

MINUTES
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Tuesday, January 31, 2012
- TIME:** 1:30 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room EW40
- MEMBERS:** Chairman Stevenson, Vice Chairman Shepherd, Representative(s) Wood(35), Barrett, Moyle, Eskridge, Raybould, Bedke, Andrus, Wood(27), Boyle, Hagedorn, Harwood, Vander Woude, Gibbs, Pence, Higgins, Lacey
- ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None.
- GUESTS:** Jennifer Werney, Dave Ricks, Charles Correll, Jean McDevitt, Nancy Merrill, Tammy Kolsky, David White, Tamara Humiston, Ernest Lombard, Thomas Crimmins, Randy Doman, Idaho Dept. of Parks and Recreation; Lara Rozzell, Courtney Washburn, Idaho Conservation League; Bob Brammer, Robert Pietnos, Eric Wilson, Idaho Dept. of Lands; Scott Nichols, US Geothermal; Brad Hunt, O.A.R.C.; Norm Semanko, IWUA
- MOTION:** **Chairman Stevenson** called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.
- Rep. Lacey** made a motion to approve the minutes of Thursday, January 25, 2012.
Motion carried by voice vote.
- Nancy Merrill**, Director, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, introduced the members of the Board of Directors that were present. She said their mission is to improve the quality of life through outdoor recreation and resource stewardship. She said they have 30 state parks, they manage over 60,000 acres, they have 5.2 million park visitors and have increased their overnight camping. She said on average they register 300,000 boats, ATV's, motorbikes and snowmobiles annually. Ms. Merrill said they have five advisory committees and receive \$7 million disseminated in grant funding each year. She said they are memory makers, but due to the economy they have been forced to move into another era. She said they have chosen to move forward. Ms. Merrill said there has been a steady increase in visitors and decrease in full time employees. She gave a comparison of the amount of park visitors per employee and said their improvements are heading in the right direction. She said they had to construct a temporary financial bridge and have need of a long term funding solution. She said they have a mandate to implement business like practices and are moving forward with this implementation.
- Ms. Merrill** reviewed their 2011 successes, saying all 30 parks remain open and volunteers have contributed many hours of service. She said customer satisfaction has increased and revenues and visitation is up. She said they have established better communication with state and community leaders. She said they are updating their visitor centers, they've built more training sites and a standard of quality is being established. Ms. Merrill said the staff is receiving national recognition and they have reached a turning point in management of the state parks. She said they are creating a sustainable dedicated funding source for the agency and they are doing their best to incorporate business practices.
- Ms. Merrill** reviewed the State Parks Passport proposal and gave a conservative estimate of vehicle owners who will choose to purchase the Passport. She said the end result will be that Idahoans will have a choice when they register their cars to purchase access to all 30 parks for a tremendous discount. She said this is a movement towards a long term sustainable funding source to assist in keeping Idaho's state parks open and accessible.

In response to questions from the Committee, **Ms. Merrill** explained the Passport would be a sticker similar to the one provided now and would be given at the time the registration stickers were given whether it was in person or mailed. She said they will work on repairs of roads and bridges in the parks and replace rest rooms with the money raised from these passports. Ms. Merrill said they currently have an MOU with the Department of Transportation on reimbursement of costs to the Transportation Department.

RS 20849: **Rep. Roberts** said this proposed legislation will provide an opportunity for Idaho citizens to support the Idaho State Parks Passport Program when they register their vehicle.

In response to questions, **Rep. Roberts** said this passport will be a sticker placed on the vehicle's windshield on the lower left hand side and it is similar to what they currently have. He said the details of the costs and money collected will be carried out in the MOU with the Department of Transportation.

In response to questions from the Committee, **Ms. Merrill** said the money will be deposited into the Controller's Office as they currently are now. After fees are taken out, the remainder will be deposited into the Parks and Recreation account.

MOTION: **Rep. Gibbs** made a motion to introduce **RS 20849. Motion carried by voice vote.**

DOCKET NO. 26-0136-1101: **Dave Ricks**, Deputy Director, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, said these are the Rules governing the Winter Parking Permit Program. He said currently there are two ways to obtain a parking permit. He said they have added another way to purchase the permit; this is to buy the permit online and print out the temporary permit. He said they are running a rule to allow the online printed permit to be put on the dashboard so the purchaser won't get a ticket for not having an official printed permit.

MOTION: **Rep. Wood(35)** made a motion to approve **Docket No. 26-0136-1101. Motion carried by voice vote.**

DOCKET NO. 20-0315-1102: **Chairman Stevenson** said he had met with the parties involved and it had been decided that rejecting the Rules and returning to the previous Rule wouldn't solve any problems.

Bob Brammer, Assistant Director, Idaho Department of Lands, said the consequence of the discussions is they agreed it would be better moving forward and approve the Rules, with the commitment from the Department to come back next year with improved geothermal rules addressing the issues of concern. He said the Department is committed to reenter negotiated rulemaking to make clarifications in the Rule. He said from the Department's standpoint, it is their recommendation to approve the Rule.

Scott Nichols, US Geothermal, said he did talk with the industry people and they agreed it was best at this point to go ahead and recommend approval of the Rules with the Department's commitment to go back and renegotiate next year.

Lara Rozzell, Idaho Conservation League, said she is happy to see the state moving forward in creating geothermal on state lands. She said they agree with approval of the Rules to create a path for the industry to move forward.

MOTION: Rep. Wood(35) made a motion to approve **Docket No. 20-0315-1102. Motion carried by voice vote.**

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

Representative Stevenson
Chairman

Susan Werlinger
Secretary