

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Thursday, March 14, 2013
- TIME:** 1:30 pm or Upon Adjournment
- PLACE:** Room EW42
- MEMBERS:** Chairman Andrus, Vice Chairman Boyle, Representatives Bolz, McMillan, Batt, Bell, Agidius, Dayley, Miller, Romrell, Stevenson, VanOrden, Pence, Erpelding
- ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Rep. Erpelding
- GUESTS:** Shelley Bennett, Idaho Wine Commission; Sean Ellis, Capital Press; Sharon Kiefer, Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Rick Waitley, Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom; Dar Olberding, Idaho Grain Producers; Wally Butler, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation; Stan Boyd, Idaho Cattle Association and Idaho Wool Growers Association
- Chairman Andrus** called the meeting to order at 2:53 p.m.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Dayley** made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2013 meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**
- H 278:** **Rep. Boyle**, presented **H 278**, Animal Damage Control Funding. She stated that this bill deals with wolf problems, wildlife depredation, and animal damage control. She detailed the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's set-aside fund, in part, called Access Yes, for sportsmen's access to private hunting and fishing land. Monies for this set-aside account come from Idaho hunting and fishing licenses and tags.
- Rep. Boyle** explained that monies also flow in from interest earned from the Expendable Big Game Depredation Fund. She confirmed that at the close of each fiscal year, if the balance of this fund exceeds \$750,000, then up to \$100,000 of the overage has been transferred to Access Yes, and any remaining funds above that to the Animal Damage Control (ADC) fund. This legislation proposes to move any overages above the \$750,000 mark, if available each year, solely to the ADC. Access Yes would be moved to the Fish and Game fund, which receives \$2 from each hunting or fishing license sold.
- In regards to questions, **Rep. Boyle** answered that there was a large balance in the Depredation Fund as of November 2012. She related that revenue brought in from tags must be balanced with a huge amount of claims for damages, i.e. loss of livestock due to predators. She responded that requests could be made from the state's General Fund, although many other issues desperately need funding as well. Also, interest earned toward depredation funds has decreased significantly from previous years. She claimed that monies from federal funding and from environmental groups that had pledged to help with the wolf problem have dried up.
- Concerning Access Yes, **Rep. Boyle** clarified that these funds provide sportsmen with access to private lands for hunting by making payments to the land owners who participate in their program.

Sharon Kiefer, Deputy Director, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), testified that this bill affects the Expendable Big Game Depredation Fund, Sportsmen's Access, and ADC. She commented that license and tag money collected by IDFG transfers \$200,000 annually into the depredation fund, plus interest earnings. These are used for compensation payments to landowners who suffer damages from wildlife. She specified that the ADC does not have latitude to use the IDFG funds at their discretion; IDFG oversees and directs the use of ADC funds toward predatory animals, including birds. Ms. Kiefer described that the overage funds above the required \$750,000 annual balance are an intermittent financial tool for both sportsmen's access and the ADC. In fiscal year 2011, \$100,000 was transferred to Access Yes and \$66,000 was transferred to the ADC account.

Ms. Kiefer specified that Access Yes also receives revenue from their Super Hunt proceeds and federal and partnership funds. She conveyed that landowner interest to participate in Access Yes has always exceeded the funding available. Many access easements or permanent access improvements, such as boat ramps and parking areas, have been acquired through Access Yes. A significant portion of Access Yes funding from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is expected to dry up, and this affects IDFG's ability to uphold sportsman expectations.

Ms. Kiefer stated that Wildlife Services responds to livestock depredation reports to assist owners in areas that help with elk survival and benefit sportsmen. She emphasized that this bill was not discussed with the IDFG or with sportsmen, whose funds are affected. She does not believe this bill balances multiple, important priorities; consequently, IDFG does not support this bill.

Regarding questions on how the overage money should be spent, **Ms. Kiefer** said there is room for discussion about dividing this between Access Yes and the ADC. She noted that the ADC receives other funding. Access Yes has additional funding from the Super Hunt, around \$160,000 to \$200,000 per year; some federal funding, between \$300,000 to \$400,000 spread over three to four years; plus some partnership accounts for lesser amounts.

Pertaining to other possible solutions, **Ms. Kiefer** acknowledged many groups are looking for any and all available financial tools to aid depredation. She indicated that the ADC account is used for control measures, many times carried out by Wildlife Services. However, this bill does not address compensation for livestock losses. With reference to the large sums in IDFG's Habitat Acquisition and Winterfeed operations, she reiterated that the depredation fund, which includes these, must maintain a minimum balance of \$750,000. Much of these funds, above the minimum, were spent by the end of the fiscal year, then the balance continually rebuilds again with licensing revenue. She offered to bring an annual report showing IDFG's spending history to the committee members.

Wally Butler, Range and Livestock Specialist, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, affirmed his support of this bill. Although it is an intermittent funding source and he would rather see the federal government step in for a mandate they created, he wants to bolster any ADC efforts to prevent depredation. He recognized that most cattlemen from his organization contribute to the depredation fund as hunters and fishermen that buy licenses.

Stan Boyd, representing the Idaho Cattle Association and Idaho Wool Growers Association, expressed his support of this bill. He pointed out that with the advent of the wolf in Idaho, there has been a huge increase in their population preying on livestock resources. He believes the ADC needs to be able to respond. Ideally, the livestock industry would like a significant and consistent funding increase. He stated that although the consistency for funding within this bill is not present, any funding helps, even if it fluctuates. He mentioned the possibility of adding Access Yes to a land acquisition account, which has a large balance. He also specified that paying out more claims against wolves in the future means less money for predator control. He stressed that more funding sources are needed, but this is a step in the right direction.

In regards to questioning, **Ms. Kiefer** was called upon to answer about the possibility of raising the cost of each hunting and fishing license by one dollar, to go toward ADC funds. She related the recent effect of the economy, and how IDFG has suffered due to diminished funding. She did not believe an increase on license fees would best accomplish IDFG objectives or benefit sportsmen.

Rep. Boyle commented that the Legislature has discussed options for further ADC funding for 20 years. She has not seen other solutions brought forward. She indicated that when wolves prey on wildlife, it creates less opportunity for hunters as well, so hunters would benefit from this bill. Also monies to compensate ranchers who lost livestock are gone now. Any current relief only provides pennies on the dollar. She claimed there are significant problems with lack of response from Fish and Game, so depredation issues have exploded, creating urgency for action. She disclosed that another bill will be forthcoming to address compensation issues.

MOTION:

Rep. Miller made a motion to send **H 278** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

Rep. Bolz and **Rep. Pence** expressed concern that this is not a complete fix for the wolf problem, but is more like a band-aid, without a constant source of funding.

**ROLL CALL
VOTE:**

Roll call vote was requested. **Motion carried by a vote of 10 AYE, 3 NAY, 1 Absent/Excused. Voting in favor** of the motion: **Reps. Andrus, Boyle, McMillan, Batt, Agidius, Dayley, Miller, Romrell, Stevenson, and VanOrden. Voting in opposition** to the motion: **Reps. Bolz, Bell, and Pence. Rep. Erpelding was absent/excused. Rep. Boyle** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Rick Waitley, State Director, presented an update on Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom (AIRC). He defined that this program was started in the 1980's to help students that were a generation or two removed from the farm, to learn where their food and fiber came from. Funding is provided in part by Idaho agriculture specialty license plates. He said AIRC develops curriculum for use in Idaho classrooms. They provide bumper stickers, posters to color describing Idaho agriculture, puzzles, pamphlets, books, recipes, bulletin board ideas, nutrition programs, workshops, tours, and large expo events. They have been able to distribute thousands of teacher and student packets with classroom resources through these venues.

Mr. Waitley described an AIRC character named Flat Andy who travels to different states and agricultural areas, as a way to educate students, developed in part due to recent reductions in funding for field trips. He directed attention to multiple summer teacher workshops and continuing education credits provided by AIRC, in conjunction with various colleges and universities in Idaho. He indicated that Idaho is one of four states that are able to provide a balanced diet from what is grown in their state. He commended many partners who work with AIRC, such as the Department of Education, Idaho Beef Council, Idaho Preferred Program, and Farm to School. AIRC also boasts a large, strong membership base.

Shelley Bennett, Community Relations Coordinator, Idaho Wine Commission, presented an update. She stated that there are 50 wineries and 56 vineyards currently in Idaho. Their board has five members, consisting of wine and vineyard owners. She submitted that the Wine Commission markets and promotes wineries and grape growers through educating the community, hosting events and media outreach. This industry has grown significantly over the last ten years. She affirmed that the Wine Commission offers seminars, tours and brochures. Their web site has been a successful and valuable tool. Grants have been used toward advertising, personnel and travel. She also explained they received a great response to their media boot camp as well.

Ms. Bennett outlined their three major events: Savor Idaho, Sippin' in the City, and "Unwined" at the Movies. She gave an update on legislation regarding the wine industry, with recent excise tax legislation and changes to container sizes/private labeling. Educational seminars were well received. She advised that the "I Support Idaho Wines" campaign has aided their industry. Scenic byway signs help identify areas with vineyards and generate traffic to them. She noted that research needs continue, regarding chemistry, pruning, canopying, and soils, but overall the Commission is in good shape with a positive overall outlook.

Rick Waitley, Administrator, Idaho Alfalfa and Clover Seed Commission (IACSC), presented an update. He remarked that they represent growers in southwestern Idaho, who produced over seven million pounds of alfalfa and clover seed in fiscal year 2012. This is a drop from prior years, losing acreage to houses being built. He mentioned that IACSC received assessments last year around \$25,000. However, after expenses, the total income and expenses balance was close to negative \$11,000. He related that there is a separate balance of \$50,000, which their six member commission of growers is trying to figure out how to best invest.

Mr. Waitley explained that IACSC oversees the disbursement of funds in three major areas of operation: research, education and promotion. They are also affiliated with the National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance (NAFA), which coordinates and promotes educational and research activities, benefitting seed growers in Idaho. He described two Idaho funded research/education projects in 2012, the Pest Alert Network (communicating within the agricultural industry about pest outbreaks and pest management information), and Idaho One Plan (pesticide applicator digital reporting program).

Mr. Waitley relayed that Idaho is the third largest alfalfa seed producing state, and the alfalfa forage industry is among the top five agricultural crops grown in the U.S. He supported the IACSC in providing \$5,000 of funding to the Parma Research Center, owned by the University of Idaho (U of I). He stressed the importance of keeping this center going. IACSC also provided funding for industry relations in conducting educational activities this past year, with Food Producers of Idaho, among others, at two large fairs. He reported that much of the U.S. looks to Idaho for quality seeds to plant, as a result of Idaho's excellent soil, water availability, climate and knowledgeable growers.

In response to questions regarding the U of I's two day teacher workshop and agricultural tour, **Mr. Waitley** explained that the U of I is the only university/college that recognizes the tour for credit, although they are the most expensive. He confirmed that currently someone with a doctorate degree must conduct the workshop.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Representative Andrus
Chair

Kim Jensen-Porter
Secretary