

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 10, 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 8:03 a.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Bayer** moved to approve the Minutes of February 1, 2022. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

Senator Blair moved to approve the Minutes of February 3, 2022. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

Chairman Burtenshaw announced that the agenda would be reordered to hear the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) presentation first.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION: **Canadian-US Regulatory Alignment and Cooperation, Trade Issues Impacting the Agriculture Sector.** **Matt Morrison**, Chief Executive Officer, PNWER, introduced himself to the Committee. **Mr. Morrison** gave a brief history and overview of PNWER. He provided information and statistics on quagga and zebra mussel infestations in United States rivers and lakes (see Attachment 1). He stated that the Columbia River Basin is the only watershed not infested. He described the economic impact of invasive species on irrigation, salmon habitat, and dams. **Mr. Morrison** noted the high costs to protect the watershed and maintain infested infrastructure. He described PNWER's efforts to obtain federal matching funds for prevention efforts and leverage partnerships with Canada.

Mr. Morrison identified a recent issue with feral swine in the PNWER region.

In response to Committee questions about feral swine, **Mr. Morrison** answered that feral swine are a separate invasive species that have begun migrating to PNWER member states. They are the same species as feral hogs in Texas, he added.

In response to Committee questions about eradication of quagga mussels, **Mr. Morrison** responded that Montana declared a natural resource emergency after mussel larvae were detected in a small body of water in 2016. **Mike Cuffe**, Montana State Senator and Vice President, PNWER, introduced himself to the Committee. **Senator Cuffe** said Montana used chemicals to kill everything in that body of water. He observed that the effort appears to have been successful but heavy monitoring continues. **Senator Cuffe** commented that boat check stations were very important to the prevention effort. He said that Montana extended its inspection season and kept some inspection stations open 24 hours. **Senator Cuffe** remarked that the \$500 million annual cost to manage quagga mussel outbreaks was an underestimate.

Richard Gotfried, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Alberta, Canada, introduced himself to the Committee. **MLA Gotfried** gave an overview of his elected position and his involvement with PNWER. He noted that Manitoba has had a large problem with quagga mussels. He stated that Canada has reduced federal spending for prevention efforts. **MLA Gotfried** mentioned the work group studying the feral swine issue. He described PNWER as a powerful tool to address cross-border issues in Ottawa and Washington, DC. **MLA Gotfried** invited the Committee to attend the 2022 PNWER Summit in Calgary from July 24-28, 2022.

Chairman Burtenshaw asked that the PNWER representatives speak to the Governor about increased funding for boat check station facilities and manpower. He mentioned the need to inspect all types of motorized and non-motorized watercraft. **MLA Gotfried** agreed that establishing a robust inspection system would be cheaper than the costs of dealing with mussel infestations.

Mr. Morrison concluded by commenting that supply chain issues have created challenges in agriculture exports. He recognized Patrick Kole of the Idaho Potato Commission for his efforts on PNWER's Agriculture Committee.

PRESENTATION: Idaho Bean Commission Annual Report. Andi Woolf-Weibye, Executive Director, Idaho Bean Commission (IBC), introduced herself to the Committee. **Ms. Woolf-Weibye** reviewed the mission of the IBC and its 2021 activities. She discussed IBC's budget, research projects, current grants, trends, and production statistics (see Attachment 2). **Ms. Woolf-Weibye** presented an informational video on Idaho bean production.

DISCUSSION: In response to questions from **Senator Nelson** about IBC's budget, **Ms. Woolf-Weibye** responded that a \$97,000 reimbursement to IBC was delayed, making it appear that the IBC was overspending its budget. She stated that the IBC had not increased fees since it was created in 1960. **Ms. Woolf-Weibye** commented that a previous legislative committee advised the IBC to spend down its reserves before asking for a fee increase. She added that the IBC took that approach.

Senator Blair asked for an explanation of the Soil 5 for 5 program. **Ms. Woolf-Weibye** replied it is a group interested in soil conservation. She said the format allows presenters five slides and five minutes to present on soils and various Idaho issues. No IBC board members or growers have presented yet.

PRESENTATION: Idaho Wheat Commission Annual Report. Casey Chumrau, Executive Director, Idaho Wheat Commission (IWC), introduced herself to the Committee. **Ms. Chumrau** described the mission and composition of the IWC. She gave an overview of IWC funding sources and anticipated revenue, the Columbia Snake River transportation system, production highlights, issues with buckwheat, "UI Cookie" wheat, and the proposed IWC building (see Attachment 3). **Ms. Chumrau** noted that the IWC had contributed \$15 million to UI research and education since 1982. She presented a video on the importance and efficiency of the Columbia Snake River system.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Blair** asked for more information on the UI Cookie wheat disease package. **Ms. Chumrau** replied that she could not answer today but would provide additional information.

Senator Blair inquired about the status of the Wheat Marketing Center building in Portland. **Ms. Chumrau** answered that the owner is seeking a buyer for the building.

In response to questions from **Senator Nelson** about a path to market for UI Cookie wheat and future wheat varieties, **Ms. Chumrau** answered that most states and land grant universities do not have infrastructure to market their intellectual property. Commercial seed companies often have their own breeding programs, she said. **Ms. Chumrau** said public programs were important because they focus on quality and other characteristics that take longer to develop, while commercial breeding programs focus on profitability. She said that there is more competition between private and university breeding programs. **Ms. Chumrau** added that the IWC thinks growers should get a return on their research investment.

Senator Blair commented that it was refreshing to hear the IWC decided not to charge royalty fees for UI Cookie wheat. He said he appreciated the relationship between IWC, the UI, and private growers.

Chairman Burtenshaw remarked that removing the dams in the Columbia Snake River transportation system would result in additional shipping costs and decreased farm income.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Burtenshaw** adjourned the meeting at 9:17 a.m.

Senator Burtenshaw
Chair

Jeanne Jackson-Heim
Secretary