

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, January 16, 2014
TIME: 1:30 P.M.
PLACE: Room EW42
MEMBERS: Chairman Andrus, Vice Chairman Boyle, Representatives Bolz, McMillan, Batt, Bell, Agidius, Dayley, Miller, Romrell, Stevenson, VanOrden, Pence, Erpelding
**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None
GUESTS: Chuck Cuddy, IDWR Board; Jodie Ellis, Carol Youtz, Board of Veterinary Medicine; Mackenzie Herrick, Veritas Advisors; Brent Olmstead, MPIIdaho; Scott Leibsle, ISDA; Bill Barton, ISDA; Bert Stevenson, Roger Chase, IWRB; Norm Semanko, Idaho Water Users Assn.; Ed Hawley, Administrative Rules

Chairman Andrus called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

Roger Chase, Chairman, Idaho Water Resource Board, introduced four members present of the eight member Water Board. He said the State Water Plan was adopted by the Board in November of 2012. He said for the first time, the plan includes strategies and milestones for executing management policies and evaluating policy effectiveness. He said there was concern by some legislators regarding certain policies in the plan and the Board has worked during the summer to review these policies. He said modifications to the policy from this review should be ready for the 2015 session. Mr. Chase reviewed the role of the Board and the tasks given to them by the Governor. He provided some examples of projects they provide funding to with loans, grants or both.

Chairman Chase introduced the Water Sustainability Initiative funding. He said funding is critical to help the Board maintain the balance of water in the State of Idaho. Depending on where you live in Idaho, water issues can be different, Mr. Chase said money was set aside to help with issues and projects throughout the state. This money was withdrawn when the economy took a downturn. He said the Board is asking for those funds to be restored and he reviewed several projects the funding would be used for.

Chairman Chase reviewed the issue with the Mountain Home Airforce Base, saying they do not have a sustainable water source. He said if the base can't establish a sustainable water right, there is a chance the base would need to close. He said there is a proposal with the JR Simplot Company to sell the State of Idaho a portion of their water right in that area. Mr. Chase stated that water could be used to supplement the Mountain Home Airforce Base, and it would also help the entire aquifer in that area. He said that settlement is still in negotiations and this is critical to the well being of the State of Idaho.

Chairman Chase stated the Board is also asking for help with aquifer recharge programs, most of which are in the Snake River Plains. He said they need to be very careful with water over-allocation in these areas. He said most of this water goes for storage and to recharge the Snake River Aquifer. He said they are looking for sites in the aquifer for recharge that will hold the water for many years. Mr. Chase said there are only certain times of the year that the aquifer can be recharged and recharge can only be done when there is an excess amount of water, which is usually in the spring. He said it is their goal to build aquifer recharge sites across the valley. Mr. Chase reviewed the various recharge projects that are currently in place and explained how the projects work.

Chairman Chase reviewed the issues in Northern Idaho and said they are different than the issues in Southern Idaho because they have larger amounts of water. Project work in North Idaho will help us protect the water that we have and justify the uses of the water. He explained the need to investigate new water storage areas and the need for water storage instead of buying water from outside sources. Mr. Chase stated they have looked at many sites for dams. He reviewed the three sites that have stood out as possible locations. He said these projects are the Weiser River Galloway Dam, Island Park Reservoir and raising of the water levels at Arrowrock Dam. He explained in detail the process of the Water Supply Bank and how it is used. In conclusion, Mr. Chase said the recharge efforts in the state are important, and Idaho spends the least amount of money of any state to protect its water. He asked for support and consideration from the members of the committee.

Gary Spackman, Director, Idaho Department of Water Resources, addressed the committee and said the Water Board is a separate entity from the department, but they are linked together because of related roles and responsibilities. He said in his observation, this Water Board is involved in more water issues and across a broader spectrum of activities than any other Water Board he has worked with.

Director Spackman gave a background about the need to secure a water supply for the Mountain Home Airforce Base. He explained work to obtain water right from Simplot. He spoke about the need for more snow and the mountain snow-water equivalent. He reviewed the areas that picked up a significant amount of snow pack from the most recent storm. He said one concern with water is the reservoir levels are lower than in normal years and irrigation water will likely be curtailed in thousands of acres of the Snake River Plain Basin because of legitimate calls of senior water right holders. He said this is a real possibility if there is a less than normal snow pack.

Director Spackman briefly reviewed the department's organization and gave a summary of the governor's recommendations by fund. He reviewed the department's General Fund appropriation over the last 10 years and explained the progress the department has made over the last few years. He explained the process of reducing their backlog of water right transfers, permits, and licenses; and reviewed other department programs.

Director Spackman reviewed the pending lease application process for the IWRB's Water Supply Bank. The purpose of the bank is to work as a water clearing house for water rights and for the marketing of water rights. He said the Snake River Basin Adjudication is almost complete and he credited everyone who has participated in that process. He reviewed some draft legislation that would be presented during the session.

In answer to committee questions, **Director Spackman** said that the J.R. Simplot Company water right being considered for transfer to Mountain Home Airforce Base was decreed water that was not being used.

In answer to committee questions, **Mr. Patten**, Department of Water Resources, said there is a recharge action plan and goals are set to first stabilize the aquifer and then set up a path for recovery.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

Representative Andrus
Chair

Angela Sandoval
Secretary