

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 16, 2015

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Andrus, Vice Chairman Boyle, Representatives McMillan, Batt, Bell, Dayley, Miller, Romrell, VanOrden, Burtenshaw, Kerby, Troy, Pence, Erpelding

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Kit Tillotson, IASCD; Steven Becker, IASCD; Stephanie Becker, Candi Fitch, Idaho Cherry Commission; Larry Bell, Idaho Cherry Commission; Benjamin Kelly, IASCD; Dennis Tanikuni, Idaho Farm Bureau.

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

MOTION: **Rep. Erpelding** made a motion to approve the minutes of January 28, February 2, and February 4, 2015. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

RS 23318: **Candi Fitch**, Cherry Commission, stated there are two districts listed in the code, and with more production now in District 2 and fewer growers in District 1, the commission is asking the reference to the districts be removed from their section of the code. Removal of the districts will assure the members can be chosen to give the best representation to the Cherry Industry. This is the main change reflected in the RS, and with the removal of the districts the Commission will make sure the state is fairly represented. Another change that comes into play will be this year's nomination meeting. With the removal of the districts the appointments for the next three years will need to be staggered. Included in the RS are a few clarification changes. The Commission is also asking, if the industry should increase in size, through rule the districts could be reinstated.

MOTION: **Rep. Romrell** made a motion to introduce **RS 23318**. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Teri Murrison, Administrator of the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, presented their annual report. She stated they take care of and improve our natural resources for future generations while maximizing their benefits to the state and the people of Idaho. She stated they focus on cooperative and collaborative efforts with local people who know and work the land.

The Governor appoints five Commissioners to staggered 5 year terms. She said they oversee policy to serve Idaho's soil and water conservation districts, perform various program duties related to water quality planning and implementation, provide low interest conservation loans and more. She stated they focus on three core functions: providing districts with technical and other support services, offering non-regulatory, science-based incentive programs to develop voluntary conservation practices, and administration.

Ms. Murrison stated there are 50 districts in Idaho. She reported they strengthen and help build capacity providing specialized technical assistance for conservation planning, engineering, watershed assessments and sage grouse, fish and other species conservation projects. The second core function is to provide incentive-based and general conservation programs and services which would include the Resource Conservation and Rangeland Development Program providing low interest loans to purchase equipment and install projects that provide conservation benefits. Last year there was an increase in approved loans from 4 the previous year to 12 loans approved in 2014. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) signed 156 contracts enrolling 16,792 acres, saving 66,916 acre feet of water - enough to serve about 330,000 people, saving almost 134,000 tons of soil erosion.

In response to committee questions regarding drip irrigation systems, **Ms. Murrison** stated that is definitely on their radar as this is a most effective way to conserve water. In response to committee questions regarding the activity with the low interests loans, she stated there was an increase over the year before and they are aggressively marketing a campaign to see more interest and activity in this for next year.

Steve Becker, Treasure; Idaho Association of Soil Conservation District, stated the IASCD was organized in 1944 and worked to strengthen districts and further non-regulatory locally led natural resource conservation in our state. The association has a role at the local, state and national level and each relationship is vital to the effectiveness of keeping our farms and ranches active, healthy and sustainable.

Conservation Districts provide leadership at the county level to address critical natural resource issues, develop partnerships that can bring resources to the table to help address those issues, and reach out to schools and their communities to teach the value of protecting natural resources. He stated they support soil and water conservation districts in a number of ways; as the voice for districts at the Idaho legislature, the voice for the districts with the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the voice for districts with the National Association of Conservation Districts.

The Association keeps individual districts informed on critical emerging issues and opportunities, helps build partnerships with federal and state agencies and other organizations in order to carry out district priorities and programs and they analyze programs and policy issues that have an impact on local districts.

Mr. Becker gave three examples of work that some of the local conservation districts do. He reported the association's philosophy is that conservation decisions should be made by local people with technical and funding assistance from federal, state and local governments and the private sector. He stated the stewardship of our state's soil and water resources is a responsibility all Idaho citizens share.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Representative Andrus
Chair

Joan Majors
Secretary