

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 15, 2022

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Burtenshaw, Vice Chairman Bayer, Senators Patrick, Den Hartog, Blair (Johnson), Zito, Ricks, Nelson, and Semmelroth

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 Burtenshaw** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

H 455 **AGRICULTURE** - Amends and repeals existing law to revise provisions regarding certain fees and to remove provisions regarding certain inspection fees, tonnage fees and reports, and the artificial production of rainfall.

Chanel Tewalt, Deputy Director, Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), introduced herself to the Committee. **Ms. Tewalt** explained the bill would repeal Title 22, Chapter 32 of Idaho Code pertaining to artificial rainfall. She said the Legislature moved oversight of this matter to the Idaho Department of Water Resources. **Ms. Tewalt** reported the proposed legislation also would change the registration fee structure for fertilizer and soil and plant amendments from a tonnage rate to a flat annual fee. She observed the change would save ISDA staff time and producer costs by eliminating the tonnage reporting requirements (see Attachment 1).

TESTIMONY: Elizabeth Criner, Far West Agribusiness Association, provided written testimony in support of **H 455** because the bill would streamline the registration process and save time and administrative costs for Association members.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Blair** asked if the registration fee was charged per company or per product. **Ms. Tewalt** responded that the fee applied to each product sold in Idaho.

Senator Patrick inquired when ISDA performs the guaranteed analysis. **Ms. Tewalt** answered that the relevant section of Idaho Code involved truth in labeling. She stated an ISDA team reviews the label for accuracy and ingredient safety when an applicant submits a registration. ISDA also takes field samples to analyze products to ensure the ingredients match the labels, she added.

MOTION: **Senator Blair** moved to send **H 455** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Bayer** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION: **Idaho Invasive Species Council. Nick Zurfluh**, Invasive Species Section Manager, ISDA, introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Zurfluh** reviewed the history and mission of the invasive species program and Invasive Species Council (Council) (see Attachment 2). He provided statistics on funding obtained through the invasive species sticker program, the General Fund, and a Water Resource Development Act grant.

Senator Nelson asked how much the sticker program collects each year. **Mr. Zurfluh** replied the average is \$1.5 million per year, collected by Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and administered by ISDA.

Vice Chairman Bayer inquired why the Council was established by executive order and not by statute. **Lloyd Knight**, Administrator, Division of Plant Industries, ISDA, introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Knight** answered that the Governor established the Council by executive order prior to passage of the Idaho Invasive Species Act. He clarified the Council performs only an advisory function. The regulatory functions appear in statute and rule, he said.

Senator Patrick further explained the program received some General Fund dollars because the Legislature decided to extend the hours of operation for some inspection stations.

Mr. Zurfluh provided information on the process for and number of watercraft inspections in 2021. He discussed watercraft inspection programs in neighboring states. **Mr. Zurfluh** remarked that ISDA receives assistance from local law enforcement and port of entry staff.

In response to Committee questions about inspections in Washington and Nevada, **Mr. Zurfluh** reported most boats entering Idaho are headed north and west, while fewer boats enter from Washington. He explained most western states have inspection programs. **Mr. Zurfluh** stated Nevada and Utah conduct inspections of boats leaving Lake Mead in addition to roadside inspections. He described the process for inspecting and decontaminating large boats.

Chairman Burtenshaw inquired about the location of the Montana lake where mussels were found. **Mr. Zurfluh** answered it is within a few hundred miles of Idaho, east of the Continental Divide. He remarked that Montana had success eliminating the mussels, with no new reports after multiple years of sampling.

Senator Blair asked for details on the types of watercraft that were found with mussels. **Mr. Zurfluh** stated mussels were most often found on larger motorized boats, but ISDA had also found mussels on inflatable rafts, kayaks, and draft boats. He added that 10 to 15 out of the 400 watercraft found with mussels were non-motorized.

Mr. Zurfluh described Idaho's rapid response plan for handling reports of mussels and other invasive species. He reviewed ISDA's efforts to educate the public about invasive species.

Vice Chairman Bayer asked who pays the costs for a boat to be parked in dry dock for 30 days. **Mr. Zurfluh** responded that marinas have been willing to donate the space. He stated ISDA staff works on site to conduct the decontamination process, resulting in no out of pocket costs to the boat owner.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION: **Sugarbeet Industry Update.** **Brad Griff**, Executive Director, Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association (Association), introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Griff** provided general sugarbeet information and 2021 production statistics (see Attachment 3). He discussed the composition and mission of the Association. **Mr. Griff** described the benefits of using Roundup ready sugarbeet seed.

Chairman Burtenshaw asked how sugarbeet sugar compares with cane sugar. **Mr. Griff** explained the two sugars have exactly the same chemical composition. He reported cane sugar only grows in the United States in the warm, humid climates of Louisiana, Florida, and Texas. **Mr. Griff** observed that sugarbeets prefer cold weather. He said proper cool storage would maximize the amount of sugar from each sugarbeet.

Chairman Burtenshaw inquired about the reason for producing Roundup resistant sugarbeets. **Mr. Griff** answered that weed control was the biggest challenge to growing sugarbeets. He said a producer can now apply Roundup two times a year to control weeds. **Mr. Griff** stated the result was a major reduction in pesticide use and an increase in yield. He noted the two seed varieties are identical under the microscope.

Senator Blair asked if Roundup resistant weeds have started to appear in Idaho. **Mr. Griff** replied yes and stated that seed companies were working with growers to develop new seed varieties to address the challenge. **Senator Blair** inquired if growers would be interested in using other weed killing technologies besides genetic engineering. **Mr. Griff** responded that growers are eager to try and incorporate new technology.

Senator Patrick commented that his farm uses one-third less fuel and requires no hand labor since he began using Roundup ready seed. He added that the beets are clean and easy to process, while yields have increased by one-third. **Senator Patrick** advised the challenge now is to find more trucks to haul the harvest.

Jessica Anderson, Public Affairs Manager, Amalgamated Sugar Company (ASC), introduced herself to the Committee. **Ms. Anderson** gave an overview of ASC's history and mission to ensure the future success of its growers (see Attachment 4). She noted ASC is the second largest sugar company in the United States, producing ten percent of the nation's sugar. **Ms. Anderson** reported that transportation is ASC's highest cost. She reviewed operations at ASC's production facilities and its infrastructure investments. **Ms. Anderson** discussed ASC's training and research programs.

Chairman Burtenshaw asked for more information on betaine. **Ms. Anderson** replied it is a naturally occurring amino acid in sugarbeets. She said it is used as a feed additive to help animals retain moisture in their muscles and in the nutraceutical and cosmetics industries.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Burtenshaw** adjourned the meeting at 9:29 a.m.

Senator Burtenshaw
Chair

Jeanne Jackson-Heim
Secretary