



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

April 9th, 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: Winchester Dam Funding (Action)

Presented by: Amber Worthington

Position/Title: Deputy Director – Programs and Policy

Agenda Item No.: 3

Supervisor Approval: JF

Background:

The Department acquired Winchester Lake and surrounding property from Potlatch Forests, Inc. through a land exchange and a payment of around \$15,000 in 1966. The lake and surrounding property are under Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation's management and host day use locations and 70 campsites.

The dam of the lake began as a log and earthen dam and through rehabilitation and additional stabilization, is now an earthen dam with a concrete spillway. Even with improvements, Idaho Department of Water Resources recently deemed the dam high hazard and in critical need of repairs. The dam needs to undergo rehabilitation to guarantee it can withstand 100-year flood conditions and other pressures creating seepage issues. Due to the high hazard category and to mitigate further issues, the Department has been required to lower the water 40 inches, ultimately affecting outdoor recreation and the local community of Winchester.

The Department funded drilling exploration and design work in the last year and staff are prepared to begin the repair work. The engineering estimate for the dam repairs are between \$2.8 million and \$3.6 million which does not include construction oversight. To help defray costs, the Department would like to apply for grant funding through the Idaho Water Resources Board (IWRB) Aging Infrastructure Grant program and through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, facilitated by Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR).

Staff are asking for authorization by the Commission to apply for the grant funding and will address the spending authority needs at a later Commission meeting.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Section 36-107(b), Idaho Code authorizes the Commission to govern the financial policies of the Department and fix the budget for the operation and maintenance of its work for each fiscal year.

Public Involvement Process:

The public can weigh in at the public meeting prior to the budget review with the Commission.



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Justification:

Winchester Dam is owned and operated by the Department and in very serious need of repairs. The Department has been granted a conditional exemption that allows it to keep water in the lake, at a 40” drawdown, until the repairs are made. The Department needs authorization from the Commission to apply for the monies to make those repairs using resources that are available for that purpose.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend the Commission provide approval to the Department to apply for the grants through the Aging Infrastructure Grant program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, providing a three-way split to fund the improvements to the dam.

Suggested Motion:

I move the Commission adopt the staff recommendation to apply for grant funding from the Idaho Water Resources Board Aging Infrastructure Grant program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund to fund the Winchester Dam repairs.