



**THE  
LANGDON  
GROUP**  
*a J-U-B Company*

**IDAHO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION  
COMMISSION (SWCC) AND IDAHO DEPARTMENT  
OF WATER RESOURCES (IDWR) POTENTIAL  
INTEGRATION**

# **RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS**

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**PREPARED BY  
THE LANGDON GROUP**

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## Background

In the interest of identifying potential efficiency in Idaho government, Governor Brad Little has recommended that the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) and Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) thoroughly evaluate combining to more effectively serve Idaho constituents.

Additionally, Governor Little signed Executive Order 2025-05—the Idaho Act—on Friday, August 15th, 2025 (Order). His Order affects all state agencies, including IDWR and the SWCC. Included in the order is the directive to review all current operations and determine if consolidation of services, bureaus, or agencies could improve efficiency and reduce overall spending.

In their evaluation, IDWR and SWCC leadership are committed to an integration process that meets the needs and interests of Governor Little’s directive and a wide range of stakeholders. To help ensure all relevant voices are heard and considered, The Langdon Group (TLG), in collaboration with Board Works by Ledgerwood, was hired to objectively implement a strategic and inclusive process that captures feedback from a range of key stakeholder interests and broadly from the soil and water conservation community to produce recommendations for a successful integration with IDWR. To accomplish this, the following tasks and associated schedule were developed by TLG and approved by IDWR:

Schedule	Tasks and Work Products
July 2025	Identify Situational Assessment (SA) participants SA Guide
August -September 2025	Facilitate SA
September 26, 2025	SA Summary Report
October 2 – October 23, 2025	IASCD Division Fall Meeting Outreach
September 29 – November 10, 2025	Public Survey
October 28, 2025	Integration Recommendations Workshop
November 10, 2025	Recommendations Report
November 19-20, 2025	Present findings and recommendations at the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts (IASCD) Fall Conference and Idaho Water Resources Board (IWRB) Fall Meeting

# Recommendations

The following outline represents recommendations associated with the merger of the SWCC with another state agency, should this occur, where synergy and common ground was found among a diversity of interests through all phases of the process (situational assessment, public survey, integration recommendations workshop). These recommendations are the product of The Langdon Group, a third-party consultant, and should not be interpreted as the recommendations of IDWR, SWCC, the Idaho Governor's Office, or any other state agency.

1. IDWR is the appropriate state agency for SWCC to merge with, due to IDWR's:
  - a. Technical bandwidth to support SWCC.
  - b. Focus on water issues, where the greatest synergy exists among SWCC's conservation programs.
  - c. Overlapping services (Administrative, Human Resources, Information Technology, Fiscal, and Legal), appropriate for consolidation.
  - d. Need to provide career growth opportunities for their Engineers in Training (EIT), through SWCC design work.
  - e. Broader career growth opportunities for SWCC staff that currently have minimal growth opportunities within the SWCC organizational structure.
  - f. Overlap with SWCC processes (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs (CREP), Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), stream restoration/headgates, and permitting), creating opportunities to streamline and expedite.
  - g. Data overlaps, creating the opportunity to develop a shared data clearinghouse.
2. The recommended organizational structure of the merged agencies is as follows:
  - a. The IDWR Director manages the SWCC Bureau Chief as a direct report.
  - b. The Bureau Chief oversees the coordination of daily activities under the direction of the SWCC Commissioners, as was the relationship with the former SWCC Administrator.
  - c. The selection of the SWCC Bureau Chief is significantly informed by the commissioners as participants in the interview panel.
  - d. Commission oversight includes responsibility and guidance over all programs under the SWCC. This includes the engineering staff, Water Quality Program for Agriculture (WQPA) program staff, CREP program staff, and all field staff working for those programs.
  - e. Within this structure, SWCC retains all non-support service Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. SWCC support service (Information Technology, Human Resources, and Finance and Accounts Payable) FTEs would be evaluated for inclusion within existing IDWR departments.
3. Concerning the SWCC Commission Board, it is recommended that:
  - a. The SWCC Commission Board functions in statue as it does today, nominated by the local conservation district divisions for consideration by the Governor. Conservation district commissioners are chosen by the public through a vote in local elections.

- b. The chairman of the SWCC Commission Board serves in an ex officio position on the IWRB and serves as a liaison between the two government bodies.
  - c. The IDWR Director serves as an Ex Officio, non-voting Commissioner of the SWCC in the same way the IDWR Director plays this role with the IWRB.
- 4. It is critical to preserve the non-regulatory, voluntary independence of the SWCC in reality and perception. The following considerations are recommended to achieve this:
  - a. Ensure that the SWCC budget for the benefit of local conservation districts, match and/or through district operations is protected and allocated correctly.
  - b. Preserve connections and relationships with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and local conservation districts through shared offices where financially feasible.
  - c. Maintain SWCC branding in all forms.
  - d. Preserve independent SWCC agency reporting to germane committees in the legislature.
  - e. Retain seasoned, experienced SWCC staff that strongly support the agency mission and are part of the agriculture community.
  - f. Keep WQPA funding and program decisions within the SWCC
  - g. Formalize a “Conservation Partnership Framework” that documents how IDWR and SWCC will coordinate non-regulatory programs. This Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) should ensure that resource sharing never crosses into enforcement or policy interference.
  - h. Recognize the broad mission of the SWCC and conservation districts beyond water resources, to include but not be limited to issues involving wildlife habitat, cropland, rangeland, forestland, urban environments, and others as described in this report.
- 5. In Idaho Code:
  - a. Change § 22-2718 to replace “department of agriculture of the state of Idaho” with “department of water resources of the state of Idaho,” necessitating moving Title 22, Chapter 27 under Title 42 where most code associated with IDWR lives.
  - b. Preserve “non-regulatory” in the code by making no additional changes to the language associated with the SWCC currently in Title 22, Chapter 27.
- 6. Effectively communicating the merger will be key to a successful transition. The following describes key steps towards achieving this:
  - a. The preferred method for sharing information about the merger is via frequent email communications with all interested parties in an FAQ format. See the *information and outreach* section of the *situational assessment* chapter in this report for a list of recommended questions.
  - b. For many participants not directly involved with the SWCC, a conservation district, or NRCS, the mission and purpose of the SWCC is not fully understood. It is recommended

that the combined agency develop a unified, statewide conservation education and outreach campaign highlighting SWCC's 80-year history and accomplishments.

- c. Improve SWCC communication with the public, legislature, and districts by developing a new communications officer position or contractor for the combined agency.

During the integration recommendations workshop, a focused group worked collaboratively to develop a suggested legislative process recommendation designed to reallocate SWCC personnel and result in operational savings, for presentation to the following:

- House and Senate leadership
- House and Senate Agriculture Committees
- House and Senate Resources Committees

With the support of stakeholders, legislative leadership, the germane committees, and ultimately the full bodies pass a joint resolution supporting the evaluation and development of successful path to merger that would benefit both agencies. The group prepared an example of what joint resolution language could look like: *We encourage, authorize and empower the IDWR director and the SWCC Commission to evaluate and prepare proposed legislation supporting the potential integration of the SWCC into IDWR, with certain specific conditions in mind.*

The legislative work done in coordination with legislators would primarily be carried out by the IASCD, not IDWR or the SWCC, and is therefore provided here for informational purposes, not as a Langdon Group recommendation:

To seek this outcome, the group suggested that the IASCD board should seek approval to support the resolution at the November IASCD Annual Meeting. If support from the IASCD is achieved, the recommendation to the legislature would be moved forward by a legislative sponsor with support from the IASCD, SWCC and IDWR. The presentation should highlight the recommended goals, organizational structure, and additional focus on the following:

- Perception of the branding, that it is independent, separate, non-regulatory
- Budget is secure, savings can go into match and/or through district operations
- Be prepared with simple, draft language for legislation (one-liner)

# Situational Assessment

## Situational Assessment Process and Methodology

TLG worked with representatives from IDWR staff, SWCC staff, and the SWCC Commission Board to identify a range of stakeholders who represent relevant interests. Although involving every interested party is not feasible, the goal was to identify individuals who represent Idaho's geographic diversity and all appropriate groups, while capturing all audiences of the [5P Model framework for multiagency collaboration](#).

**The project team conducted interviews with 48 individuals from 25 organizations** in August and September 2025. The full list of organizations and interests interviewed is available in Appendix A. **An additional 21 contacts were identified through the process**, but either declined to be interviewed or were unresponsive to multiple email or phone call requests to participate.

An email from IDWR or the SWCC introduced the process and invited participants to participate. The email introduction and invitation are available in Appendix B. After initial contact, TLG followed up with a request to schedule an interview.

As part of the interview process, participants were provided with an explanation of the purpose of the interview and how their responses would be used. They were informed of the next steps in the process, including the creation of this report, a broadly distributed survey, a workshop, and a presentation at the IASCD Conference in November 2025 of the process, results, and recommendations. Participants were informed that their names would not be attributed to any comments or input provided during the interview, rather feedback would be grouped into common themes and topics.

The project team made significant efforts to capture all possible interests by reaching out to a cross-section of interested groups located geographically across the state. While it was not possible to meet with every individual or group with an interest in this effort, the project team attempted to interview a sample of individuals and organizations that accurately represent the different perspectives, priorities, and concerns that exist within this space.

To solicit input that is valuable and constructive, the interview format was conversational with active listening, allowing the participant to steer the discussion, while ensuring the following objectives were met:

- Ensure engagement opportunities are accessible to stakeholders who are involved in the integration process.
- Foster an interview process that ensures stakeholders have their voices heard.
- Build trust with involved parties through transparent communication and engagement.
- Improve communication and understanding of the plan to integrate the SWCC and the IDWR.
- Identify and engage community members, including conservation district clients from all regions of the state, to ensure a thorough integration process.
- Maintain and foster good relationships with each unique conservation district, which helps them maintain their independence and governance capacity in the development and delivery of locally-led conservation programs and services based on local natural resource conservation



needs.

- Determine key themes from interviewees concerning the unique value that the SWCC and the IDWR bring to the state of Idaho.
- Produce a report that informs the legislative process.

Interviews varied by interviewee as each agency, individual, organization, and entity is unique. Question groupings by topic were developed and designed to be customizable for each interview, with open dialogue and the opportunity for participants to provide valuable insight and feedback reflecting their individual experience and expertise. For the full list of questions and topics, see Appendix C.

## Situational Assessment Findings

This section captures the opinions, beliefs, and perceptions of the Situational Assessment participants, categorized by theme, that emerged during interviews. This assessment does not aim to verify the accuracy of people's statements, but rather aims to understand the priorities, concerns, and interests of various stakeholders.

This report is intended to provide a snapshot in time of a cross-section of the communities and interested parties. However, it is not a representative sample and does not include all potential perspectives. Terms such as *most*, *many*, *some*, and *few* are used to provide an unscientific indication of the frequency that a comment or suggestion was received. Generally, most = over 75%; many = 50-75%; some = 10-49%; and few = less than 10%.

Themes are organized below in alphabetical order.

### Agency Perceptions – Regulatory vs. Voluntary Functions

For most participants there was a clear distinction between how IDWR and SWCC are perceived and categorized. IDWR is seen primarily as a regulatory agency, while the SWCC has a voluntary focused mission. One stakeholder characterized this difference as, "IDWR's job is to tell, SWCC's job is to listen."

For those most familiar with SWCC, the "three-legged-stool" is an important distinction of the shared role SWCC plays with NRCS and the conservation districts, dating back to the 1930s. Each leg is equally important and necessary to carry out their shared mission of voluntary soil and water conservation efforts on the ground. To keep the stool standing, many feel it is critical that SWCC maintain their voluntary autonomy from the regulatory arm of IDWR. One stakeholder indicated that a potential merger with IDWR could inflate the SWCC leg of the stool, creating imbalance that negatively impacts the success of the current model.

Stakeholders provided the following specific comments about how agency perceptions and their current regulatory and voluntary missions manifest on the ground when working with farmers and producers:

- There are places you do not want to drive with IDWR on the side of your truck in eastern Idaho.
- When IDWR shows up on your farm it's a bad day, when SWCC shows up it's a good day.

- Recent events and media coverage surrounding curtailments has impacted the IDWR brand in Eastern Idaho. The timing is not ideal for SWCC to rebrand as IDWR if that is the direction this goes.
- It is detrimental to SWCC's image if they are perceived as the agency that turns your pump off.
- It is more desirable to characterize a potential relationship between SWCC and IDWR as "resource sharing" over a "merger" or "combination."
- Some farmers will not walk into the door of a regulatory agency. For SWCC to maintain relationships with the agriculture community, they need to be physically separated from IDWR offices. Farmers expect to be able to walk into the joint district, NRCS, and SWCC offices to talk with someone who understands their issues and is available to help.
- SWCC staff should not be asked to report violations, or they will not be welcomed back on private property. There is a fear that SWCC staff will be empowered to "rat out" farmers to their regulatory colleagues in IDWR.
- SWCC services are characterized by one participant as "regulation abatement". SWCC lives in a space where they can work with farmers and producers to develop conservation projects that reduce the potential for IDWR regulation violation.

Some stakeholders indicated less concern about the potential merger of regulatory and voluntary agencies and offered models on how this is being successfully accomplished elsewhere:

- IDWR currently has non-regulatory arms that are operating without conflict or external perception concerns, specifically the IWRB and the National Flood Insurance Program.
- ISDA has successfully maintained regulatory and non-regulatory arms, specifically called out in the mission statement as "promotion, education, and regulation." ISDA Divisions are deliberately siloed, to prevent any perceived conflict. For example, dairy inspection and dairy promotion are two different divisions. The agriculture community understands these differences and is not concerned about allowing staff charged with promoting a dairy onto a farm for fear they might be looking for violations. This is the role of the inspector.
- The NRCS is a non-regulatory federal bureau housed within the US Department of Agriculture alongside the US Forest Service, a primarily regulatory agency, and the Farm Service Agency, which has both regulatory and non-regulatory components. This has proven successful because the bureaus stay in their respective lanes and only cross-over for "resource sharing" outside of the public eye.

One stakeholder mentioned that SWCC already has some regulatory responsibilities if best management practices fail, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can enforce anti-degradation violations.

### Appropriate State Agencies for Merger

When asked, what is the preferred state agency if SWCC were to merge, most indicated that IDWR is the best fit, while some shared a preference to stay under ISDA. No other state agency was shared as a potential fit, with widespread disinterest in merging with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) due to its strong regulatory mission. Few suggested that SWCC should function independently, one individual suggested if a merger were necessary, it should be IDWR and IDEQ due to

their shared regulatory missions. Another suggested a new “Department of Natural Resources” should be formed to house multiple current agencies, including SWCC.

One participant shared that IDWR’s past experience housing a division (energy) that was not water focused, was unsuccessful. They had different missions and visions, and no attempt was made to blend cultures around a common purpose. This was shared not to suggest another state agency would be a better fit, rather that there are lessons to be learned.

The justifications for an IDWR merger were:

- The current relationship with ISDA is non-existent, and the assumption is ISDA does not want SWCC. There are also indications that other agencies may merge with ISDA, making for a crowded organization chart.
- IDWR has a clear, strong leadership structure.
- IDWR has more technical bandwidth to support SWCC than ISDA.
- ISDA is focused on production. SWCC is focused on water and land health, which fits better with IDWR.
- There is an opportunity for the SWCC loan program to benefit from the resources of the IDWR fiscal department.
- There is clear synergy with water issues and conservation programs, which is increasingly becoming the highest of the different interests that exist in the SWCC.

The justifications for remaining with ISDA were:

- There has been no clear justification or benefit to moving out of ISDA, so why do it?
- They share the same customer base.
- ISDA regulations have less conflict than IDWR with SWCC practices.
- ISDA’s regulatory arm works with SWCC to help avoid regulation, such as keeping cattle out of streams.
- ISDA’s mission and vision are broad, similar to SWCC, whereas IDWR is focused solely on water. This has the potential to alienate the non-water aspects of the SWCC.
- ISDA has a history of successfully balancing regulatory and non-regulatory divisions.

## Information and Outreach

Participants expressed strong interest in both the type of information they would receive and their preferred methods of communication. At the time of the interviews, the level of knowledge and the sources of information varied considerably among stakeholders. Conservation districts not actively involved with the IASCD or the SWCC generally reported feeling the least informed. Some individuals perceived that there is no clear purpose for the merger, and the primary driver is to “check the box” of efficiency. The Situational Assessment process was also perceived as an exercise in checking-the-box. To address this perception, participants provided many key questions they would like answers to:

- Why the need for change?
- What is the perceived efficiency?

- What is the benefit to IDWR?
- What is the benefit to SWCC?
- How will this change the SWCC's mission?
- What is the timeline?
- How much money will be saved?
- How will this affect staff and agency job descriptions?
- How will this affect SWCC's current funding?
- Does this give IDWR greater control over Idaho's water?
- What will happen to Commissioners?
- What will happen to the non-water aspects of SWCC?
- Will this change how SWCC staff work with NRCS and district staff?
- Will SWCC field staff be moved to IDWR offices?
- Will SWCC staff titles, business cards, vehicles, be rebranded as IDWR?
- How does this affect the non-regulatory, voluntary mission of the SWCC?
- Will the SWCC now be expected to enforce regulations?
- If this is not approved by the legislature, what happens to SWCC?
- How can I provide my input?

For many participants not directly involved with the SWCC, a conservation district, or NRCS, the mission and purpose of the SWCC is not fully understood. There is broad interest and recognized value in providing basic information about:

- What the SWCC does.
- How SWCC money is spent.
- How SWCC supports Idaho farmers and the economy.
- The value and history of the three-legged-stool: SWCC, NRCS, conservation districts
- Idaho's constitutional or statutory limit on independent state agencies.
- The Water Quality Program for Agriculture (WQPA) grant program.
- The differences and benefits of soil and water conservation in urban and rural environments.
- Descriptions about each conservation district in Idaho and the people they serve.

The preferred methods for receiving information are via frequent email communications, and in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) format. One participant suggested a visual interpretation of IDWR and SWCC services and statutes in columns, clearly indicating or "cross walking" where there is the opportunity for efficiencies. For the purpose of the legislature, it was suggested that information needs to be concise and not exceed one page.

Suggested messages include:

- Strength in combining where water comes from and what we do with it.
- Stronger together for Idaho's land and water future.
- SWCC will have its own place in IDWR and will not be absorbed.
- Water is the biggest issue for the agriculture community moving forward.
- Water issues reflect land use.

- This has long-term benefits for Idaho sustainability.

Fall conservation district meetings, the IASCD Annual Meeting, the IWRB November meeting, the SWCC Commission presentation, the Idaho Association of Counties, and the IDWR new employee orientation meeting are all avenues where it was suggested that information about the potential merger be presented and discussed.

## Organizational Structure

Most participants indicated a preference to see minimal change to the current SWCC organizational structure should a merger with IDWR take place, only to have the role of acting administrator shift to that of a Bureau Chief that carries out the directive of the Commissioners and reports operationally to the IDWR Director, with the existing “South Idaho District Support and Conservation Programs” and “North Idaho and Engineering” group structures in-tact. For those familiar with the IDWR Organization Structure, most indicated a preference for the SWCC Bureau to live in the Planning and Technical Services, non-regulatory division of IDWR.

Participants did not specifically indicate a preference for how the Department of Human Resources (DHR), Information Technology (IT), Legal, and Fiscal fit within the context of the organizational structure, however most indicated that the potential for efficiency gains existed by assimilating these departments within IDWR, and therefore it can be assumed most would support removing these groups from the current SWCC organizational structure and combining them with their counterparts in IDWR.

The SWCC’s Conservation Reserved Enhancement Program (CREP) was an example program where many participants saw an opportunity for synergy and resource sharing between the SWCC and IDWR, however there was not a stated preference for removing these departments from their current place within the SWCC structure. The *Potential Gains* chapter of this document provides more detail into this topic.

## Statute

Among those stakeholders with knowledge and understanding of how the SWCC is currently described in Idaho Statutes, all indicated at a minimum, to change Idaho Code, § 22-2718 to replace “department of agriculture of the state of Idaho” with “department of water resources of the state of Idaho,” necessitating moving Title 22, Chapter 27 under Title 42 where most code associated with IDWR lives. Most shared a preference to see no additional changes to the language associated with the SWCC currently in Title 22, Chapter 27. This preserves “non-regulatory” in the code and protects the SWCC from being put in a position to enforce regulatory violations.

Some indicated a preference to see some changes to Idaho code to capture the efficiencies gained through the potential merger, specifically through assimilating the administrative, human resource, and fiscal duties. Few stakeholders indicated a preference to see deliberate language added to statute that clearly separates the voluntary directive of SWCC from IDWR and characterizes the relationship only as the sharing of resources.

Some also saw advantages in making changes to the statute in phases – beginning with the minimum change described above in 2026 and addressing potential efficiencies in 2027 and beyond. However, another stakeholder warned that the legislative attention span is short and advised not to drag the process out too long.

### *SWCC Commissioners*

Opinions varied about the preferred role and function of the Commissioners if the SWCC merged with IDWR. Most indicated a preference to see the Commissioners operate and function as it does today, appointed by the Governor consistent with Idaho Code (22-2718) and responsible for hiring the SWCC Administrator or Bureau Chief.

Many indicated a preference to see the Commissioners shift to an advisory role, similar to the commissions and councils that exist within ISDA and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, providing only advice and suggestions and no management or financial decisions. Under this arrangement, management and hiring of the SWCC Administrator or Bureau Chief would shift to the IDWR Director. One participant suggested that the chairperson in an advisory board model could be added to the IWRB to represent the interests of the SWCC.

Some or few participants provided specific recommendations about how the Commissioners could integrate and function within the structure of IDWR:

- Include the IDWR Director as an Ex Officio, non-voting Commissioner of the SWCC in the same way the IDWR Director plays this role with the Idaho Water Resources Board.
- Combine the Commissioners and IWRB initially, and then reduce the body in subsequent years with members that represent both interests.
- Have the IWRB assume all duties of their respective SWCC district counterparts. The individual districts perform much of the necessary work, and therefore, it would be an insignificant burden for the IWRB to assume these responsibilities.
- Reduce the number of Commissioners with existing conflicts of interest, to help ease the transition into IDWR.

### *SWCC Staff*

Most participants saw the necessity of having a position within IDWR that assumed the duties of the former administrator, likely as a “Bureau Chief.” Many indicated that it is too much responsibility for the IDWR Director to “wear both hats”, although many commented that the current Director has performed well at managing this. Some participants saw the potential role of a SWCC Bureau Chief as having many of the same duties as the former administrator without the added legislative duties (sometimes characterized as a “burden”) which would now be assumed by the IDWR Director. More than one participant shared that the former administrator had to exert the same level of legislative effort for a disproportionately smaller agency as that of a larger agency director.

Generally regarding staff, most indicated a preference to see the majority remain in their current roles with potential efficiencies gained through combining supporting groups described above, while others shared the focus of SWCC staff should be solely on supporting the conservation districts through

funding, not providing technical support or services. With additional funding gained by removing SWCC positions, districts could hire former SWCC staff directly to continue providing those technical services.

## Potential Gains

The most frequently heard opportunities to improve or benefit SWCC through a merger with IDWR were the perceived efficiencies of combining overlapping services (Administrative, DHR, IT, Fiscal, and Legal) and providing engineering support to the SWCC's lone engineer.

Streamlining processes that involve both agencies (CREP, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) programs, stream restoration/headgates, and permitting) or where SWCC has struggled in the past to gain efficiencies (purchasing, public outreach) are another perceived benefit shared by many.

Some participants expressed that IDWR would provide SWCC with greater professionalism with prompt communication and necessary resources to be efficient in their work.

The following sub-themes emerged as specific areas where participants saw potential gains for both departments (listed alphabetically):

### *Communication with the Public*

Some participants noted that the SWCC engages regularly with the boards, staff, and members of fifty conservation districts across the state. Conservation district members are the same farmers and ranchers who regularly interact with IDWR's regulatory and non-regulatory programs. These regularly occurring and frequent interactions could be a valuable way to communicate the actions, programs, and grant and loan opportunities of the IDWR and IWRB and to receive critical feedback.

### *Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)*

CREP encourages farmers and landowners to enroll in long-term conservation contracts, removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and implementing conservation practices. Many participants saw a natural synergy between the agencies with the SWCC CREP program because it is water quantity focused and already works cooperatively with IDWR.

With support from IDWR marketing and communication, some believe the CREP program has the opportunity to increase the number of farms and total acreage enrolled, resulting in significant water savings greater than what can be achieved through curtailments and other IDWR projects such as increased water storage.

It was also mentioned that an important component of the CREP program concerns the wildlife habitat after the water is removed, and the necessary funding for this non-water aspect cannot be lost.

### *Data and Knowledge Sharing*

Both IDWR and SWCC collect data, and it is perceived that with greater access to water data, SWCC may identify potential projects that benefit conservation districts that were not previously realized.

IDWR hydrologists and the SWCC groundwater program are additional areas where sharing expertise could result in positive initiatives around groundwater quality, hydrology mapping, and aquifer recharge.

TMDL implementation plans, watershed planning, canal lining, and ditch piping are other projects where shared knowledge could contribute to positive outcomes.

Additionally, SWCC field staff have access to private properties that IDWR does not and may be able to bring issues back to their IDWR colleagues to develop collaborative solutions to complicated problems, and relay important IDWR messages to water users.

### *Funding*

Some see the merger with a larger agency as an opportunity to access additional funding and with a larger grant writing team, realize the ability to pursue more funding for conservation district projects. Specifically:

- IDWR grant opportunities may have relevance to SWCC customers.
- IDWR funds could be added to the WQPA grant program.
- The Conservation Improvement Grants (CIP) program, eliminated 15 years ago, could reemerge with a new funding source.
- Greater access to federal funding under IDWR than is possible under ISDA.

### *Offices and Equipment*

Few indicated an opportunity to realize efficiencies by combining staff in IDWR district offices and sharing vehicles and equipment. Most indicated a preference to remain independent, as described in greater detail in the “Preserve” chapter.

For the Commissioners, one participant sees the opportunity for a more professional setting with access to the IDWR conference room and equipment.

### *Political Positioning*

As part of a larger state agency, some see the opportunity to have more “political clout” as an IDWR bureau, without the responsibility of pushing a small budget with limited human resources through a cumbersome appropriation process every year. Currently, SWCC receives no support from ISDA in the legislature and must push its budget and WPQA funding independently. One participant indicated it is better to be a line item than an independent request.

It was also mentioned that IDWR’s mutual interest in the CREP program may help ensure the necessary funding to operate in SWCC continues.

### *Recruitment and Retention of Staff*

Some participants shared that SWCC often struggles to retain and recruit staff due to the lack of opportunities to promote or move laterally within a small agency. The potential merger with IDWR is seen as an opportunity to provide staff with broader opportunities to explore new career paths. Conversely, IDWR staff have the opportunity to explore opportunities in SWCC and specifically in engineering where IDWR Engineers In Training (EIT) will have the opportunity to work on design projects necessary to achieve their professional licenses, reducing the likelihood they will seek employment in the private sector or with a different state agency to grow their careers.



## Preserve and Avoid

Most participants indicated a preference to preserve SWCC autonomy from regulation, primarily as it relates to the service culture and voluntary role they play as a partner to the 50 soil and water conservation districts in Idaho, NRCS, and to the farmers, producers, and more broadly to the people and land of Idaho. Concern over jeopardizing the SWCC's public perception exists among some interviewees if this is not preserved.

To maintain this, many feel it is critical that the SWCC:

- Co-locate staff with NRCS and conservation districts. Working side-by-side and maintaining these relationships are perceived by many as critical to the success of conservation efforts and can be best achieved in a cooperative and collaborative environment. Additionally, the CREP program is managed through the US Department of Agriculture computer system.
- Keep staff in the field and do not move them to centralized locations, as it would damage relationships and create a greater travel burden.
- Retain SWCC branded vehicles, email addresses, and business cards.
- Retain seasoned, experienced staff that have bought into the agency mission and are part of the agriculture community.
- Keep WQPA funding decisions with the Commissioners and do not turn control over to the Idaho Water Resource Board.

Some participants shared that it is important to **avoid minimizing or losing** the following key aspects of the current SWCC:

- There is concern non-overlapping interests of the SWCC, such as soil health, water quality, wildlife, air quality, and plant and animal resources on Idaho's privately owned forest, rangeland, and agricultural lands, may be overshadowed within an agency primarily focused on water quantity and water use. The Commissioner's role in making management decisions and directing the priorities of the SWCC.
- A role in legislative committee meetings to accurately tell the conservation story.
- The CREP program.
- The structure of the loan program. It is set up to work seamlessly with the NRCS.
- The EPA 319 grants in coordination with IDEQ. SWCC staff helps write and administer these grants for smaller districts.
- The role SWCC plays working with landowners to address water quality impaired streams on private land.
- The role SWCC plays working with agencies and districts to identify nitrate priority areas and implementing projects to incentivize farmers and livestock producers to reduce nitrate loads.
- Urban community outreach and education.
- Expedited processing. Concern was expressed around IDWR's processing schedule for permits and water rights transfers. These review times are getting longer, and a participant did not want to see SWCC processing times impacted by a merger.

- Existing funding allocation. There is concern that a merger will result in reduced funding for the SWCC.
- Technical support role for conservation districts, particularly the smaller districts that do not have their own staff resources and/or dedicated funding sources.

## Public Survey

TLG worked with representatives from IDWR staff, SWCC staff, and the SWCC Commission Board to identify a range of stakeholders that represent relevant interests for the SA phase. Although involving every interested party is not feasible, the goal was to identify individuals that represent the geographic diversity of Idaho and all appropriate organizations.

To ensure that all interested parties have an opportunity to provide their input, an online non-scientific survey was made publicly available, Sept. 29-Nov 10, 2025. Respondents were provided access to the SA Summary Report and asked that If their interests, concerns, or ideas are included in the report, know that it has been captured and will be considered moving forward and is not necessary to repeat in the survey. The survey asked respondents the following questions:

1. After reviewing the Situational Assessment Summary Report, are there any additional aspects or components of the SWCC and/or IDWR that you would like to see PRESERVED after a potential merger?
2. After reviewing the Situational Assessment Summary Report, are there any additional aspects or components of the SWCC and/or IDWR that you would like to see ELIMINATED after a potential merger?
3. After reviewing the Situational Assessment Summary Report, are there any additional opportunities or gains you would like to see IDWR and SWCC ACHIEVE after a potential merger?
4. After reviewing the Situational Assessment Summary Report, are there any additional outcomes you would like to AVOID after a potential merger?
5. Do you have any additional comments, concerns, or considerations, that you feel were not captured in the Situational Assessment Report?

The survey was shared via email to all SA participants to redistribute to their networks and in-person at the six October Soil and Water Conservation Division meetings by SWCC staff. In total, 18 responses were received. The full survey summary report is provided in APPENDIX D.

The following summary captures survey input that is unique to what was received in SA, categorized in themes established by the SA. Content was edited for readability with minimal changes to what was received. The survey did not request demographic information therefore it is not possible to determine if the responses capture a wide range of interests, therefore responses are not categorized by the frequency a comment or suggestions was received.

## Public Survey Themes

### Agency Perceptions – Regulatory vs. Voluntary Function

- Any rebranding that places SWCC as a sublabel under IDWR should be avoided. Instead, eliminate plans or language that minimize SWCC's public identity—for example, removing its logo or reducing its direct communications role with districts and landowners.

- Formalize a “Conservation Partnership Framework” that documents how IDWR and SWCC will coordinate non-regulatory programs. This framework should ensure that resource sharing never crosses into enforcement or policy interference.
- There are fundamental difference between the IWRB and the IDWR. One is a governing body for the State, and one is an Agency of the State. They are not the same and function independently.
- Programs perceived as top down could further discourage voluntary participation from farmers, ranchers, and other landowners.
- IDWR may struggle to manage both regulatory duties and voluntary conservation programs effectively.
- The SWCC is also involved in many other areas including soil conservation, range work and water quality issues, that do not easily mesh with IDWR's regulatory mission.
- SWCC's model of voluntary, partner-leveraged conservation delivers a higher return on investment than traditional top-down management.

### Appropriate State Agencies for Merger

- Instead of merging SWCC with IDWR, look at combining the non-regulatory parts from several agencies. There are many grants and conservation programs spread across multiple agencies.
- The proposed merger overlooks autonomy and risks undermining a statutory mandate designed to preserve the SWCC's proven collaborative, locally driven model. Staying within ISDA aligns with SWCC's mission, supports its collaborative culture, and strengthens its partnerships that benefit Idaho's land, water, and agricultural communities.
- SWCC is, fundamentally, an agricultural conservation organization. Housed under ISDA, they are under the Senate/House Agricultural Affairs committees. A move to IDWR would change to being under the Senate/House Resource, Environment, and Conservation committees. This fundamentally changes their legislative possibilities as agency legislation is now through a committee that is not explicitly considering the role of agriculture in the state.
- The SWCC by themselves do not direct any conservation activities but exist to aid the ISCD to help their producers. The focus of the resource priorities is human, soil, air, plant, and animal impacts which are much broader than the water focus. The foundational grant program originally developed by the SWCC was for rangeland improvements.

### Information and Outreach

- Improve statewide awareness of SWCC's 80-year history and accomplishments through a unified, statewide conservation education and outreach campaign led by SWCC staff.
- Districts should first be asked if a merger is appropriate or beneficial before being asked what should be preserved, avoided, or gained. Broad input from districts, farmers, ranchers, and conservation partners is vital to making informed decisions.
- Before there is such a large undertaking to move an organization for the sake of cost savings and efficiency, it would be prudent to have actual data on the financial implications to determine if this action is a cost effective and beneficial move for the State. There is also no review showing that IDWR has the current capacity to accommodate the merger.

## Organizational Structure

- An acting administrator managing both organizations can work during a transition period, however having a dual role managing both entities is not sustainable.

## Potential Gains

- Currently, it is unclear which projects qualify for match funding and only a handful of districts are able to benefit. If the funding was spread out more evenly, it could cut down on reporting.
- Additional assistance in preparing SWCC financial requests.
- More support for the overall SWCC budget, including support for Conservation Districts. The District budgets for base and match funding have been stagnant for years, while inflation and cost of living has continued to rise.
- Larger, more reliable budget for conservation projects for individual farmers or small groups of farmers.
- Improved watershed-scale conservation that integrates parcel-level work with broader watershed planning to address systemic resource challenges.
- Voluntary conservation program that individual farmers or small groups of farmers could use to implement water savings best management practices.

## Preserve and Avoid

### *Preserve*

- It is important that SWCC and IASCD presentations remain part of the Agricultural Affairs Committees during the legislative session.
- Both organizations should maintain their autonomy from one another and continue to function as independent organizations.
- Preserve SWCC's continued control over staff management, funding allocations, grant administration, and priority setting.
- Preserve SWCC's independent budgetary control and authority to direct resources toward district priorities.
- Preserve SWCC's strong agriculture focus and deep relationships with farmers, ranchers, and forest owners that are vital to its efficacy.
- Preserve the safety and protection of districts from any litigation that could cross over from IDWR.

### *Avoid*

- If the proposed IDWR-SWCC merger moves forward, we may lose a vital agricultural connection and instead present solely to the Natural Resources Committees.
- Loss of autonomy could damage SWCC relationships with farmers and ranchers that they partner with every day.
- Eliminating the small agency feel and moving work into a larger operation can reduce SWCC's ability to maintain its own priorities and culture as community-based elected boards.
- SWCC's budget must not be absorbed or redirected toward IDWR regulatory programs.

- Avoid more laborious report requirements.
- If the current structure is disrupted without fully considering the consequences, there is risk of losing not just the SWCC's credibility, but the trust placed in all 50 districts statewide.
- Avoid loss of focus on SWCC's responsibility for implementing the Idaho Agriculture Plan to meet state non-point source requirement.
- Avoid the limitation or obstruction of nature-based or low-tech process-based restoration techniques in the suite of tools for SWCC.
- Avoid reprogramming of full-time employee lines and other funding to IDWR to divest from SWCC.
- Avoid transfer of SWCC personnel away from NRCS and District office locations, which would lose the important networking and education that goes on there.
- Avoid SWCC reports translating into information that IDWR needs to represent to the districts.
- Avoid large-scale restructuring often results in diminished outputs, damaging culture shifts, and loss of experienced staff.

# Integration Recommendations Workshop

## Integration Recommendations Workshop Introduction

On October 28, 2025, 18 stakeholders representing IDWR staff, SWCC staff, the SWCC Commission, the IWRB IASCD, Idaho State House of Representative, and the Idaho State Senate participated in a full-day in-person workshop, hosted by The Langdon Group (TLG), with the goal of developing recommendations regarding the proposed integration of the SWCC with IDWR.

To inform and prepare participants for discussion, the following presentations were provided by IDWR Director Weaver and TLG:

- Background of Governor Little's proposal for combining the agencies and an overview of current IDWR and SWCC organizational structures
- Overview of feedback received through the situational assessment and public survey
- Overview of potential paths to enact change through the legislative process and budgeting.

## Integration Recommendations Workshop Envisioning

Early in the agenda, participants were broken into three small groups, each facilitated by a TLG professional. These groups were charged with answering the question: *What would the proposed combination look like when working well?* [The Goals Grid](#) (Nickols & Ledgerwood. 2005) framework for strategic planning was used by each group to identify answers to the question within the context of what they would like to see achieved, preserved, avoided, and eliminated through the potential merger. The following summarizes what was heard:

### Achieve

- More natural resource conservation, get more done to protect Idaho resources
- Greater program achievements
- Improve the loan program and streamline funding
- More technical support
- Improved communication and messaging with the public and conservation districts
- Streamline permitting processes
- Increased trust for IDWR in eastern Idaho
- Coordinated agency goals
- Increased district match funding
- More effectiveness in role
- Data sharing
- Coordinated goals
- A combined budget with sufficient fiscal protections to ensure money used historically by the SWCC is preserved for its ongoing use at comparable levels.
- Reduced government spending on personnel, operations, and capital expenditures

## Preserve

- Priority of serving local conservation districts
- SWCC's non-regulatory/voluntary role
- Independence of the SWCC staff, commission, and director
- SWCC funding for soil conservation districts
- The three-legged stool (SWCC, NRCS, Districts) by keeping SWCC staff in the same field offices with NRCS and the districts where financially feasible
- SWCC in statute
- Selection/nomination of SWCC commissioners by conservation district divisions
- SWCC identity and branding (vehicles, logo, email address, etc.)
- SWCC independent marketing and communications
- Resource sharing
- SWCC subject matter expertise
- SWCC mission
- SWCC autonomy
- SWCC visibility and voice in the state legislature

## Avoid

- Moving SWCC field staff to regional IDWR offices
- Permitting conflicts or the perception of conflict
- Adding unnecessary steps to the process
- Turf wars
- SWCC losing autonomy
- Working in silos
- SWCC become more regulatory (remain voluntary)
- SWCC getting lost in the IDWR organizational structure

## Eliminate

- Staff turnover by creating opportunities for IDWR Engineers in Training to earn their Professional Engineering licenses through access to SWCC design project, and by providing SWCC staff more opportunity for growth and movement within a larger department.
- IDWR mistrust in eastern Idaho
- Operational redundancy by combining administrative and financial divisions and consolidating redundant resources such as vehicle fleets, field equipment, office technology and supplies, and offices



## Integration Recommendations Workshop Recommendations

The afternoon was primarily dedicated to recommendation development. Three focus areas emerged for recommendation development: actionable goals; the legislative process; and organizational structure.

New small groups were formed to create draft recommendations for advancement and future consideration, summarized below.

### Actionable Goals

This small group utilized the notes captured through the morning exercise of identifying *What the proposed combination would look like when working well*, to refine goals into the following with actionable tasks:

- Preserve non-regulatory, voluntary independence of the SWCC.
- Protection of SWCC funding for the benefit of local conservation districts.
- Increase SWCC technical support by utilizing IDWR engineers. This has the dual benefit of providing IDWR Engineers in Training to earn their Professional Engineering licenses through access to SWCC design project.
- Improve SWCC communication with the public, legislature, and districts by developing a new communications officer position or contractor for both agencies
- Protect the existing statutory SWCC commissioner nomination process whereby district divisions recommend nominees to the governor.
- Preserve connections and relationships with NRCS and local conservation districts through shared offices where financially feasible.
- Maintain SWCC branding in all forms.
- Develop professional growth opportunities through a larger combined agency to help retain IDWR and SWCC staff.
- Develop a shared data clearinghouse.
- Preserve independent SWCC agency reporting to germane committees in the legislature.

### Organizational Structure

This small group developed a recommended organizational structure for the proposed integration of the SWCC with IDWR.

The organizational structure recommendation is as follows:

- The IDWR Director would manage the SWCC Bureau Chief as a direct report.
- The Bureau Chief would oversee the coordination of daily activities under the direction of the SWCC Commissioners, as was the relationship with the former SWCC Administrator.
- The selection of the SWCC Bureau Chief would be significantly informed by the commissioners as participants in the interview panel.
- Commission oversight would include responsibility and guidance over all programs under the SWCC. This includes the engineering staff, WQPA program staff, CREP program staff, and all field staff working for those programs.

The model for this joint management structure of the SWCC Bureau Chief exists currently within IDWR: The IDWR Deputy Director for Planning & Technical Services is a direct report of the IDWR Director, however selection and mission direction is primarily led by the IWRB.

Within this structure, SWCC would retain all non-support service Full Time Equivalents (FTEs). SWCC support service (Information Technology, Human Resources, and Finance and Accounts Payable) FTEs would be evaluated for inclusion within existing IDWR departments.

The group also recommended that the Chairman of the SWCC Board hold an ex officio position on the IWRB and serve as a liaison between the two boards, and that SWCC commissioners are nominated by the local conservation district divisions for consideration by the Governor, as is the process today.

## The Legislative Process

This small group used conversation from the *Legislative Process and Budgeting* Discussion held earlier in the day to work collaboratively and develop a suggested legislative process recommendation designed to reallocate SWCC personnel and result in operational savings, for presentation to the following:

- House and Senate leadership
- House and Senate Agriculture Committees
- House and Senate Resources Committees

With the support of stakeholders, legislative leadership, the germane committees, and ultimately the full bodies pass a joint resolution supporting the evaluation and development of successful path to merger that would benefit both agencies. The group prepared an example of what joint resolution language could look like: *We encourage, authorize and empower the IDWR director and the SWCC Commission to evaluate and prepare proposed legislation supporting the potential integration of the SWCC into IDWR, with certain specific conditions in mind.*

To seek this outcome, the group suggested that the IASCD board should seek approval to support the resolution at the November IASCD Annual Meeting. If support from the IASCD is achieved, the recommendation to the legislature would be moved forward by a legislative sponsor with support from the IASCD, SWCC and IDWR. The presentation should highlight the recommended goals, organizational structure, and additional focus on the following:

- Perception of the branding, that it is independent, separate, non-regulatory
- Budget is secure, savings can go into match and/or through district operations
- Be prepared with simple, draft language for legislation (one-liner)

# Appendix

## A: Participant List

Forty-eight individuals were interviewed from 25 organizations. Some interviews occurred in small groups with multiple representatives of the same organization. Some interviewees represented multiple organizations or interests. Efforts were made to capture the multiple organizations, entities, and interests people represented.

1. Adams Soil and Water Conservation District
2. Ada Soil and Water Conservation District
3. Bear Lake Soil and Water Conservation District
4. Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District
5. Boundary Soil Conservation District
6. Butte Soil and Water Conservation District
7. Central Bingham Soil Conservation District
8. Idaho Association of Counties
9. Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts
10. Idaho Department of Human Resources
11. Idaho Water Resources board
12. Idaho Department of Water Resources staff
13. Idaho Division of Financial Management
14. Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission Commissioners
15. Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission staff
16. Idaho State Department of Agriculture
17. Idaho State Legislature
18. Idaho Water Users Association
19. Kootenai-Shoshone Soil & Water Conservation District
20. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
21. Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources
22. Natural Resources Conservation Service
23. Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District
24. Squaw Creek Soil Conservation District
25. Wood River Soil and Water Conservation District

## B: Email Content

Dear NAME:

As you are likely aware, In the interest of identifying potential efficiency in Idaho government, Governor Brad Little has recommended that the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) and Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) combine to more effectively serve Idaho constituents.

IDWR and SWCC leadership are committed to an integration process that meets the needs and interests of a wide range of stakeholders. To help ensure all relevant voices are heard and considered, [\*The Langdon Group\*](#) (TLG), in collaboration with *Board Works by Ledgerwood*, has been hired to objectively implement a strategic and inclusive process that captures feedback from a range of key stakeholder interests and broadly from SWCC staff to produce recommendations for a successful integration with IDWR. With the integration of these two agencies also comes the opportunity to re-evaluate current SWCC and IDWR functions.

As an impartial third party, TLG will implement a number of methods for engagement and gathering diverse stakeholder input beginning with a situational assessment, followed by a more broadly distributed survey, a focused workshop, and ultimately a presentation of the findings and recommendations at the 2025 Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts Fall Conference.

Beginning with the Situational Assessment, Bryant Kuechle or one of his colleagues from The Langdon Group will be reaching out to you to schedule conversations individually or in small groups, as appropriate. Feel free to reach out to Bryant ([bk@langdongroupinc.com](mailto:bk@langdongroupinc.com), 208-739-3048) at any time. Conversations can occur in-person, phone, or online – whatever is most appropriate and convenient for you.

Although The Langdon Group won't have the capacity to meet with every person with interest in this topic, the goal is for them to reach a cross section that can help paint a picture of the issues, concerns, and opportunities for successful integration.

Please let me know if you have any questions and thank you for your participation in this process,

## C: Interview Questions & Strategy

### Process

TLG will interview approximately 50 stakeholders who are identified as key parties in the integration process. Interviews will occur in a variety of methods, including in-person, over the phone, or via video conference. Interviews are anticipated to be a mix of individual and small groups. Interviewees will receive an introduction to the project, and overview of the process from the SWCC and the IDWR via email (see draft email content below), followed by a request from TLG to schedule a conversation in advance of interviews.

- Before the interview, participants will be provided a full explanation of the purpose of this assessment and where it sits in the overall integration process.
- Names will not be included and comments/input will not be attributed to individuals or organizations, rather feedback will be grouped into common themes that emerge during the process.
- Organizations will be listed as participants and the report will include the total number of people that participated in the interviews.

Input will be captured in a summary report and provided to SWCC staff. SWCC staff will then be asked to respond to a survey designed to gather additional broad input. The results of both processes will inform a key stakeholder workshop to further refine and define a recommended path forward. The summary of the entire process will be presented at the 2025 IASCD Fall Conference.

### Potential Areas of Conversation

Conversations may vary by interviewee as each individual, agency, and stakeholder group is unique with different interests and may require different approaches. The following question groups are designed to be customized and generate open dialogue while providing valuable insight and helping to ensure that the interdependent needs described in [the Triangle of Satisfaction](#) model are considered. For each stakeholder, discussion topics will be selected based on stakeholder interest and relevance to their role.

#### Personal Connection

- What is your current or past involvement with the SWCC and/or the IDWR?
- What value have you seen that the SWCC and/or the IDWR has provided to your community or field of work?
- What do you perceive as the priorities of the SWCC and/or the IDWR?
- How long have you had a relationship with the SWCC and/or the IDWR?
- How would you describe your experience working or interacting with the SWCC and/or the IDWR?

#### Interests and Understanding

- What are your primary interests regarding this integration?
- What are your concerns regarding this integration? What are the concerns you are hearing from your community?

- Are there concerns about preserving the SWCC mission of conservation of natural resources including preserving agriculture from within IDWR and how can that be overcome?
- What information would help you better understand the integration process?
- What information would compel you to support the integration process?

### Looking Forward

- What opportunities do you see for integration of the SWCC and the IDWR?
- What areas would be best served with more independence?
- What challenges do you see for integration of the SWCC and the IDWR?
- Are there opportunities to incentivize district participation through this process? Explain.
- Are there cultural differences that we need to be aware of among the interests?
- What opportunities exist that will enhance the services both agencies provide? What new opportunities might this process realize? For example, are there existing IDWR programs or initiatives that would benefit from SWCC expertise and vice versa such as the Stream Channel Protection Program?
- What outcomes would you like to see from the integration of the SWCC and the IDWR?
- What would a successful integration look like from your perspective in both a short term and long term time frame?
- Are there any specific services or functions you would like to see preserved after the integration?
- What would you like to see evolve from the creation of one integrated agency?
- What would you like to see change in the current state of the SWCC and the IDWR?
- What would be the anticipated impact on locally-driven conservation program delivery and services provided by the 50 conservation districts, irrigation districts, ground water districts, surface water districts.
- What would be the anticipated impact of direct natural resource conservation services and programs for land owners, land managers.

### Lessons Learned

- Are you aware of other integration processes that have occurred in Idaho or among similar agencies in other states? What worked? What didn't? What lessons can we learn?
- Are there other processes that you have been involved in where we can learn from those successes or failures?

### Messaging

- Is the way this is being communicated to your community working? Is it resonating?
- Could communication or messaging be improved to help with understanding?

### Roles

- Are there concerns about staff migration tied to potential integration? If so, why and how can that be mitigated?
- Are there concerns about how staff will integrate? Explain? What are potential solutions.
- How do you see the SWCC and IDWR boards working together and maintaining their independent interests? What is the IASC Board's role?
- What role does ISDA play moving forward?

- Does this change how NRCS integrates with the SWCC, IDWR, and the 50 Conservation Districts? How and what is recommended.
- Are there concerns about natural resource conservation needs being addressed beyond water resources?
- Are there concerns about locally-driven conservation programs and services delivery by conservation district under the merger?

#### Engagement

- Who else should be involved in this process that we may not have considered at a local, state, or national level.
- How do you prefer to engage in this process moving forward?
- How do others with an interest in this prefer to engage in this process?
- What challenges might we encounter when trying to bring stakeholders and interest-groups together for discussion of the integration of the SWCC and the IDWR?
- What support or resources would help you engage more effectively in integration efforts?
- What would meaningful engagement look like for you and your organization?
- How can the SWCC and the IDWR make participation easier or more accessible?

#### For potential Workshop Participants

- Would you be interested in working with a small group of approximately 15 stakeholders in a workshop process to refine the recommended path forward?
- What do you need to participate effectively while serving in this role?
- How can the integration process benefit from your expertise?
- Who is critical to involve in this?

## D: Full Survey Summary Report



## Q1 After reviewing the Situational Assessment Summary Report, are there any additional aspects or components of the SWCC and/or IDWR that you would like to see PRESERVED after a potential merger?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Keeping SWC intact as a group with commissioners, NRC staff working with Districts State-wide and with an administrator or assistant administrator/director.	11/7/2025 8:22 AM
2	I believe it's important for SWCC and IASCD presentations to remain part of the Agricultural Affairs Committees during the legislative session. I'm concerned that if the proposed IDWR-SWCC merger moves forward, we may lose this vital agricultural connection and end up presenting solely to the Natural Resources Committees.	10/26/2025 8:55 PM
3	Please refer to our Additional Comments, Concerns, and Considerations for a full explanation of our district's position. We believe the current ISWCC structure functions efficiently and effectively. We are not providing separate answers to the other questions in the survey because doing so could be interpreted as agreement with a merger, which has not been determined. Changes of this magnitude should not be made without broad consultation and clear evidence of need.	10/25/2025 9:07 PM
4	I believe that in order to maintain effectiveness of working with agriculture producers on a voluntary basis, the SWCC would still need to maintain its autonomy from the IDWR even if it is housed within the IDWR.	10/24/2025 8:51 PM
5	Both organizations should maintain their autonomy from one another and continue to function as independent organizations by maintaining: The Commission's flexibility to work with Districts in individual capacities. How the Commission interacts with each District is unique, based on the regional needs, staff capacity, and other factors. The Soil & Water Conservation Commission Board's authority to oversee the Commission. These positions are suggested for consideration by the Conservation Districts to the Governor to then make the appointment. That input is key to making sure that the Board has an understanding of the organization, has an already established, good working relationship, and ensures that everyone's time is used wisely and to the best of their capabilities. The Soil & Water Conservation Commission Administrator position, and have that position hired by the Commissioners. This position is not only responsible for management of the Commission Staff, but also for the big-picture work with all 50 Conservation Districts across the state. A temporary stand-in managing both organizations can work during a transition period, however having a dual role managing both entities is not sustainable in the long run.	10/24/2025 9:09 AM
6	In addition to what's already noted in the assessment, it's essential that the SWCC's governance and decision-making authority remain fully independent within any merged structure—not just its mission. This includes continued control over staff management, funding allocations, grant administration, and priority setting. The report mentions preserving autonomy from regulation but does not explicitly address preserving the Commission's independent budgetary control and authority to direct resources toward district priorities.	10/24/2025 8:34 AM
7	The independence of the SWC is important	10/22/2025 2:56 PM
8	It was implicit in much of the report, but to make it explicit: We should preserve SWCC's strong agriculture focus and deep relationships with farmers, ranchers, and forest owners that are vital to its efficacy.	10/22/2025 2:02 PM
9	I would like to see the Commission Board of Directors preserved in an autonomous position in any potential merger with IDWR. The Commission should not under any circumstances be run by the IDWR Water Board.	10/19/2025 10:25 AM
10	the safety and protection of our supervisors (Soil and Water Conservation Districts) from any litigation that could cross over from IDWR	10/15/2025 10:43 AM

Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) and Idaho Department of Water Resources  
(IDWR) Potential Integration

11	I read the Summary Report, but I just want to emphasize the importance of maintaining the relationship of SWCC with NRCS and the SCDs, including being co-located in the same office, using NRCS computers, and continuing to use our own vehicles.	10/10/2025 3:19 PM
12	As summarized throughout the report, autonomy from regulatory responsibilities is key if merged with IDWR	10/9/2025 9:54 AM
13	Yes	10/2/2025 3:25 PM
14	No	10/1/2025 10:13 AM
15	SWCC independence and ability to provide no regulatory advice to producers. SWCC will not function without true independence.	10/1/2025 8:11 AM
16	Just the existing working relationship between districts and the SWC.	9/30/2025 2:50 PM
17	After this merger, the identity of IDWR will remain the same, their assignment of managing the tasks required for governing Idaho's water resources is paramount. The purpose of the SWCC was to serve and direct assistance to the Soil Conservation Districts who in turn aid Idaho land owners. To exist the SWCC must create a funding bridge to aid the SCD's.	9/30/2025 2:10 PM

## Q2 After reviewing the Situational Assessment Summary Report, are there any additional aspects or components of the SWCC and/or IDWR that you would like to see ELIMINATED after a potential merger?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 5

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Reduce Commission meetings to every other month or quarterly, but keep the option of scheduling Special Meetings as needed.	11/7/2025 8:22 AM
2	Match funding feels like it could be a lot simpler. Right now, it's kind of unclear what actually qualifies, and it seems like only a handful of districts are able to really benefit. Rural counties just can't keep up. If the funding were spread out more evenly, it could cut down on all the reporting headaches—or maybe just make county or city contributions count	10/26/2025 8:55 PM
3	Please refer to our Additional Comments, Concerns, and Considerations for a full explanation of our district's position. We believe the current ISWCC structure functions efficiently and effectively. We are not providing separate answers to the other questions in the survey because doing so could be interpreted as agreement with a merger, which has not been determined. Changes of this magnitude should not be made without broad consultation and clear evidence of need.	10/25/2025 9:07 PM
4	I would like to see any reference to the SWCC coming under any administrative direction of the IDWR eliminated. If the SWCC comes under the umbrella of IDWR, the administration and direction of the SWCC should remain with the SWCC Commissioners and not fall under the IDWR.	10/24/2025 8:51 PM
5	If there is a merger, we do see the value in utilizing some of the administrative support of IDWR, including the financial positions. We know that the budget request did take up a considerable amount of time in the winter, and it would be beneficial to the SWCC Administrator to have additional assistance in preparing the financial request.	10/24/2025 9:09 AM
6	The assessment discusses reducing redundancy in HR, IT, and fiscal functions, but it does not address the risk of eroding SWCC's visibility. Any rebranding that places SWCC as a sublabel under IDWR should be avoided. Instead, eliminate plans or language that minimize SWCC's public identity—for example, removing its logo or reducing its direct communications role with districts and landowners.	10/24/2025 8:34 AM
7	N/A	10/22/2025 2:02 PM
8	No	10/10/2025 3:19 PM
9	No	10/2/2025 3:25 PM
10	No	10/1/2025 10:13 AM
11	Oversight from IDWR.	10/1/2025 8:11 AM
12	no	9/30/2025 2:50 PM

## Q3 After reviewing the Situational Assessment Summary Report, are there any additional opportunities or gains you would like to see IDWR and SWCC ACHIEVE after a potential merger?

Answered: 13 Skipped: 4

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	More communication with Districts, Federal programs, additional fundings for programs/projects. To utilize staff in both departments to provide organizational and project support. To provide assistance for SWC engineering staff. Improve marketing campaigns for SWC loan program.	11/7/2025 8:22 AM
2	Instead of merging the Commission with IDWR, is there a chance to look at combining just the non-regulatory parts from several agencies? There are a lot of grants and conservation programs spread across DEQ, IDWR, IDL, ISDA, the Office of Species of Concern, and Fish and Game. I'm wondering—would people trust the process more, and would it be more efficient and effective, if the regulatory and non-regulatory roles were kept separate? And maybe it would make more sense to have one department handling conservation grants and working with private landowners, instead of six or more agencies doing similar things.	10/26/2025 8:55 PM
3	Please refer to our Additional Comments, Concerns, and Considerations for a full explanation of our district's position. We believe the current ISWCC structure functions efficiently and effectively. We are not providing separate answers to the other questions in the survey because doing so could be interpreted as agreement with a merger, which has not been determined. Changes of this magnitude should not be made without broad consultation and clear evidence of need.	10/25/2025 9:07 PM
4	If the SWCC can maintain it's autonomy, then I would like to see SWCC work more closely with the Idaho Water Board.	10/24/2025 8:51 PM
5	If the Commission moves underneath the IDWR banner, we would like to see more support with the overall Commission budget, including support for Conservation Districts. The District budgets for base and match funding have been stagnant for years, while inflation and cost of living has continued to rise. This flatline of funding is making it difficult for Districts to retain new employees and continue to offer services at levels seen in the past.	10/24/2025 9:09 AM
6	Beyond the efficiencies and funding synergies already described, an additional opportunity is to formalize a "Conservation Partnership Framework" that documents how IDWR and SWCC will coordinate non-regulatory programs. This framework should ensure that resource sharing never crosses into enforcement or policy interference. The merger could also achieve better statewide awareness of SWCC's 80-year history and accomplishments through a unified, statewide conservation education and outreach campaign led by SWCC staff. IDWR should coordinate with SWCC and all SWCDs/SCDs, with SWCC taking the lead, allowing the Commission to operate with the flexibility and local responsiveness that have defined its success.	10/24/2025 8:34 AM
7	Watershed-scale conservation: Integrating parcel-level work with broader watershed planning may address systemic resource challenges. Professional development: Cross-agency collaboration can create new career pathways for staff.	10/22/2025 2:02 PM
8	I see potential gains for the Loan and CREP programs, but only uncertainty for the conservation districts and the employees that support them.	10/19/2025 10:25 AM
9	If possible, it would be good if the SWCC could have a larger, more reliable budget for conservation projects for individual farmers or small groups of farmers. These conservation projects could address a variety of resource concerns, such as water quality, water quantity, soil erosion, soil health, plant health, wildlife habitat, and others. It would also be good if IDWR had a voluntary conservation program that individual farmers or small groups of farmers could use to implement water savings best management practices.	10/10/2025 3:19 PM
10	Work on helping farmers achieve their goals in their practices.	10/2/2025 3:25 PM

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11	No	10/1/2025 10:13 AM
12	no	9/30/2025 2:50 PM
13	To be successful, the planning partnership covering all land based resources directed by the local SCD's must be somehow connected with IDWR. Government agencies are not usually invited to discuss environmental concerns on private lands without the involvement of the local Soil Conservation Districts, who are neighboring farmers themselves.	9/30/2025 2:10 PM

## Q4 After reviewing the Situational Assessment Summary Report, are there any additional outcomes you would like to AVOID after a potential merger?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 1

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Too many changes quickly.	11/7/2025 8:22 AM
2	Losing effectiveness of Districts, Commission, and NRCS. (independently and together). A lot on-the-ground conservation and education gets done for minimal funding.	10/26/2025 8:55 PM
3	Please refer to our Additional Comments, Concerns, and Considerations for a full explanation of our district's position. We believe the current ISWCC structure functions efficiently and effectively. We are not providing separate answers to the other questions in the survey because doing so could be interpreted as agreement with a merger, which has not been determined. Changes of this magnitude should not be made without broad consultation and clear evidence of need.	10/25/2025 9:07 PM
4	I would want to see the SWCC to AVOID being folded into IDWR, and just come under the IDWR umbrella only, while maintaining full operational independence from the IDWR.	10/24/2025 8:51 PM
5	We would like to avoid the loss of autonomy of the Commission. What has made it successful in working with Districts and farmers is its ability to act independently with a variety of partners. The Commission works with 50 unique soil conservation districts across the state, all with varying budgets and capabilities. We also see that this shift to IDWR and loss of autonomy could damage our relationships with farmers and ranchers that we partner with everyday. We understand that both ISDA and IDWR have regulatory arms - the difference is that in this proposed shift, it is being discussed how to MERGE organizations, versus leaving us as an independent operation underneath another organization. Issues with this merger include: 1. We currently have no regulatory authority, and this proposed merger DOES give us closer ties to a regulatory organization, even if the intent is to distance us from regulatory components of IDWR. 2. Taking away our small agency feel and moving our work into a larger operation can reduce our ability to maintain our own priorities and culture as community-based elected boards. The SWCC does have "access to private properties that IDWR does not". If producers and ranchers are unsure of how this new relationship impacts them and their Commission relationship, they could also limit the access that SWCC and the Districts have previously earned through years of relationship-building.	10/24/2025 9:09 AM
6	The assessment identifies concerns about public perception and regulatory association, but it does not directly mention the risk of funding redistribution. SWCC's budget must not be absorbed or redirected toward IDWR regulatory programs. SWCC is already underfunded; reducing its budget or staff under a larger umbrella agency would cause long-term harm to Idaho's conservation network. Avoid any outcome where SWCC's local partnerships, credibility, or matching-fund leverage capacity are diminished.	10/24/2025 8:34 AM
7	We would like to avoid more laborious reports for the state	10/22/2025 2:56 PM
8	Avoid a loss of focus on SWCC's responsibility for implementing the Idaho Ag Plan to meet state non-point source requirements Avoid the limitation or obstruction of nature-based or low-tech process-based restoration techniques in the suite of tools for SWCC Avoid reprogramming of fulltime employee lines and other funding to IDWR to divest from SWCC	10/22/2025 2:02 PM
9	Loss of the Commission Board of Directors' governance of SWCC. Loss of good relationship between IASCD and the Districts with the SWCC. A step backwards in the working relationship between the SWCC, the Districts, and the NRCS. A transfer of SWCC personnel away from NRCS and District office locations, which would lose the important networking and education that goes on there.	10/19/2025 10:25 AM
10	more reports.... will what we report now translate into information that IDWR needs to represent the Soil and Water Conservation Districts?	10/15/2025 10:43 AM
11	Since IDWR is much larger than SWCC, I don't want SWCC to lose its identity and purpose. I	10/10/2025 3:19 PM

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don't want the soil conservation districts to feel like they have been abandoned.

12	As summarized throughout the report, autonomy from regulatory responsibilities is key if merged with IDWR. Loss of regulatory abatement and producer advocacy.	10/9/2025 9:54 AM
13	Yes	10/2/2025 3:25 PM
14	No	10/1/2025 10:13 AM
15	Loss of identity	9/30/2025 2:50 PM
16	It is important to recognize there is a fundamental difference between the IWRB and the IDWR. One is a governing body for the State and one is an Agency of the State. They are not the same and function independently.	9/30/2025 2:10 PM

## Q5 Do you have any additional comments, concerns, or considerations, that you feel were not captured in the Situational Assessment Report?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 1

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	While I understand the push for government efficiency, I believe the conversation around merging agencies is overlooking a critical factor: effectiveness. The combined budget for Idaho's 50 conservation districts and the Commission is relatively modest, around \$3 to \$4 million, and yet these entities deliver substantial value. They operate with lean resources and have built deep, trusted relationships with farmers and ranchers over the past 80 years. I don't see waste in this system. What I do see is a network that's earned the confidence of rural communities through consistent, on-the-ground work with landowners to help them conserve Idaho's resources. That trust is fragile. If we disrupt the current structure without fully considering the consequences, we risk losing not just the Commission's credibility, but the trust placed in all 50 districts statewide.	10/26/2025 8:55 PM
2	Conservation districts are independent local governments led by elected supervisors who implement vital, community driven conservation priorities on Idaho's public and private lands. As major stakeholders, they deserve meaningful consultation whenever changes affect their funding, support, or operations. The Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC) and conservation districts form a trusted, collaborative, and effective conservation model rooted in stewardship, local leadership, and voluntary partnership. Disrupting this model in the name of efficiency risks eroding landowner trust, reducing participation, and increasing costs through added bureaucracy. This ultimately weakens conservation outcomes in an agriculture dependent state. Programs perceived as top down could further discourage voluntary participation from farmers, ranchers, and other landowners. This directly impacts conservation results. These districts have delivered decades of proven success, leveraging millions in local investments to benefit Idaho's agricultural economy and natural resources, all while operating on lean budgets and volunteer boards. Overlooking district input risks undermining the expertise and dedication that have made Idaho's conservation model successful for decades. Moving ISWCC under the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) a regulatory agency focused on water rights enforcement risks mission creep, cultural clashes, and overextension of resources. IDWR may struggle to manage both regulatory duties and voluntary conservation programs effectively. This could undermine both missions and create real environmental impacts. These changes could disrupt the support systems that farmers and ranchers rely on to maintain productive, sustainable lands. They threaten the very agriculture and natural resources the state depends on. If efficiency and good management are truly the goals, the state should invest more in conservation districts and ISWCC. This would build on their proven, cost-effective success rather than disrupting a system that already works well. Just as the Governor expresses pride in investing in education, funds allocated for conservation and enhancement of state natural resources are a worthy investment. In 2010, the Idaho Legislature restored administrative autonomy to ISWCC, allowing it to operate independently while remaining under ISDA's statutory framework. This grant of autonomy was not merely procedural. It reflects a recognition that ISWCC functions best as an independent body, able to manage programs and partnerships effectively. The Governor's proposal to move ISWCC under IDWR overlooks this autonomy and risks undermining a statutory mandate designed to preserve the Commission's proven collaborative, locally driven model. There is no current need for additional oversight. Imposing it risks disrupting a system that is already effective. Staying within the Department of Agriculture aligns with ISWCC's mission, supports its collaborative culture, and strengthens its partnerships that benefit Idaho's land, water, and agricultural communities. While much of the discussion has focused on how a merger would affect the Commission, it is just as important to consider the impact on the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR). IDWR's main role is managing and enforcing water rights, which fundamentally differs from ISWCC's locally led, voluntary conservation programs. Taking on both responsibilities could stretch IDWR's capacity, blur its regulatory focus, and risk slowing both agencies' work. The cultural divide between enforcement and collaboration could erode efficiency rather than improve it, while damaging the trust with farmers and landowners that is essential to Idaho's conservation success. These are real risks that deserve more attention	10/25/2025 9:07 PM



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before any changes are made that could weaken two effective systems instead of strengthening one. We appreciate that the Langdon Group conducted a stakeholder study, but its scope was far too narrow to represent Idaho's diverse conservation community. Only eleven of fifty conservation districts were interviewed. Most of those individuals also serve on the Commission or IASCD, institutions directly involved in the merger discussion. Equally concerning is the exclusion of farmers, ranchers, private landowners, and other key stakeholders. These are the people whose voluntary investments in conservation benefit both local communities and Idaho's natural resources. If this report is to inform legislative action, it should first go through a broader, more inclusive process. This ensures every district and the agricultural community has a fair voice in shaping Idaho's conservation future. Our district would like to note that while the survey refers to a potential merger, all the questions focus on what should be preserved, avoided, or gained. Answering these questions presumes districts support a merger, which could be misleading. The survey might be interpreted as showing district support when the majority opinion has not been determined. None of the questions ask whether districts support or oppose a merger. Districts should first be asked if a merger is appropriate or beneficial before being asked what should be preserved, avoided, or gained. Until that question is answered through full consultation with all 50 districts and the landowners we serve, this survey should not be interpreted as support for the merger. While we know it would be impossible to engage every stakeholder, broad input from districts, farmers, ranchers, and conservation partners is vital to making informed decisions. The current system works. ISWCC and the conservation districts already deliver effective, cost-efficient programs that protect Idaho's land, water, and agricultural legacy. Listening to those who work with conservation on the ground ensures changes strengthen Idaho's agricultural economy and protect programs that benefit both farmers and natural resources. After reviewing the Langdon Group report, conducted in response to Governor Little's order to improve Idaho government efficiency, and reflecting on our experience with ISWCC operations, we conclude that ISWCC already operates efficiently under a full-time Administrator knowledgeable about natural resource conservation and agriculture. Consolidation under IDWR would not improve performance and could be costly both environmentally and financially. Maintaining the current structure ensures continuity, effective conservation outcomes, and strong partnerships that benefit Idaho's land, water, and agricultural communities.

3	In operational reality, the SWCC and IDWR only have superficial similar responsibilities. The IDWR has strong regulatory responsibilities, while the ISWCC is seeks voluntary cooperation from Agriculture producers, in conjunction with the NRCS and Conservation Districts and is non regulatory. To fold the SWCC in with IDWR too closely would greatly diminish it's ability to gain the trust of producers and work to conserve water so that IDWR would not need to curtail water rights. The SWCC is also involved in many other areas including soil conservation, range work and water quality issues, that do not easily mesh in with IDWR's regulatory mission.	10/24/2025 8:51 PM
4	With all of the Discussion regarding how this merger would impact ISWCC and IDWR, it appears that there was not much discussion as to how this could affect Conservation Districts. While Districts do work closely with Commission staff, it's important to note that they are still individual organizations with their own elected Board Supervisor positions. Any impact to the Commission will also greatly affect Districts, and there is much concern about how that relationship may be shifted with this change. It was a disservice to Districts to only communicate to Supervisors who happened to fill other positions on other Boards, and not reach out to a more general population of District Supervisors. There is much discussion about perceived efficiencies, but this report does not show that actual metrics have been looked at, such as office space, employee capacity to accept more responsibility, raises that may come with added work, etc. Before there is such a large undertaking to move an organization for the sake of cost savings and efficiency, we believe it would be prudent to have actual data on the financial implications to determine if this action is a cost effective and beneficial move for the State. And while this report talked about the potential gains, there was not much that highlighted potential losses, including how large-scale restructuring often results in diminished outputs, damaging culture shifts, and loss of experienced staff. We also do not see any review showing that IDWR has the current capacity to accommodate all of these shifts. In also looking at the potential gains, there is a lot of talk about increasing programs such as Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - while this could be the case, the CREP takes funding. With the current cuts to funding, it is hard to see that actually being an outcome of this merger. That can also be said for the comments that "IDWR money can be redirected to XYZ program of the Commission..." Current funding is tight across the board in Idaho so the likelihood of a shift in funding is doubtful. At this time, our organization does not support moving forward with a merger. We think a decision like this merits actual consideration of	10/24/2025 9:09 AM

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financials, staff workloads, merged budgets, and an actual plan of action to receive our support to move forward.

5	The assessment does not fully capture the asymmetry of need between the agencies. SWCC's model of voluntary, partner-leveraged conservation delivers a higher return on investment than traditional top-down management. Any integration must recognize that SWCC's success stems from collaboration—not control. If integration proceeds, the public-facing identity should remain SWCC-led for all non-regulatory programs, with IDWR in a supportive, technical role. In short: strengthen SWCC, don't subsume it. The best path forward is to protect its independence, amplify its story, and ensure that efficiency efforts do not come at the cost of credibility or community trust.	10/24/2025 8:34 AM
6	As a district it is important that we are not associated with an overly regulatory agency as we are not regulatory. We hope district funds will still funnel to the districts and no extra work is required as our district employees are part time employees for the most part.	10/22/2025 2:56 PM
7	a. SWCC is, fundamentally, an agricultural conservation organization. Housed under ISDA, they are under the Senate/House Agricultural Affairs committees. A move to IDWR would change to being under the Senate/House Resource, Environment, and Conservation committees. This fundamentally changes their legislative possibilities as agency legislation is now through a committee that is not explicitly considering the role of ag in our state. It would be helpful to see more analysis around SWCC's existing relationship with ISDA and weigh the pros and cons of that. Perhaps an easier strengthening and streamlining could occur under ISDA rather than a full-scale move to IDWR. The report explicitly describes that "most = over 75%; many = 50-75%; some = 10-49%; and few = less than 10%". Given that we are not being asked to duplicate responses in this survey, this language will not adequately capture the distribution of concerns from survey participants. Would like this to be recognized as something that only a 'few' people thought was important (for example) may be 'many' if the survey allowed us to reiterate points made in the report.	10/22/2025 2:02 PM
8	This was a poor approach to take with this potential merger. Coming into this process with no plan in place, nothing definitive to evaluate, and throwing everything open for comment for the SWCC really degrades the personnel value as state employees and minimizes their conservation mission.	10/19/2025 10:25 AM
9	hopefully - better communication. Tell us what is expected, so we can help each other	10/15/2025 10:43 AM
10	After looking at the list of soil conservation districts that were interviewed, it seems that south-central Idaho and southeastern Idaho were not represented very well. I would like to see some feedback from those areas.	10/10/2025 3:19 PM
11	While government efficiency at both state and federal levels is important, I don't think this is a particularly effective example of consolidation improving efficiency. Another option of improved efficiency is providing SWCC with more flexibility, better tools, and better staff support to execute their mission in the best and quickest manner possible. Has the state examined how additional investment or expanded mission/resources can improve efficiency with SWCC?	10/9/2025 9:54 AM
12	No	10/2/2025 3:25 PM
13	No. Thank you for a quality, transparent process.	10/1/2025 10:13 AM
14	The merger is unnecessary.	10/1/2025 8:11 AM
15	not at this time	9/30/2025 2:50 PM
16	Yes. Your situational assessment is/was based on an incorrect foundational purpose of the SWCC. The principal purpose of the Commission was/is to serve the Idaho Soil Conservation Districts with State funding, guidance on accounting and budgeting to meet fiscal responsibilities. The SWCC also was the pathway for the State Legislature to provide State funding for Idaho to leverage the NRCS Federal funds for conservation, delivered via contracts and agreements with farmers and ranchers. As with the NRCS programs, the programs funded through the SWCC, the decision makers providing conservation on the Idaho lands are the FARMERS AND RANCHERS. The agency existed only to provide available funding to the Soil Conservation Districts, who in turn are involved locally to identify local resource priorities. The SWCC by themselves do not direct any conservation activities but exist to aid the ISCD to help their producers. The focus of the resource priorities are human, soil, air, plant and animal impacts which are much broader than the water focus. The foundational grant program originally developed by the SWCC was for rangeland improvements. The SWCC is not in a	9/30/2025 2:10 PM

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position to encourage any conservation program without working with and through the SCD's. CREP is the only connection of conservation with IDWR and this is only because it is a set-aside program to not farm acres to reduce the pumping of ground water for irrigation and coordinated by NRCS. The decision maker is the farmer. As a functioning entity, the SWCC becomes involved only by invitation and request of a SCD for planning assistance and State funding if the Federal funding is not available. Engineering is still typically NRCS.

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