

PR COLD WATER BYPASS OPTIONS ARE PONDERED

June 26, 2019 at 5:00 am | By [Keith Kinnaird \(mailto:kinnaird@bonnercountydailybee.com\)](mailto:kinnaird@bonnercountydailybee.com)

PRIEST RIVER — A gravity system or use of groundwater are emerging as top contenders for cooling temperatures and amplifying angler opportunities in the Priest River.

The Idaho Lakes Commission took in a presentation last Wednesday from McMillen Jacobs Associates engineers in which a host of potential approaches were addressed. They include drawing water from a 60-foot depth of Priest Lake and pumping it upland to the Outlet Bay, a siphon system, a gravity system and the use of groundwater.

Pumping, however, would require a 500 horsepower pump or an array of pumps. It would also involve higher maintenance-and-operations costs and require three-phase power, engineers Vincent Autier and Kevin Jensen told the commission.

The siphon approach, meanwhile, held promise because infrastructure could be buried and only single-phase power would be necessary.

“The key difference is we’re not going above ground,” said Jensen.

A gravity system would require three-phase power and a booster pump and would have a similar layout as the siphon option. It would also be largely hidden from view, according to Autier.

The use of groundwater would require the acquisition of water rights and would likely require further study, the engineers said.

The life cycle cost of a gravity system was estimated at \$3.8 million, while the siphon, groundwater and pumping options have costs of \$4.6 million, \$3 million and \$5.9 million, respectively.

A current of unease persists with the proposal. The project is not anticipated to have an impact on the level of Priest Lake, although some who attended the presentation wanted greater assurance that it would not affect the lake.

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