

SPONSORED COFFEE CHATS WITH KIKI

WATER UNDER THE HIGH DESERT

Underlying the desert of southern Idaho lies the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer, which is the size of Lake Erie, covering 10,000 square miles.¹ This is an amazing resource for Idaho when you look at what other countries without water are having to spend to desalinate water for their people.

A couple of years ago, through my investing work, I had the opportunity to hear a speaker from the Saudi AramCo fund share that a 600-cubic-meters-per-day desalination plant was currently being built in the Gulf, but that a 3,000-megawatt power plant had to be built at the same time to provide the power for it. Based on the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average cost to build a natural gas power plant in the U.S. in 2013 was \$965 per kw—which would translate to at least a \$2.9 billion investment to build a 3,000-MW power plant, besides the huge cost of the desalination plant. But this is what they have to do; water is a base critical need.

Another speaker noted that only 3 percent of the earth’s water is fresh and 68.7 percent of that fresh water is actually frozen. The next speaker, who invests university endowments and family offices in \$1 billion projects, noted that alfalfa farmers pay \$25 per acre-foot for water upstream on the Colorado River, while almond farmers downstream in central California have to pay \$2,000-\$3,000 per acre-foot and are lucky these days to get any allocation in drought years.

Idaho has a naturally occurring vast amount of fresh water that other countries and states are spending significant dollars to secure. And yet, although we have spent considerable energy in our state appropriating water rights between users, is anyone protecting the aquifer?

For many years I have really appreciated Idaho’s Attorney General Lawrence Wasden’s willingness to take a strong stand for Idaho’s aquifer; he has been the only one saying no to more waste while the U.S. government put pressure on the state to bring in more nuclear waste to be stored above the aquifer at INL.

“Lawrence Wasden didn’t draft the historic 1995 agreement between Idaho and the U.S. Department of Energy regarding radioactive waste at the Idaho National Laboratory, but he’s determined to protect it. It has resulted in Wasden coming under political pressure. That’s because he has refused to sign a waiver to bring more spent nuclear-fuel rods to the INL until the DOE makes good on its promise to begin processing 900,000 gallons of liquid sodium-bearing high-level waste stored at the site into a solid form. That liquid waste is currently housed in three large stainless-steel tanks reinforced by concrete located above the Snake River Aquifer. It has been there for 60 years.”²

In the 1950s, the federal government dumped nuclear waste from weapons production at INL in open pits. Since INL is located right on top of the aquifer, some of that waste has leached into the aquifer. We taxpayers have spent \$9 billion to date to try to clean that up, Beatrice Brailsford, from the Snake River Alliance, tells me. She has written, “Hazardous and radioactive materials has escaped from every single project, and the leaks are, in fact, too numerous to count. Under Superfund, each of the nine major facilities was made a Waste Area Group, as was the Snake River Aquifer.”³

About 10 days ago, Attorney General Wasden and Governor Brad Little were able to reach an agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy for hopefully a path forward that protects the aquifer and gets the waste out, while working with the DOE to resolve prior breaches. I appreciate their work and hope that our federal government keeps to their promises this time. Idahoans must protect our naturally occurring Snake Plain Aquifer for the valuable asset that it is.

¹ Samantha Wright reporting, Boise State Public Radio.
² www.idahostatejournal.com/members/idaho-a-g-explains-firm-stand-on-nuclear-waste/article_ea484799-f84c-5c48-9c71-76153aa83e82.html

³ Surface contamination has reached the aquifer from, for instance, reactors operating without containment. Some of the big ticket items remaining are drying the 900,000 gallons of sodium-bearing high-level liquid waste and then adding that to the rest of the high-level waste powder and turning it all into a solid. That will be very challenging. The plutonium burial grounds and the high-level waste areas will have to be capped. Except for the core areas where either nuclear activities will continue or substantial contamination will remain even after the Superfund clean, the hope is that INL, including groundwater, will be suitable for unrestricted use in 2095.” Beatrice Brailsford



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THE WEEKLY

SUN

CALENDAR

EVENT FEATURE



The annual Firefighter’s Ball is a way for hardworking firefighters and the community they serve to gather together for a fundraising gala. Photo credit: Ketchum Sun Valley Volunteer Association

SCORCHING HOT BALL TO BE HELD

Ketchum Sun Valley Firefighter’s Ball will have jungle theme

BY DANA DUGAN

The 40th annual Ketchum Sun Valley Firefighter’s Ball will be held Saturday, Nov. 23, in the main lobby lounge at the Limelight Hotel in Ketchum. The event will include live music by Lounge on Fire, an extensive silent auction, creative costuming, dancing, and complimentary pizzas by the Limelight. Doors will open at 7 p.m., with music commencing at 8 p.m.

The Ball is put on every year by the Ketchum Sun Valley Volunteer Association made up of volunteers and full-time firefighters.

“It’s a ‘Welcome to the Jungle’ theme, so however you want to incorporate [costumes], it could be anything,” said Colleen Quindlen, a firefighter and EMT for Ketchum and Sun Valley fire departments, who is in charge of the silent auction.

Donations from past firefighter’s balls have helped to provide the new training facility, upgraded rescue equipment for extrication from vehicle crashes, provided electric bicycles for paramedics with heavy medical packs to reach trail accidents more quickly, various tools, rescue training, equipment and snowmobiles.

Co-coordinators for the ball are Keller Gibson, a volunteer engineer/EMT with Ketchum Fire, and Killarney Loufek, a volunteer firefighter for Ketchum Fire.

“We have a whole host of people working behind the scenes to make things happen,” Gibson said.

The auction includes 35 items, and packages such as a Sun Valley ski pass; gift certificates to many local businesses; dog goodies; a kids’ party; restaurant cards; airplane rides; a cabin stay off the Nordic trails, including a pass for a year; a trout sculpture valued at \$8,000, and much more.

“We are incredibly lucky in this community to have the backing that we do,” Gibson said. “Employers let us leave for calls, and co-workers understand when we come in a little late to the office smelling a bit like smoke.”

Indeed, the KSV Volunteer Association is a vital part of the Wood River Valley, both in the services and the people who serve. The gratitude goes both ways.

“The Firefighter’s Ball is a big thank-you party for the whole community,” Gibson said. “It also gives us a chance to introduce ourselves to people who may not know we’re firefighters—the person serving you coffee, building your house, walking your dog. We have a whole other life where we’re dedicated to helping and serving our community in every way we can.



Revelers dance at a masked ball during the annual celebration. Photo credit: Ketchum Sun Valley Volunteer Association



In support of the Ketchum and Sun Valley firefighters, attendees pose at a recent Firefighter’s Ball. Photo credit: Ketchum Sun Valley Volunteer Association

“We’re also a family. We don’t just come together for training and calls and then go our separate ways. We go out to dinner, go on motorcycle rides, and meet up for tea and coffee. The Ball is a chance for us to showcase our family and show thanks for allowing us to serve.”

Tickets are available by visiting ksvva.org, at Atkinsons’ Market in Ketchum, or in person at the door.