

# News Release

## Pioneer Irrigation District

3804 Lake Avenue, Caldwell, ID 83605  
TEL: (208) 459-3617 -- [www.pioneerirrigation.com](http://www.pioneerirrigation.com)

### **Legal Fees, Rising Operation Costs, Delinquencies Force Increased Yearly Tax Assessment By Pioneer Irrigation District**

For Immediate Use  
Caldwell, Idaho – Aug. 13, 2008

For Media Information Contact:  
Scott Campbell – 385-5432

Spiraling fuel, chemical, and maintenance costs, coupled with the need to protect itself from potential civil and public health lawsuits, has forced the Pioneer Irrigation District to hike its 2008 irrigation tax assessments by almost two-thirds over 2007, the District announced today.

Pioneer's Board of Directors set the 2008 operation and maintenance assessments at \$66 per acre. That's a 65 percent increase over the 2007 rate of \$40 per acre. The Pioneer Board also doubled the cost of the Assessment Expense from \$10 per account to \$20 per account.

Most significantly, layered on top of those costs is the amount needed for water quality testing and legal fees involved in the ongoing lawsuit which Pioneer was forced to file earlier this year against the City of Caldwell. Pioneer filed the lawsuit to defend its private property rights and to protect public health and safety.

Board members say if Pioneer had not turned to the courts for protection, the District and its patrons would have been exposed to potentially financially devastating lawsuits growing out of flooding or health issues resulting from the illegal dumping of urban storm water into District canals and drains.

Pioneer has been wrestling for more than a year with the serious problems of urban waste water runoff and municipal encroachment involving the City of Caldwell. The District filed suit against the City of Caldwell in January to stop the City's policy of requiring the construction of municipal storm water sewers that dump polluted urban runoff directly into the District's canals and drains without permission of the District. Idaho law expressly prohibits encroachment into private property of irrigation entities.

Pioneer tried for more than a year to reach some type of agreement with the City of Caldwell which could resolve the urban storm water sewer issue but has been unsuccessful.

“Caldwell has simply ignored the District. Pioneer had no choice but to turn to the courts for relief. Otherwise, the number of illegal storm sewers will continue to grow, as will the risk to the public and to the District,” said Scott Campbell, an attorney representing Pioneer.

Board members were also faced with a growing revenue shortfall resulting from larger numbers of people who have not paid their 2007 taxes. The Board then had to calculate how to deal with an anticipated even larger number of delinquencies in 2008. The District is a non-profit organization, and can't set aside large reserves to offset delinquent accounts.

The 2008 assessment rate increase means the cost for a residential lot 1-acre or smaller will increase by \$36, from \$50 in 2007 to \$86 in 2008. The tax assessment will raise the cost for an 80-acre parcel of land by \$2,090. The assessment for a 40-acre parcel will go up by \$1,050.

“This type of increase to its patrons is absolutely the last thing in the world the Board wanted to do but they were forced into it and simply had no choice. It all boils down to a simple matter of math. Fuel, manpower and chemical costs alone increased almost 40 percent over last year, while dam maintenance costs from the Bureau of Reclamation increased by 45 percent,” Campbell said.

“The District has always run extremely lean in its operation, so there simply was no fat that could be cut to make up the difference. The Board agonized over what course to take; but it was painfully obvious that the only solution was for the assessments to go up,” Campbell added.

Pioneer patrons will have the option of paying their 2008 assessments in full by December 20, or in two payments, the first half by December 20 and the remainder by June 20. For more information about the assessment, contact Pioneer at 459-3617.

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 approximately 34,000 acres of residential and farmland in Canyon and Ada Counties.

-end-