

# News Release

## Pioneer Irrigation District

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### **PIONEER'S STORM WATER RUNOFF, ENCROACHMENT ISSUES TO BE CENTER STAGE AT NATIONAL CANAL SAFETY MEETING**

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A Pioneer Irrigation District representative will be in Denver Wednesday to brief Federal officials and irrigation representatives from around the country about Pioneer's struggle to deal with urban encroachment, including unauthorized dumping of urban storm water runoff into its canals and drains.

Scott Campbell, an attorney who represents Pioneer, will explain the District's situation at a Bureau of Reclamation national meeting on canal management issues. The topic was added to the meeting agenda after officials from the Idaho Water Users Association detailed the Pioneer situation as being typical of a growing problem across the West in a one-on-one meeting with the head of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Pioneer recently filed suit against the City of Caldwell to stop developers from building municipal storm water sewers dumping urban runoff directly into the District's canals and drains. Caldwell's revised storm water management manual gives developers a mandate to build municipal storm water drains that dump directly into Pioneer canals and irrigation drains without permission of the District. Idaho law expressly prohibits encroachment into private property of irrigation entities.

Details about Pioneer's battle to protect itself from illegal encroachment are expected to be a topic of intense interest at the Bureau of Reclamation meeting because it is so similar to situations faced by other irrigation entities who are also looking for answers.

“If irrigation districts and canal companies do not stop illegal discharges into their facilities when they are first discovered, the long term impacts will be overwhelming. Delay in attacking these problems could lead to creation of vested rights for the illegal discharges to become permanent. The liability exposure for flooding damages, environmental litigation, and health related claims will grossly expand the financial impacts upon irrigation districts, canal companies, their directors, and their employees.” Campbell said he plans to tell officials at the meeting.

The Pioneer representative said he hopes the presentation will be a first step in helping irrigation entities around the West, like Pioneer, formulate proactive strategies to deal with the growing issue of urban encroachment.

“Pioneer Irrigation District knows full well that urban development will not stop, but the storm water impacts of such development causes unacceptable problems for irrigation districts and canal companies if they do not prevent illegal discharges to canals and drains. These are all consequences of urban development improperly shifting the burden of the problems of urban storm water onto existing agricultural irrigation delivery organizations,” Campbell added.

The Denver meeting was originally planned to only evaluate and discuss canal safety issues in light of a recent canal failure that resulted in flooding in Fernley, Nevada.

“We are delighted the Bureau wants our input at this national forum on the growing urbanization of lands surrounding canals and drains. The Pioneer situation is very similar to those now being faced by other irrigation organizations here in Idaho and in other parts of the nation. Our presentation is designed to highlight the problem and hopefully start the process of finding solutions,” added Norm Semanko, Executive Director of the Idaho Water Users Association. Semanko will appear with Campbell at the meeting.

Pioneer Irrigation District has provided irrigation and agricultural drainage services to Ada and Canyon County land owners for more than a century. The District currently maintains about 7,000 accounts providing irrigation water to 34,000 acres of residential and farmland in Canyon and Ada Counties.

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