



## Press Release

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### ● For immediate release

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### Land Application Annexation

On May 18, 2021 the Post Falls City Council will consider finalizing the annexation of 717 acres of property of the Rathdrum Prairie with a zoning designation of Public Reserve. The property includes a 70 acre school site owned by the Post Falls School District and 647 acres reserved for open space and the land application of recycled water. The annexation was previously approved by the City Council, following a public hearing on June 9, 2020. Annexation is the next step in what has been over a 20-year journey.

In 2000, the Post Falls Wastewater Master Plan identified a need for an alternative to discharging all of the City's treated wastewater to the Spokane River. Because of this need, the City worked with local landowners to obtain land for the future site of land application. In order to borrow the necessary funding, the City put the issue to a vote and received approval from the citizens to obtain a loan. The purchase was finalized in 2004. Subsequently, the property was leased to a long-time local farmer.

In 2013, the City adopted an updated water reclamation master plan. As predicted in the previous plan, the need to diversify the discharge options for recycled water was a prominent concern to meet new requirements from the EPA. Due to the availability of the property on the prairie, the City was able to select this alternative, with a lower cost than if river discharge had been the only option.

In 2019, the Post Falls school district approached the City about acquiring a portion of the land application property to be used as a school site because of the property's proximity to the utilities needed to develop a school site. The School District purchased 80 acres adjacent to the City's land application property that was further from utility services. The City and School District completed a property exchange in 2020 providing

the School District with a site for up to two schools that still allows the City to continue to plan for the future land application of fully treated wastewater.

To provide the ability for water and wastewater provision to the future school site, the school property needed to be annexed. The water reclamation property also needed to be annexed to allow the City to protect the public's investment in the site by making sure that the City could regulate the property with its own rules. In preparation for annexing these properties, the City established a Public Reserve zoning district specifically for publicly owned properties allowing only for "governmental, public utility, educational, recreational, cultural, water reuse, agricultural and environmental uses." The Public Reserve zone does not allow privately owned development. The zone was created specifically to provide assurance to the public that the land would not be privately developed and would be used for limited public uses.

The land application property will continue to be used for agricultural purposes. Once land application of treated wastewater begins, crops that use the most water per acre will be planted. Land application is currently expected to begin on the property sometime in the 2030s. At that time, the City will explore options for allowing public use of the property while ensuring that its primary role as a land application site remains intact.

The City of Rathdrum has also agreed to make 314 acres of property owned by Rathdrum available for land application of recycled water. This property is immediately north of the Post Falls property.

Several years ago, the City of Post Falls acquired just over 370 acres of forested property south of the Spokane River and west of Q'emiln Park, primarily for land application of recycled water. The Parks Department contributed to a portion of this purchase and the property connects almost 76 acres of Park property to the west to the established park and trail system at Q'emiln Park. The combined properties are jointly managed as the Post Falls Community Forest and are open to the public for non-motorized recreation. The Community Forest was annexed into Post Falls in 2020, also with the Public Reserve zoning.

With the two annexations combined, the City has annexed almost 1,084 acres of City owned property into the Public Reserve zone.

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