

MINUTES
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 17, 2022

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW40

MEMBERS: Chairman Gibbs, Vice Chairman Lickley, Representatives Moyle, Wood (Critchfield), Boyle, Vander Woude, Gestrin, Mendive, Kauffman, Blanksma, Addis, Moon, Manwaring, Okuniewicz, Yamamoto, Rubel, Mathias, Burns

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representative(s) Addis

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of the session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Chairman Gibbs called the meeting to order at 1:30pm.

**UNANIMOUS
CONSENT
REQUEST:** **Chairman Gibbs** made a unanimous consent request to **HOLD H 586** in committee at the request of the bill sponsor. There being no objection, the request was granted.

HCR 34: **Rep. Giddings**, District 7, stated this resolution recognizes that 50 years ago, on May 2, 1972, 91 miners lost their lives in the Sunshine Mine as a result of a fire. This resolution will pay tribute to the loss of all of Idaho's fallen miners, the efforts to save them by mine rescue teams, and the grief felt by the families and communities, and will commemorate May 2 from 2022, and every year forward in Idaho, as "Miner's Memorial Day."

MOTION: **Rep. Yamamoto** made a motion to send **HCR 34** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

Ben Davenport, Executive Vice President, Idaho Mining Association, spoke in support of **HCR 34**. He stated it is important to memorialize and remember those who lost their lives in the Sunshine Mine disaster. He explained, as a direct result of this disaster, vast improvements were made in the health and safety of the mining industry, making Idaho mining one of the safest industrial professions today.

**VOTE ON
MOTION:** **Chairman Gibbs** called for a vote on the motion to send **HCR 34** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote. Rep. Giddings** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

H 584: **Paul Arrington**, Executive Director, Idaho Water Users Association, stated **H 584** involves the water right associated with the raising of Anderson Ranch Dam. He explained **Idaho Code, Section 42-203A**, includes criteria the Director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources must consider when reviewing applications to develop a new water right. Those criteria include a consideration of whether the application is: made in good faith and not for delay or speculative purposes, in the local public interest, consistent with the conservation of water resources, and is not going to adversely affect the local economy of the watershed. He explained, **H 584** declares the Anderson Ranch Dam project application satisfies these criteria and that the Director is not required to make findings related to these criteria.

MOTION: **Rep. Lickley** made a motion to send **H 584** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote. Rep. Blanksma** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Rick Ward, State Wildlife Game Manager, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, provided an overview on the current status of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Idaho. After giving a biological background on CWD, including an explanation regarding CWD prions, the deformed proteins found in mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, and moose, Mr. Ward explained because CWD prions are found in saliva, urine, and feces of live animals, CWD can spread from one animal to another or through contaminated environment. Prions are not living organisms like a bacteria or a virus, and are incredibly sturdy and difficult to eradicate, creating one of the greatest challenges in managing the disease. CWD has a relatively long incubation period of 18-24 months before an animal displays any outward symptoms. Mule deer are the most susceptible to CWD, followed by white-tailed deer. Elk and moose are less susceptible than either deer species. CWD is always fatal. Testing requires removing the lymph nodes or the brain stem, so it can only be done on dead animals, as there is no practical way to test live animals for CWD. Samples are shipped out of state to be tested and the results can take three to six weeks.

Mr. Ward stated the Department has been conducting CWD surveillance since 1997 and has collected over 21,000 samples over that time frame. In November 2021, the Department received their first positive test results from two mule deer harvested from the Slate Creek drainage, between Riggins and Grangeville, within Game Management Unit 14. As a result of these positive tests, the Department began operating check stations near Unit 14 to collect additional samples, the Commission designated a temporary CWD Management Zone consisting of Units 14 and 15, and implemented emergency surveillance hunts to collect additional samples from deer. They collected 524 samples from both species of deer in the surveillance area resulting in an additional two positive test results from white-tailed deer. One more white-tailed deer tested positive that was volunteered from a private landowner in the Slate Creek area. They collected 48 samples from elk. One sample was positive from an elk in the White Bird area, and from known migration movements, it is highly likely it made at least one seasonal migration while infected with CWD.

Mr. Ward explained the Department's CWD strategy identifies three methods aimed at mitigating the spread of CWD; containment, hunt season changes to Unit 14, and ramped up CWD sample collections. They hope to accomplish this through a modified hunt structure by targeting older bucks, which are more likely to harbor and spread CWD. By setting hunts to manage for a younger age structure in the population and reducing overall deer densities, other states managing CWD have shown this can reduce the prevalence of CWD spread.

In response to a committee question regarding including a broader area beyond Unit 14, **Mr. Ward** stated they did surveillance hunts and conducted samplings in Units 13 and 18 as well.

In response to committee questions regarding CWD spreading between wild animals and domestic animals, **Mr. Ward** stated there are no documented cases. He said for fawns born to positive does and cows, it is inevitable they will eventually become CWD positive due to the close contact with the doe or cow and/or the infected environment.

Dr. Scott Leibsle, Idaho State Veterinarian, Idaho State Department of Agriculture, provided an overview of CWD and the Idaho domestic cervidae program. He stated the program focuses on domestic elk, reindeer, and fallow deer from the 42 producers who have over 4,800 animals. He explained, Idaho is predominantly an import state with CWD testing required on no less than 10% of harvested animals and 100% in any other death. The current regulations for importing cervidae include the following: the origin farm must have a five year history of negative tests on all animals that die or are harvested, the animals cannot originate from a CWD endemic area, there must be a certificate of veterinary inspection along with an import permit, there must be two forms of official identification, and all other import requirements must be met. The Department continues recommending aggressive sampling of harvested domestic cervidae, enforcing the mandatory testing of 100% of non-harvested deaths, and maintenance of fences to ensure adequate separation to prevent ingress of wild animals or egress of domestic cervidae. To date, CWD has not been detected in any domestic cervidae in Idaho.

In response to committee questions regarding exemptions to testing and how many there are annually, **Dr. Leibsle** explained if an animal dies other than a harvest, and tissue cannot be taken and submitted for testing, they must fill out a waiver and explain why the sample wasn't taken. One reason for a waiver is the animal was buried under the snow and the tissue deteriorated to the point where it could no longer host the disease. He remarked, in 2020, there were 68 waivers granted.

Chairman Gibbs recognized **Hope Alles**, the committee's Page, for her excellent work during the first six weeks of the Legislative Session.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:44pm.

Representative Gibbs
Chair

Tracey McDonnell
Secretary