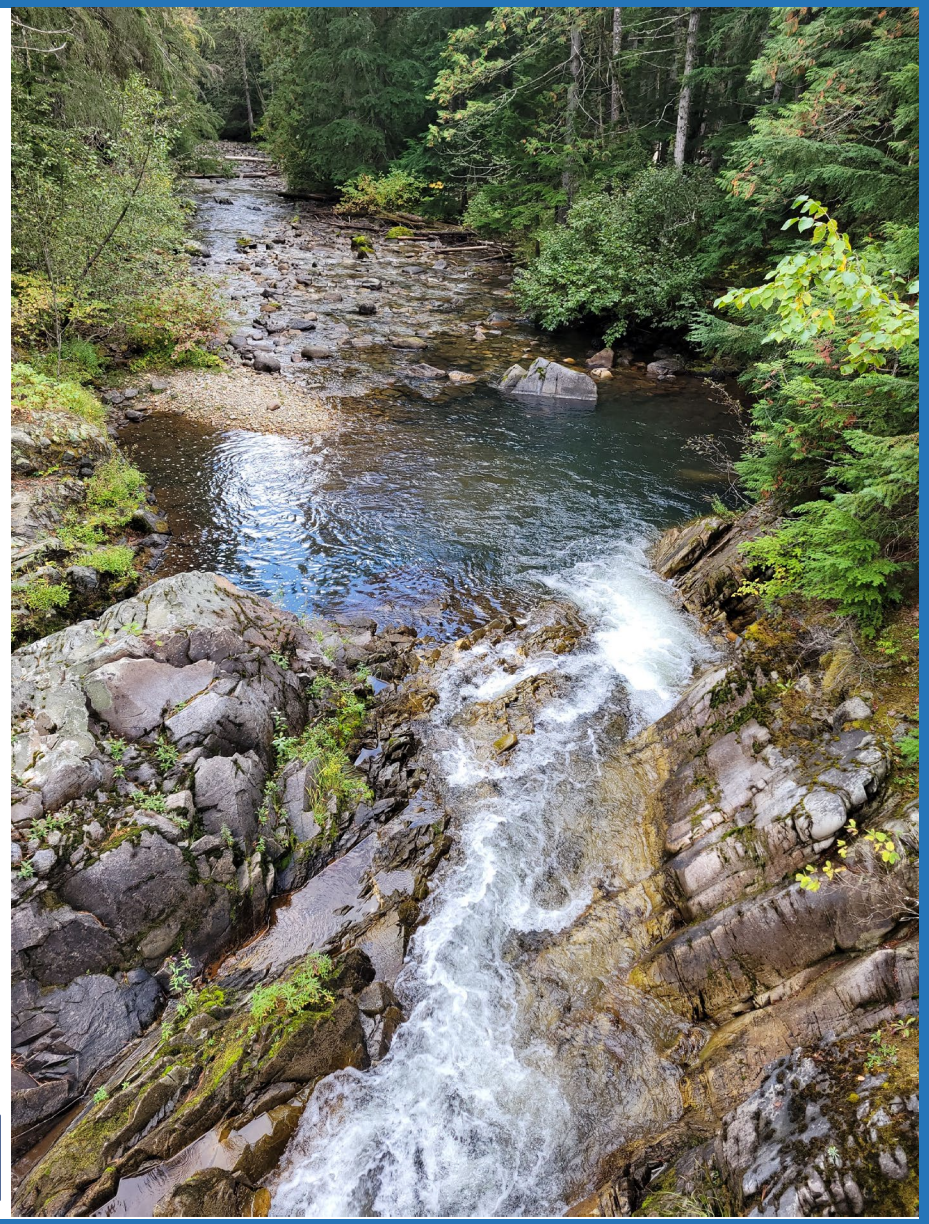
- Tributary inflow
  - Add staff gages
  - Continue flow measurements
  - Cooperation with DEQ
  - More data = less reactive operations



Thorofare

Stakeholder Feedback

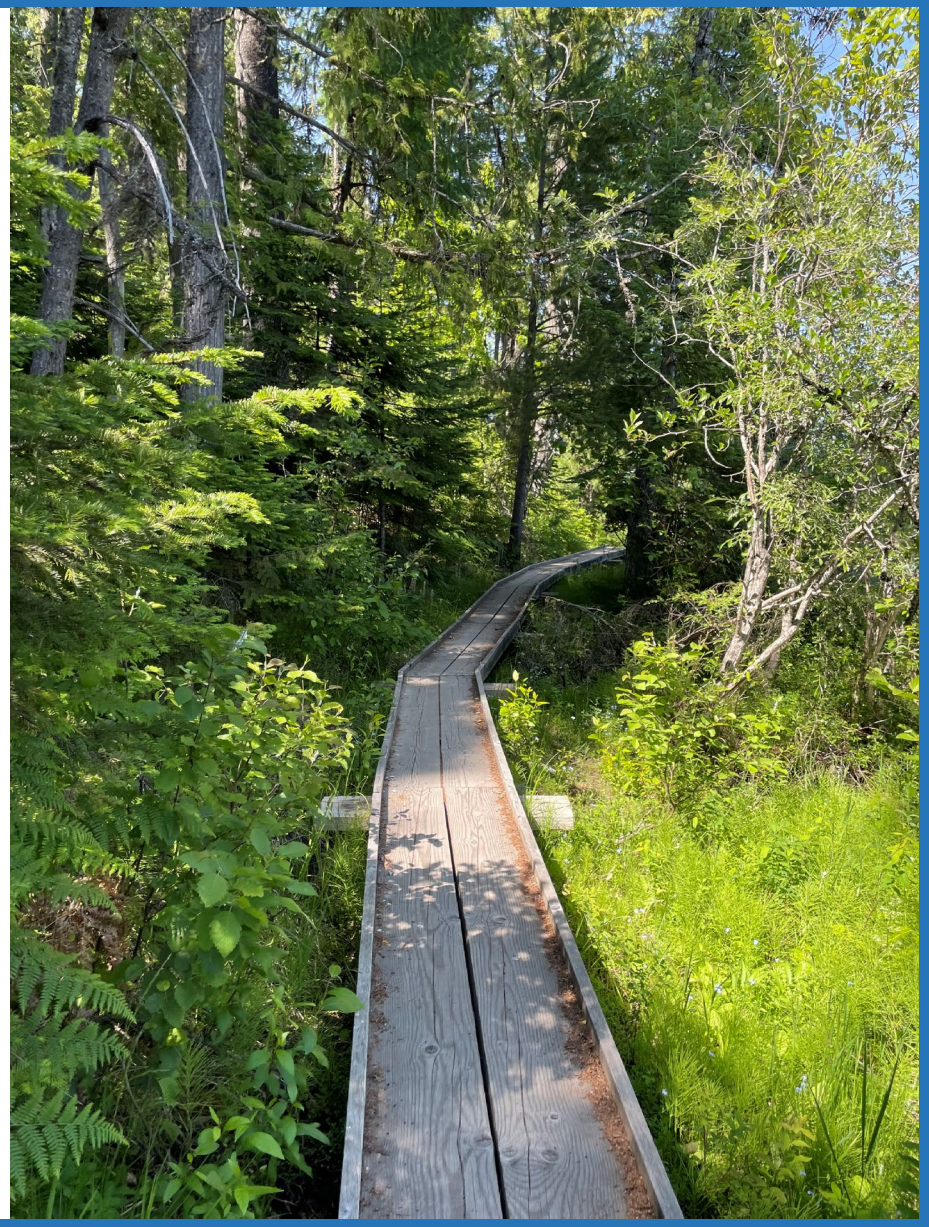
- Need to get dock in water at 2.85’
- Elkins Resort: Summer lake level
  - Higher sooner (Mother’s Day)
- Lake level – flooding
  - Lake levels above 4’ during Spring runoff
- River fluctuations



Hughes Fork

Next Steps

- Stakeholder feedback to continue
- Lessons learned
- 2026 operations
- IWRB stakeholder engagement 2026



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WATER RESOURCES

Questions?

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208-762-2800

