

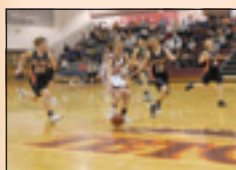


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Woolstenhulme: Renewing levies is critical

Ken Levy
TVN Staff

No new taxes or fees of any kind will be added to anyone's bills should voters choose to renew the Teton School District's supplemental levies March 8.

As voters prepare to decide on whether to renew these levies, funding from state

sources could dry up even further. Monte Woolstenhulme, TSD superintendent, said the district could be facing budget cuts from 5-10 percent in the upcoming fiscal year.

"Passage of the school levies is critical," said Woolstenhulme, in an e-mail.

"Without the local funds from the levies, we would have to make dramatic cuts in every program we offer, at all levels,

which would have a direct impact on student learning."

The supplemental levy helped the district get through a 10 percent cut in its budget from the state last year.

In place since voters overwhelmingly approved it in 2009, the current \$2.6 million supplemental levy needs a 50.1

Levies continued on A14

Technology is focus of new education reform plan

Ken Levy
TVN Staff

Standing by his three pillars of education reform, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna asserted Monday that technology, rather than textbooks, will be the future face of the educational experience in Idaho.

Those pillars — the 21st Century Classroom, Great Teachers and Leaders and Transparent Accountability — support Luna's concept of a five-year strategy of creating a customer-driven education system he calls Students Come First.

In his budget remarks to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee Jan. 18, Luna called for changing the system to "educate more students at a higher level with limited resources."

Maintaining the current school system would require either cuts in that system or increased taxes to pick up the difference. The reform plan, he said, would spend available funds differently.

Luna proposed that, for the 21st Century classroom, the state invest \$6,000 over the next two years in both hardware and software for every Idaho classroom, including professional development. Beginning in 2012, every ninth grader will be given a laptop, and high school students will be required to take online courses to graduate.

"We must recognize that hardcover textbooks are becoming a thing of the past," he said. "We must invest in technology."

The state is completing \$40 million

Reform continued on A14

Snoot full of snow



A bull moose comes up with a snowy muzzle after foraging for food in a field off Ski Hill Road in Driggs Jan. 14.

TVN Photo/Ken Levy

La Niña helps boost early snowpack

Ken Levy
TVN Staff

Early season snowpack in the Upper Snake River basin is making for a potentially promising water year, according to Ron Abramovich, water supply specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service in Boise.

"The contrast between this winter and last winter shows the differing effects of El Niño and La Niña on the Upper Snake," Abramovich said. "This winter's La Niña

snowpack is already surpassing the near record low April 1 snowpack that last year's El Niño pattern produced."

Abramovich said precipitation at the start of the new year was 132 percent of average, twice as much as last January.

"Monthly precipitation in October was 146 percent of average, about the same as last year; November brought 122 percent the average amount, nearly four times last November's precipitation; and December brought 133 percent, over twice last December," he said.

Snowpacks range from 120 percent of

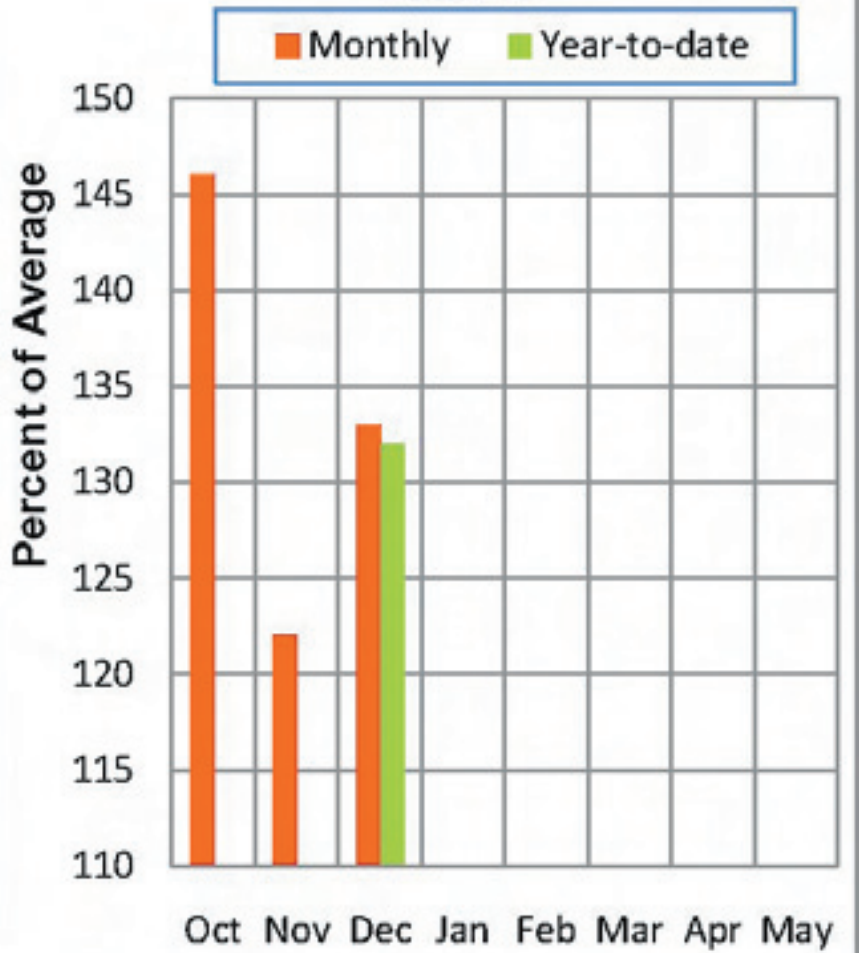
average in the Hoback drainage, to 128 percent for the area above Jackson Lake, to 145 percent in the Portneuf drainage.

The snow index for the Henry's Fork snowpack above Island Park indicates that snowpacks are the seventh highest out of 51 years, Abramovich said.

"The Snake River above Jackson Lake is similar, tenth highest out of 51 years. Collectively, reservoir storage is normal for the eight reservoirs in the Upper Snake system," he said.

Snowpack continued on A13

Mountain Precipitation UPPER SNAKE RIVER BASIN



Graphic courtesy of NRCS

Snowpack continued from A1

Jackson Lake has the best storage at 137 percent of average and Palisades is currently the lowest at 78 percent. Streamflow forecasts call for 116 percent of average amounts for the Snake River at Heise and just slightly above average amounts for the Henrys Fork and Portneuf Rivers.

The greatest forecasts are for about 130 percent for the Salt, Gros Ventre,

and Pacific Creek drainages.

“With decent reservoir storage and an excellent early season snowpack, La Niña is helping water users breathe easier this year,” Abramovich said. “Hopefully the current pattern continues.”

To contact Ken Levy
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Teton Science schools to host military families

Teton Science Schools are working with the National Military Family Association to host their third Operation Purple Family Retreat in Grand Teton National Park and the surrounding areas. These four-day retreats empower military families to develop and maintain healthy relationships while honoring the sacrifices they make for our country. Each program encompasses all military service branches and components, and is offered free of charge to all participants thanks to the Sierra Club and the Sierra Club Foundation.

Operation Purple Family Retreats help military families reconnect after deployment and will be offered at Teton Science Schools on March 11-15. Participants will be paired with field educators to help provide a memorable experience for the entire family. These retreats are open to service members and their families who have experienced deployment within the last 15 months. To be considered for these retreats, service

members must have returned from deployment no less than three months prior or no more than 15 months prior to the start date of each retreat.

“Teton Science Schools are excited to help make new connections between America’s treasures, our national parks, and the families serving in our military. We are looking forward to working again with America’s heroes and the National Military Family Association,” said Joe Petrick, program coordinator at Teton Science Schools.

“The National Military Family Association is proud to provide these retreats in such a beautiful setting. Pairing our nation’s military heroes with our nation’s treasure, the national parks, is an incredible way to honor both,” said the Association’s Executive Director, Joyce Raezer.

To fill out an application or for more information on Operation Purple programs, visit the National Military Family Association’s Web site at militaryfamily.org.

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FAFSA Completion Event Saturday, Feb. 5

Ken Levy
TVN Staff

The State Board of Education, through federal funding provided by the College Access Challenge Grant, announces its Third Annual Statewide Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Event Feb. 5.

Skilled professionals will be on hand to provide guidance to students and their parents and help them complete the FAFSA prior to Idaho institutions' priority deadlines, said Jessica Piper, project coordinator for CACG.

Local students can take advantage of the program at Idaho State

University, in Pocatello at 921 S. Eighth Ave., in the Rendezvous Building, Room 318.

"At University Place in Idaho Falls, Sherri Dewey from the ISU Department of Financial Aid will have many resources available to any student and parents wishing to complete the FAFSA, regardless of where students plan to attend," said Harold Robison, Teton High School counselor.

According to the event Web site, students will need the following items and information to complete the application:

A Personal Identification Number (PIN number), if you have been assigned one. You can request a PIN

number online at pin.ed.gov.

If you have previously completed a FAFSA Worksheet, bring it with you.

Your Social Security Number and driver's license number

Your parents' 2010 W-2 forms (if you are a dependent student).

If you earned income in 2010, you should also bring your 2010 W-2 forms. Free tax preparation service may be provided by the Internal Revenue Service Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program for qualified applicants.

Your 2010 untaxed income records (e.g., Veteran's non-education benefit records, child support received, worker's compensation).

Your current bank statements, current business and investment mortgage information, business and farm records, stock, bond and other investment records.

Your resident alien registration or permanent resident card (if you are not a U.S. citizen).

For more information, e-mail dewesher@isu.edu or hrobison@d401.k12.id.us. For additional information and locations, visit findyourpath.idaho.gov and click on "2011 Statewide FAFSA Completion Event."

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Levies continued from A1

percent voter approval to be renewed for the next two years.

"The supplemental levy can be used for teacher salaries, and pretty much anything on the budget," said Doug Petersen, TSD school board president, during a Driggs City Council meeting Monday.

Voters first approved that levy for \$2 million in 2007.

Voters will also decide whether to renew a \$400,000 plant facilities levy. Begun in 1985 at \$100,000, this five-year levy will be used to upgrade light systems, replace boilers and other school building and property needs,

Petersen said. A 55.1 percent majority is needed to pass this levy.

Through use of the current supplemental levy, Woolstenhulme said, the district was able to follow the three main guidelines for this year's budget: Maintain an excellent educational system while being fiscally conservative; make budget cuts as far away from the classroom as possible, and maintain school staff where possible, to ensure quality instruction.

This was accomplished by attrition, tightening operating budgets, extending the rotation cycle on computers and other technology,



Monte Woolstenhulme

postponing outdated software upgrades, consolidating facilities and improving the usage of current buildings, focusing on energy conservation, "and learning from other districts what budget-cutting strategies

have and have not been effective for them," he said.

"Education is so important," said Mayor Dan Powers. "I can't think of a better way to spend money."

Public informational meetings on the levies are scheduled for 7 p.m. Feb. 22 at Victor Elementary School; Feb. 23 at Teton High School, and Feb. 24 at Tetonia Elementary School.

To contact Ken Levy email
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Reform continued from A1

worth of improvements to link "all of our high schools together and to our colleges and universities through the Idaho Education Network," he said.

Luna's plan would increase the student-teacher ratio in grades 4-12 by about 1-2 students a year over the next five years. This could save more than \$500 million or an average of \$100 million per year, he said.

Those increased ratios mean a loss of about 770 teaching positions that, he said, could be absorbed by attrition.

Regarding the potential tradeoff in larger classroom sizes and losses in teachers for technology, Monte Woolstenhulme, Teton School District superintendent, said there is no substitute for a teacher in the classroom.

"It concerns me that some of the proposals are simple answers to very complex issues," Woolstenhulme said. "I don't equate technology and computers to classroom teachers."

But while Woolstenhulme also favors the idea of improved technology in the classroom, "that's not how research shows effective student learning happens," he said.

"It happens from a highly-qualified, passionate, caring teacher in the classroom," said Woolstenhulme. "They teach those students the content material and make sure that each student is learning it, and they develop a caring relationship with that student."

Regarding Great Teachers and Leaders, Luna



Tom Luna

said the state will fully restore the instructional salary grid, raise the minimum pay for new teachers to \$30,000, and implement a pay-for-performance plan that builds on base salaries to reward excellence.

Luna said the state will phase out tenure in Idaho schools. Current teachers with tenure will be grandfathered in.

School districts will no longer be able to use seniority as the only criteria in determining teacher layoffs. Districts must tie at least a portion of teacher and administrator performance evaluations to student academic growth, according to the plan.

Regarding accountability, Luna said parents, taxpayers, and policymakers should all have current, accurate information on all student achievement results and financial matters in their schools and districts.

Parents would be given opportunities to provide input on teacher evaluations and have access to "fiscal report cards" for each school district, he said. Woolstenhulme said TSD shares its financial information in open meetings including annual audits, and discusses its financials and budgets at monthly board meetings.

"Soon, we will be posting all of our financial information and budget reports on our Web site," he said.

The overall plan, Luna said, will be funded with existing state dollars with "efficiencies and cost savings found in the current system to invest millions of dollars to restructure our public schools."

Legislative committees will further study Luna's proposals.

Woolstenhulme said preliminary estimates indicate state budget cuts could run 5-6 percent on the low end and 8-10 percent on the high end.

"As we go through the legislative budgeting process, the details of funding positions vs. technology will become clearer," he said. "Funding fewer teachers and transferring that to technology would be viewed by many, including myself, as cuts."

Woolstenhulme said the TSD is fortunate to have local levies help manage the 10 percent — about \$800,000 — shortfall of reduced state funding this year. Those levies are up for renewal in March.

"Even though the state cut money out of last year's funding, we made adjustments in our budget and [are] relying more on local levy funds to ensure we have classroom teachers, paraprofessionals and school-level staff to maintain the class sizes that we have," he said.

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