

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 06, 2024

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hartgen, Vice Chairman Nichols, Senators Foreman, Schroeder, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Semmelroth, and Taylor

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Hart

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 Hartgen** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:01 a.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Taylor** moved to approve the Minutes of January 30, 2024. **Senator Schroeder** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **The State of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Michael P. Parrella**, Dean and Special Assistant to the President, University of Idaho (U of I), opened with the history of the Federal Morrill Acts of 1862. This act made it possible for states to establish public colleges funded by the development or sale of associated federal land grants. He stated February 26, 1892, the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station (IAES) was organized on the Moscow, Idaho campus. Classes began that year on October 3, 1892. The IAES was the research division of the University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. For more than 130 years, IAES had worked to improve the quality of life for Idahoans.

Mr. Parrella touched on the Federal Smith-Lever Act of 1914. This act established a system of cooperative extension services connected to land-grant universities. Its purpose was to inform citizens about current developments in agriculture, home economics, public policy/government, leadership, 4-H, and economic development. He explained that the U of I extension program provided reliable, research-based education and information to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

Mr. Parrella, applauded that the University of Idaho was ranked 22nd in agricultural colleges in the United States. Over one million dollars in scholarships had been awarded. He mentioned new research facilities were constructed. The Idaho Center for Plant and Soil Health would serve all of Idaho agriculture. The grand opening was scheduled February 20, 2024. The Idaho Center for Agriculture Food and the Environment (CAFE), would be the largest research dairy facility with over 2,000 head of dairy cows. It was scheduled to open in Early 2025. The Meat Science and Innovation Center broke ground October 14, 2023. The future center would include a state-of-the-art meat processing plant offering hands-on training in meat science (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: **Senator Taylor** inquired about the culvert removal at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch.

Mr. Parella, answered additional projects included habitat restoration such as stream-bank improvements and fish passage projects. Removing the culvert with drops allowed passage for the fish that could not traverse.

PRESENTATION: The State of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Brett Wilder, Assistant Professor and Area Extension Educator, U of I, detailed the financial condition of Idaho agriculture. Idaho was a small economy with big agriculture. Idaho ranked 38th in 2022 with total gross domestic product (GDP) and 17th in total farm GDP. Idaho ranked fifth behind South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, and Nebraska in total state GDP. **Mr. Wilder** stated Idaho's total export in 2022 was \$4.1 billion. Agricultural export was at a record high with \$1.1 billion exported in 2022. Idaho's net farm income was at an all time high in 2022 with \$4.2 billion despite higher costs. It was expected to be down one percent in 2023 to \$3.8 billion due to interest rates, property taxes, and labor costs (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: Vice Chair Nichols inquired about the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) bankruptcy rate.

Mr. Wilder explained new data from USDA's Economic Research Service confirmed a decline in the farm Chapter 12 bankruptcy rate. In 2022 the Chapter 12 bankruptcy rate had reached the lowest level since 2004.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time. **Chairman Hartgen** adjourned the meeting at 8:56 a.m.

Senator Hartgen
Chair

Melissa Price
Secretary