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7 May 2026

Tyler Fortunati
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
1410 N. Hilton St.
Boise, ID 83706

RE: Opposition to Proposed Drinking Water Fee Increases
Docket No. 58-0108-2601 – Idaho Rules for Public Drinking Water Systems

Greetings Mr. Fortunati,

I am writing in opposition to the proposed fee increases associated with Docket No. 58-0108-2601 concerning Idaho's Rules for Public Drinking Water Systems.

I serve as the licensed drinking water operator for the City of Athol. I recently discussed the negotiated rulemaking related to IDAPA 58.01.08 with our city leadership, including our mayor and council members. While we strongly support the mission of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and recognize the importance of maintaining safe and compliant public drinking water systems, we do not believe the magnitude of the proposed fee increase is justified at this time.

Our system, like many small Idaho communities, already operates within tight financial limitations. ***Any*** increase in DEQ fees is ultimately passed directly to local ratepayers, many of whom are already struggling with rising costs for utilities, housing, insurance, and infrastructure. Small communities have limited ability to absorb these increases without impacting residents.

I want to emphasize that this opposition is not directed toward DEQ field staff or compliance personnel. In my experience, DEQ drinking water staff have been helpful, knowledgeable, and supportive in assisting small systems like ours with regulatory compliance and operational issues. Their work is appreciated and valued.

However, before imposing significant fee increases on Idaho communities, I believe DEQ should first pursue additional internal accountability and cost-control measures, including:

• An independent operational or financial audit of the drinking water program statewide to identify inefficiencies and opportunities for savings;

• Evaluation of administrative overhead and staffing structure to determine whether organizational consolidation or restructuring could reduce operational costs;

• Review of duplicative regulatory processes or reporting requirements that may create unnecessary administrative burden for both DEQ and water systems;

• Increased use of technology, regional coordination, and process modernization to streamline permitting, reporting, inspections, and communications;

• Greater transparency regarding how existing fee revenue is currently allocated and why current funding levels are considered insufficient.

I believe Idaho communities would be more receptive to future fee discussions if DEQ first demonstrated that all reasonable efficiency and cost-reduction measures had been thoroughly explored statewide.

I respectfully request that DEQ reconsider or delay implementation of these proposed fee increases until a more comprehensive review of program operations, spending, and efficiency opportunities can be completed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments on this matter and for your continued work supporting Idaho's public drinking water systems.

Respectfully,

Pete Weigman

Pete Weigman
Public Works/Water Operator
City of Athol