

MINUTES  
**SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Thursday, February 15, 2024

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

**PLACE:** Room WW53

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Hartgen, Senators Foreman, Hart, Schroeder, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Semmelroth, and Taylor

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Vice Chairman Nichols

**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.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Carlson** moved to approve the minutes of February 6, 2024. **Senator Foreman** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Foreman** moved to approve the minutes of February 8, 2024. **Senator Zuiderveld** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**PRESENTATION:** **Recognize and Thank Sydney Newton for her service to the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee.** **Chairman Hartgen** gave Page Sydney Newton the floor to speak on what she learned through the page program as well as explain plans post graduation. **Ms. Newton** thanked the members of the committee for the opportunity to be a page for their committee and plans to attend college after graduation, possibly at the University of South Carolina, to study criminal justice and become a K-9 handler. She appreciated the ability to have a college trial run in the city compared to her hometown of Fairfield.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Carlson** told Ms. Newton to never forget her roots and where she came from and be thankful for that.

**Senator Zuiderveld** echoed Senator Carlson about remembering her roots and congratulated her on the adventure that she was about to embark on.

**Senator Schroeder** also echoed Senator Carlson and reiterated that small town Idaho is true Idaho, and to remember that.

**Chairman Hartgen** presented a gift to Ms. Newton and thanked her for her time in the committee.

**PRESENTATION:** **Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) Budget and Agency Update.** **Chanel Tewalt**, Director, (ISDA), gave a brief recap of 2023 as well as an overview of the 2025 fiscal year line item requests the department had planned (Attachment 1).

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Zuiderveld** asked the director about how marketing worked in the department, especially overseas in Japan as mentioned in the 2023 recap. **Ms. Tewalt** explained that overseas trade offices were touch points for packers or producers to be able to have a representative in said country to help facilitate deals, attend trade shows, and help distribute products. This allowed for Idahoans to not have to travel across the world to trade with other countries. **Ms. Tewalt** used the example of Taiwan that has Eddie Yen who had run the office since 1989. **Ms. Tewalt** also mentioned that Idaho didn't currently have fresh potatoes traded in Japan which was an estimated \$250 million market if opened.

**Senator Semmelroth** asked a question about chronic wasting disease (CWD) updates. **Ms. Tewalt** explained that the ISDA was attempting to implement and keep laws in such a way that it didn't make elk breeders go out of business, but also recognized that Alberta had a different approach to dealing with CWD. **Ms. Tewalt** offered to have the ISDA doctor come down to help answer any other questions that the committee may have had.

**PRESENTATION:** **Invasive Species. Chanel Tewalt**, Director, ISDA, **Ms. Tewalt** presented how the ISDA had been responding to Quagga Mussels across the state, but especially the outbreak that happened in the Snake River this past year. This outbreak included one of the fastest responses that the nation had seen with only a 2 week turn around to consider a treatment plan, consult with stakeholders, and enact said plan. While the results of the plan would not be verifiable until the upcoming spring, there were continued future efforts already being put in place to hopefully mitigate the potential of another large-scale outbreak (Attachment 1).

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Taylor** thanked the director for all of her and other stakeholders' work and asked about a mentioned plan B or chemical change if necessary. **Ms. Tewalt** explained that Chelated Copper would still be an effective treatment if they need to go into plan B, but also would require structural changes to get to unaddressed areas. **Ms. Tewalt** continued to explain the other chemical options that were considered and explained why they may or may not have been the correct treatment going forward. **Ms. Tewalt** also spoke to the assessment of the treatment and not wanting Idaho Fish and Game to restock certain areas until assessment has been confirmed.

**Senator Carlson** asked if we had figured out the source of the Quagga Mussels and how to avoid another outbreak. **Ms. Tewalt** responded no, while the State didn't know the direct cause of this specific outbreak for certain areas, we know that it would have to be personally accessible watercraft like rafts or kayaks. For other areas it may have been a result of the dam moving water and mussels downstream. To avoid an outbreak in the future it would require communication with the public about the ways that all watercraft could carry this invasive species. **Ms. Tewalt** invited Nick Zurfluh, Bureau Chief of Invasive Species, ISDA who continued to speak on the cause. **Mr. Zurfluh** reiterated that the source was dependent on the area that the infestation was found, but can be caused by watercraft as small as kayaks or paddleboards as well as large watercraft like house boats or pontoon boats.

**Senator Carlson** asked if there were current plans to include the non-motorized craft in the ISDA's inspection process or its feasibility. **Nick Zurfluh** answered by explaining that a combination of coordination with law enforcement and equipment manufacturers, as well as continued education and signage around launch points to specifically target non motorized watercraft, were being implemented.

**Senator Zuiderveld** asked about the original male quagga mussel and the process followed to monitor the progress of treatment. **Nick Zurfluh** explained

that the first mussel was trapped in a mesh netting against the rock face and was monitored every 48 hours to see treatment results. After the first block of treatment there was 100% mortality in that specific mussel.

**Chairman Hartgen** asked for clarification that just because one mussel was found doesn't mean that there was only one. **Mr. Zurfluh** confirmed chairman Hartgen's question that it took two to create veligers.

**Senator Zuiderveld** asked about veligers microscope testing and if it was possible for the committee to be able to see those pictures, as well as about the local sturgeon population in the area and how treatment affected them. **Mr. Zurfluh** responded that pictures of veligers were available online and that the sturgeon population had a nearly 100% mortality rate and they are working with the Department of Idaho Fish and Game to restock the treatment area after treatment has been completed.

**Senator Semmelroth** complimented the entire team that worked on this issue and asked if either of the divers who found the first veliger as well as adult mussel received any specific recognition. **Mr. Zurfluh** responded that both had received recognition along with the whole team, but he was open to ideas for additional recognition.

**Senator Semmelroth** inquired about plans to expand checkpoint areas to catch non-motorized craft. **Mr. Zurfluh** answered yes there were plans within the current budget as well in the budget enhancements, but also pointed to continued education expansion as a key to prevent future outbreaks.

**Chairman Hartgen** asked about threat to base-jumping in the area and their equipment **Mr. Zurfluh** responded that he was not worried about base jumpers or their equipment specifically, but did have worries when it came to the using watercraft commonly associated with base-jumping.

**Director Tewalt** gave some closing statements and thanked the body for their strategic planning and foresight to give resources knowing that an emergency would most likely happen in the future.

**Chairman Hartgen** thanked both **Ms. Tewalt** and **Mr. Zurfluh** for being good stewards of the land and water. Seeing no further questions **Chairman Hartgen** ended the discussion.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Hartgen** adjourned the meeting at 9:18 a.m.

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Senator Hartgen  
Chair

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Melissa Price  
Secretary

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Griffin Zue  
Assistant Secretary