

MINUTES  
**SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 20, 2018

**TIME:** 8:00 A.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW53

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Rice, Vice Chairman Den Hartog, Senators Patrick, Bayer, Guthrie, Thayn, Harris, Foreman, and Jordan

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** None

**NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

**CONVENED:** **Chairman Rice** called the meeting of the Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

**PAGE WELCOME:** **Welcome Page Amber Zechmann.** **Chairman Rice** introduced and welcomed Committee Page Amber Zechmann.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Harris** moved to approve the Minutes of February 6, 2018. Seconded by **Senator Foreman**. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Reappointment of H. Norman Wright of American Falls, Idaho, to the Idaho State Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISCC) to serve a term commencing July 1, 2017 and expiring July 1, 2022.** **H. Norman Wright** stated he has been a member of the ISCC for the past six years. He believes in the importance of the assistance in district plans and implementation of local projects that ISCC provides in the protection of soil, water, and air quality for the State.

**Vice Chairman Den Hartog** stated she has had conversations with some of the Soil Conservation Districts in the Treasure Valley concerning how to best preserve some of the extremely valuable agricultural land that is rapidly disappearing to development. She asked Mr. Wright if his district is also concerned with this issue. **Mr. Wright** replied that ISCC is a partner with the Soil Conservation Districts and they understand the importance of prime agriculture ground. ISCC had conversations on how best to protect this land. The Soil Conservation Districts must have funds to buy the agriculture property in order to preserve this land. The public needs to consider these acres as open air and their value to the communities.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Appointment of Catherine Roemer of Jerome, Idaho, to the Idaho State Soil and Water Conservation Commission to serve a term commencing July 1, 2017 and expiring July 1, 2022.** **Catherine Roemer** stated she is currently serving her tenth year as a Jerome County Commissioner and is a lifetime resident of the Magic Valley. She spent her career as an agricultural journalist, which familiarized her with the agriculture business in the Magic Valley. **Ms. Roemer** said it is a privilege to serve on the ISCC and to learn about the State through conservation projects from north to south.

**Senator Patrick** stated that he has known Cathy Roemer for many years and has been impressed by her involvement in the community. Her knowledge of agriculture and communication skills will be a great asset to the ISCC.

**PRESENTATION: Idaho Future Farmers of America (FFA).** **Lindsey Stowell**, President, stated Idaho FFA has been growing, leading, and serving through agriculture education, and workforce skills in over 92 chapters Statewide. FFA has expanded from nine districts to ten and reached membership of 4,700. Students have a \$20.7 million economic impact in Idaho through their supervised agricultural experiences.

Leadership is another key component of the FFA mission. Idaho FFA State officers spend a year traveling across the State delivering leadership workshops to high school members. They cover topics of team building and advocating for agriculture.

The state officer team participated at the National FFA convention where they met the United States Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue and United States Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke. In early February, two officers traveled to South Africa to study leadership and agriculture on an international level. They spent two weeks touring farms and agricultural facilities in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Pretoria with state officers from across the nation. The Idaho Chapter of FFA will continue to honor the FFA Motto: Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live and Living to Serve.

**Senator Patrick** asked Ms. Stowell to share her first impressions of meeting U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue and U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke. **Ms. Stowell** replied she was impressed and excited that their state officer team was afforded the opportunity to be introduced to Mr. Perdue and Mr. Zinke. She was surprised that the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture possessed a background in agriculture. Mr. Perdue and Zinke were down-to-earth and ready to answer the teams questions.

**Senator Jordon** asked if, with the increased interest in urban agriculture such as community gardens, is FFA considering expanding their involvement and membership. Ms. Stowell responded FFA has become more progressive in encompassing other opportunities in agriculture, aside from farming. FFA has opportunities to speak to urban areas and is establishing new chapters.

**PRESENTATION: Idaho Oil Seed Commission (IOSC).** **Steve Riggers**, Chairman, said the Idaho Oil Seed Commission was formed in 1996 with three grower members. The IOSC collects an assessment of 10 cents per hundredweight for a revenue of \$70,000 per year. The oil seed raised in Idaho is safflower, canola, and other minor oil seeds. A benefit of growing canola oil seed as a rotation crop is that the plants have large taproots that break up the compaction of the soil. Biological attributes improve soil quality and health. Canola is also an excellent heart healthy oil.

IOSC's major role is supporting the UI Canola Oil Seed Program breeding and agronomic program which funds a graduate student every year under this program. Other projects that IOSC is pursuing include: In collaboration with the State of Washington, IOSC is funding a canola pH study through the University of Idaho (UI) to analyze soil pH issues. On the eastern side of the State, growers are working with Utah State University in studies of different growth characteristics of safflower and weed management strategies. Establishing a presence at some of the grower meetings in southeast Idaho to educate farmers of opportunities in oil seed crops (Attachment 1).

One of the challenges for Idaho growers and IOSC is new weed species herbicide resistance. These weed species cover all geography and cropping systems. Growers are seeing red flags in different weed biotypes appearing in crops and the inability, in some cases to control those weeds.

Some of the chemistry growers have used in the past has run its course. IOSC is collaborating with the State of Washington Oil Seed Commission to pursue a long-term study on alternative weed management strategies to assist growers in finding a solution to control these new types of weed species in their crops.

**Senator Bayer** asked how markets have changed along with consumer demand for this oil. **Mr. Riggers** answered, from the consumer standpoint, there is more emphasis on heart healthy cooking oils. The consumer is pursuing healthier eating habits. The IOSC will continue to emphasize the healthy aspects of canola and safflower oils.

**PRESENTATION: Update on Water Quality Funding for Agriculture Best Management Practices.** **Dan Steenson**, representing Treasure Valley Water Users Association, stated the lower Boise watershed below Lucky Peak Dam faces water quality challenges from Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), along with other watersheds in the State.

Last year, in his presentation to the Committee, he described that challenge and advocated for Legislative funding on a grant basis and implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs). The following was a needs list of water quality challenges from last years presentation that led the Legislature to implement the Boise River listed water bodies funding:

- Boise River total phosphorus (TP) TMDL
- Boise River and tributaries sediment and bacteria TMDLs
- Lake Lowell TMDL
- TP listed tributaries
- Temperature

These TMDLs require significant reductions in the discharge of sediment and phosphorus to the Boise River and its tributaries. Phosphorus in the Boise River causes periphytic algae that attaches to the rocks and impairs the aesthetic quality and recreational use of the river from the City of Middleton down to the Snake River. There are TMDLs for the Snake River Hells Canyon reach of the Snake River and Boise River that call for dramatic reductions of the accumulation of these aquatic plants (Attachment 2). Significant reduction of the discharge of phosphorus are sought from various sectors: cities, municipal treatment plants, and agriculture. The TMDLs have been developed for various watersheds and implementation of changes to the water use and discharge practices to achieve the TMDLs reductions.

**Barry Brunell**, Administrator, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), said DEQ was appropriated \$500,000 to implement Agricultural Best Management Practices (ABMP). These dollars were to be spent on high priority watersheds in a Statewide effort to reduce the phosphorus loads. DEQ has an existing program for federal dollars that is implemented for agricultural projects. That program was a good fit for DEQ to include State general funds into their existing program and identify the targeted areas to implement BMPs on the projects using existing personnel. There are six basins of water DEQ uses to manage their programs through basin advisory groups. Watersheds in one of these basins, were eligible to make application for the General Fund Agriculture BMP grant.

The Basin Advisory Groups helped to determine which projects to fund and provided advice to DEQ for the issuance of sub-grants. Four projects were funded: 1) Panhandle Basin; 2) Clear Water Basin; 3) Southwest Basin; and 4) Upper Snake Basin.

DEQ is now planning for fiscal year 2019 funds so sub-grant agreements can be completed earlier. DEQ is starting the application period on March 1 and it will run for a 30 day period. This will allow DEQ to accept grant agreements by June 30 so projects can begin implementation after that date. Last year, DEQ had applications for \$3.6 million that were unfunded. This shows the interest of landowners to steward their land and minimize the number of pollutants entering into the waters of the State of Idaho.

**Senator Patrick** stated he was familiar with the Stargazer Project; he asked if the landowner or the canal company matched the funds. **Mr. Brunell** explained the Stargazer Project is a match program where the canal company's portion is water and the landowner's portion is ground. The cost share is a combination of the canal company and the landowner.

**Senator Guthrie** noted that the percentages do not seem the same for this project. What percentages drive the cost share. **Mr. Brunell** answered that projects can be overmatched. The numbers reflected on the slide are those overmatched in the Treasure Valley. The minimum is 40 percent for cost share and often there will be overmatch.

**Mayor Darin Taylor**, Middleton, Idaho, spoke at length about the watershed project that the City of Middleton entered into. The project is in the final stages of completion. The Mill Slough Phase 1 Project is a project with collaborative partners consisting of municipalities, farmers, agricultural drainage districts, and canal companies. All have worked together to implement this innovative water quality project for the Boise River. **Mayor Taylor** concluded his presentation by speaking to future phases that the City of Middleton will pursue on the Mill Slough.

**Senator Patrick** stated in his experience the project will work for the removal of phosphorus, but there will be a level built up in the soil that must be taken up by planting a crop, such as corn. **Mayor Taylor** answered that the City of Middleton has planned crop uptakes in rotation which will maximize that phosphorus uptake.

**ADJOURNED:**

There being no further business, **Chairman Rice** adjourned the meeting at 9:08 a.m.

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Senator Rice  
Chair

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Carol Deis  
Secretary