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

Subject: Public Comment on Proposed Drinking Water Program Fee Changes (Docket No. 58-0108-2601)

Dear Mr. Fortunati,

I am writing on behalf of Priest Lake Water LLC to formally register our strong opposition to the proposed Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Water Fee increases. As the new owners of this system, we are quickly learning firsthand just how costly it is to run a small public water district under the current regulatory landscape.

While we fully understand and support the core necessity of keeping rigorous clean water standards, the timing and structural scale of these compounding fee hikes pose an existential threat to small, rural, and recreational districts like ours.
Adding increased DEQ testing mandates and higher administrative fees creates a cumulative burden that is simply no longer manageable. Under the current rules in place, it is already extremely difficult to ask for and successfully get rate increases approved. Ultimately, these fee increases function as an unfunded mandate that forces us to choose between infrastructure stability and rate affordability.

We urge the DEQ to consider the disproportionate impact these rules have on rural systems compared to larger urban utilities. In response to the options presented via the Idaho Rural Water Association (IRWA), Priest Lake Water LLC System notes that any increase in fees severely impacts our tight budget, our ability to cover operational costs, and our capacity to invest in infrastructure.

Priest Lake Water LLC runs on a tight budget, yet we successfully meet all DEQ requirements and consistently self-fund our own system improvements. We have actively chosen not to borrow money.

We appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on these proposals and urge the DEQ to adjust the final rules to protect the financial viability of Idaho's small, rural water systems and the operators working hard to support them.

Sincerely,
Ellery Scott Claar