

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 18, 2014

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Andrus, Vice Chairman Boyle, Representative(s) Bolz, McMillan, Batt, Bell, Agidius, Dayley, Miller, Romrell, Stevenson, VanOrden, Pence, Erpelding

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Rep. Bell

GUESTS: Leon Slichter, ID Soil & Water Commission; Jan Webster, SWC; Benjamin Kelly, IASCD; Kit Tillotson, IASCD; Bob Naerebout, Idaho Dairyman's Assn.; Dennis Tanikuni, Idaho Farm Bureau

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

Chairman Andrus acknowledged the Page **Julie Monaghan**.

MOTION: **Rep. Erpelding** made a motion to approve the minutes of January 30, February 4, and February 10, 2014. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 495: **Rep. Vander Woude**, presented **H 495**, Dairy Products Commission. He said this will authorize the Dairy Products Commission to fix the Commissioners compensation at a rate up to \$150 per day and it amends existing law to allow for this.

Bob Naerebout, Executive Director, Idaho Dairyman's Association, said the legislation will require the Commission to file its annual report annually during the legislative session, rather than by January 15.

MOTION: **Rep. Romrell** made a motion to send **H 495** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Vander Woude** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Teri Murrison, Administrator of the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, provided a presentation on the agency's 2014 annual report. She said the Conservation Districts are the "boots on the ground" of conservation, undertaking locally led projects with private landowners. She expressed her gratitude to the landowners, stake holders, government agencies and their partners for the cooperative efforts in accomplishing positive results for the land and the people who live and work on the land. She said Conservation the Idaho Way is a voluntary and non-regulatory focus on cooperative, collaborative efforts of local people who show good stewardship of the land and its resources. She said the Conservation Commission has three core functions: providing district support, managing incentive-based and other conservation programs and fiscally prudent administration.

Norm Wright, Chairman, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, said there are fifty districts in Idaho. He said this year districts received about \$1.15 million in operating support from the General Fund and they raised another \$500,000 from local government and other local matching sources to total almost \$1.6 million dollars statewide. He said since 1990 they have been involved with over \$88 million worth of projects and of that, over \$22 million dollars has been Commission funds. He said the Commission has impacted almost 1.5 million acres with Conservation the Idaho Way. He said beyond district support services, they manage incentive-based and general conservation programs such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP); a program to conserve water usage on marginal farm ground in the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer. He said the Rangeland Resource Conservation Development Program (RCRDP) has funded almost \$25 million in loans, impacting close to 133,000 acres. He said the Commission assists DEQ in preparing the Total Maximum Daily Load Program (TMDL) implementation plans to strategically reduce agriculturally-generated pollutant loads for impaired surface waters. He said to date, they have completed 93 implementation plans. He said last year the Ground Water Program treated 35,685 acres, reducing nitrates by about 115,000 pounds, phosphorus by 24,000 pounds and sediment by 137,000 pounds.

Kit Tillotson, President, Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts (IASCD), said IASCD is charged with supporting the conservation districts and they are a unified voice for conservation in Idaho. He said they are the leaders of non-regulatory, locally led natural resource conservation. He said they work in partnership with schools to teach the value of protecting the natural resources. He said IASCD provides an avenue for Districts to reach above the local level to develop state and federal partners and bring more financial and technical resources that benefit the districts and land owners they serve.

Jeff Burwell, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), said in partnership with local Conservation Districts and the Soil and Water Conservation Commission they service 25,000 landowners in Idaho and the partnership is critical in providing timely service to these landowners. He said NRCS is the federal piece of the partnership and the largest part of the funding is through the Farm Bill. He said NRCS typically gets between 50-60 million dollars to use to apply conservation in Idaho. He said they work with landowners to conserve and sustain natural resources. He said they can only fund about 25% of the applications they receive and as a result they defer to their partner agencies for help.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:11 p.m.

Representative Andrus
Chair

Angela Sandoval
Secretary