

MINUTES  
**SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Thursday, February 19, 2015  
**TIME:** 8:00 A.M.  
**PLACE:** Room WW53  
**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Rice, Vice Chairman Bayer, Senators Brackett, Patrick, Souza, Lee, Den Hartog, Ward-Engelking and Burgoyne  
**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** None  
**NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.  
**CONVENED:** **Vice Chairman Bayer** called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

**S 1073**

**Relating to Noxious Weeds, Senator Keough**, stated that she had given handouts to the Committee entitled "Idaho's 10 Year Strategic Plan for Biological Control of Noxious and Invasive Weeds 2008-2018" (see attachment 1) and "The Idaho Invasive Species Strategic Plan" (see attachment 2). These are Idaho's aggressive efforts to combat and control noxious and invasive weeds. Biological control is a tool for terrestrial invasive species, and the bill before the Committee adds this control for aquatic noxious weeds. This legislation provides for the collection, removal and movement of noxious weeds from an infested area to a facility within the State of Idaho for purposes of biological control research, but only if the following conditions are satisfied:

1. The bill places the Director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) as the manager over the collection process.
2. The intent of the legislation is to allow research to occur and movement of such species as the eurasian watermilfoil from a lake to a research facility at the University of Idaho to find a biocontrol mechanism.
3. In order to be successful in establishing this biocontrol the research facility must work with the invasive weed that is in the area.
4. The research must show that whatever biocontrol is developed eradicates the weed and does not disrupt the ecosystem in that process.

At this point in time, there are no funds requested from the State as part of this proposed legislation.

**Senator Souza** stated she is supportive of this legislation because this aquatic weed is prominent in lakes in her district. If the research has identified viable options for controlling the watermilfoil, would further legislation be needed to get permission to enact biological control in state waterways? **Senator Keough** explained if at some point there becomes a viable biocontrol mechanism then that would go back through ISDA and the current structure for approval to use the control mechanism.

**Senator Patrick** asked how did the eurasian watermilfoil arrive in so many different forms. **Senator Keough** answered that the concern is not so much for the eurasian watermilfoil but the surrounding rock snout (shorten terminology for the scientific word) that is in the water which may be different in Green Bay versus Hope Bay versus Sandpoint.

**Jeremey Varley**, Noxious Weed Superintendant of Salmon, Idaho, stated he had reviewed the legislation and had concerns with the procedural language. If a noxious weed is moved to a research facility and that facility is located where the weed does not exist, how will the local weed control personnel be informed of the movement? Accidents do occur in research. If the weed escapes would the local weed superintendant be informed? As the legislation stands there is no mechanism to inform the local professionals.

**Senator Souza** asked how does a plant escape. **Mr. Varley** explained the plant parts can move easily, especially in the case of eurasian watermilfoil. It does not spread by a seed; it spreads by fragmentation. If one of these small fragments gets out of the research facility and into a water body that does not have that weed, then the local weed superintendant is dealing with a problem that they cannot fix.

**MOTION:** **Senator Lee** moved to send **S 1073** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to approve the Minutes of February 3, 2015. **Senator Souza** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Appointment of David Radford of Idaho Falls, Idaho to the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission for a term commencing July 2, 2014 and expiring July 1, 2019.**

**MOTION:** **Senator Brackett** moved to send the gubernatorial appointment of David Radford to the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission to the floor with the recommendation that he be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**PASSED THE GAVEL:** Vice Chairman Bayer passed the gavel to Chairman Rice.

**PAGE GRADUATION:** **Farewell to Committee Page Miles Madden, Chairman Rice** asked Miles Madden to tell the Committee about his experience as a page for the Committee and what his plans are for the future.

**PRESENTATION:** **University of Agriculture- Research (UOA), Dean John Foltz**, Dean of Agriculture, University of Idaho, began his slide presentation stating the UOA is very proud to represent agriculture and provide the resources and research extension requests. (see attachment 3) Agriculture is a \$9.7 billion industry in the State of Idaho. There are three missions at the UOA: teaching, research and extension. Today his presentation will focus on the research and extension missions. There are 11 research and extension facilities around the State. Important research happens at these facilities, as they support farms, plot work, scientists working out in the areas in the micro-climates or swell types that are faced in these diverse areas of the State. He explained how research and extension works: The scientists who work in the field or lab, take information from the stakeholders. Then extension individuals extend the research and provide it to the stakeholders to make it understandable by holding workshops for the utilization of what the research develops. Yields have increased because of the technology and scientific advances that UOA provided, and the value of production has continued to increase.

UOA has developed four new wheat varieties some which have herbicide resistance. At Kimberly, Idaho research is being conducted on water saving irrigation methods for major irrigated crops in southern Idaho. Over the next 25 years the State will face issues of how to become more productive with the watershed with more drought tolerant crops and utilizing water more effectively. The Parma extension is assisting fruit producers, such as grapes, peaches and apples, to make those crops more productive. Other faculty are working on improving sustainability and vitality of the rural communities and their importance in the State.

**Dean Foltz** expanded on specific projects that they are currently working on. The rains last fall caused sprouting problems in the cereal grain area, particularly malt barley. UOA was tasked with finding what could be done with the sprouted barley, could it still be shipped for the malt contract or could it be used as feed? The conclusion was sprouted barley is unfit as malt barley.

They have been working on developing new varieties of potatoes such as the Blazer Russet which is the regional accepted potato by McDonalds. The purple police which is a niche market for purple potato chips and fingerlings to increase consumption amongst consumers.

The key issue facing the potato industry in 2011 was the zebra chip, which was discovered in the potato crop. It is a bacteria that is transmitted by a potato psyllid, which effects the yield. The second issue was bacterial ring rot, which has been around since the 1920s. It tends to ebb and flow in the potato crop, so UOA has taken on research, prevention and control methods.

Wheat is Idaho's second largest crop; worth \$800 million. They received a \$20 million grant to collaborate with Washington, Oregon and Idaho in researching climate variability. Some research will cover management of new varieties of wheat, soil moisture, information that can go out to producers, and mentoring new professionals that will assist the farmers to serve agriculture in public and private sectors. This has been a very successful effort, and they will continue after the funding ceases. The new wheat seed varieties that UOA have developed are being marketed by a French company, Limagrain. Dairy waste is being composted to manage waste and improve soil health. This helps two industries: the wheat producers, because this manure is spread on those fields, and the dairy industry with waste management.

Dean Foltz discussed youth development and 4-H contributions across the State. UOA received grant dollars for a Youth Financial Literacy Program. Idaho was selected as one of five programs in the nation to pilot the new healthy eating program "Food Smart Idaho" to reduce obesity among youth. 4-H members are four times more likely to make contributions to their community; and two times more likely to go to college; two times more likely to make healthy choices and avoid risky behaviors.

UOA has created a grant office and hired a grant writer. The grant office was implemented to assist faculty productivity and to seek external funding sources. From May through December 2014 the grant office helped the faculty write over \$15 million in grants that have been submitted and \$17.2 million ready to be submitted.

**Senator Den Hartog** questioned how much of the submitted \$15 million has been received by UOA. **Dean Foltz** replied he did not have that dollar amount but would supply that dollar amount to Senator Den Hartog. After this first year of submissions, they anticipate that \$20 million will be received.

**Senator Den Hartog** asked what do they anticipate as a rate of return on the grant writing office's efforts in terms of dollars. **Dean Foltz** answered UOA investment in the grant office is \$150,000, if they are successful at getting 10 percent of the \$15 million submitted, that would be \$1.5 to \$2 million. It is their intention to keep a close accounting of the profitability of the grant office.

**Senator Patrick** asked Dean Foltz to elaborate further on the 4-H Youth Financial Literacy Program. **Dean Foltz** explained the attempt is to educate youth in all aspects of their life related to their finances. The subject matter they cover is: how do you finance a college education; what is a budget; what is a credit score; why is it important; and how do you balance a checkbook. These subjects are handled in workshops along with interactive game strategy for retention, how does writing a check differ from a debit card and the apps on their smartphones, these distance young people from having money in their wallet.

**Senator Lee** stated she was proud to see a section of UOA's presentation included the Parma Research Extension Center. Dr. Falahi is an incredible resource for their small rural community. Dr. Falahi does a great job in working with the local agricultural people, particularly the fruit growers and vineyards. A few years ago they had some concerns about the Center's survival during the recession. Are there any support issues that might hinder the continuation of the Center in the future? **Dean Foltz** stated that Parma is an example of the depth of the recession. Local stakeholders helped support that Center to get it through the lean time. The Center is on a much better financial footing today; but the private support from agribusiness really helped to keep the wolf away from the door at Parma and a few other extensions.

**Senator Souza** said one of the questions she is asked by some of her constituents is about some of the changes in the food crops especially the grains. Some of the wheat types are herbicide resistant. Does the UOA do follow-up research on the residual herbicide left in the crop when it is processed, and can it have detrimental affects in the future on the human body? **Dean Foltz** stated most of their research will be on the production side. The USDA and the FDA have very stringent requirements that UOA must go through to make sure there will be no residual effect. The attempt from a scientific standpoint is to advance the forefront of both food safety along with productivity, which involves both consumers and producers. They try to balance these aspects.

**PRESENTATION:** **Wheat Commission, Blaine Jacobson**, Executive Director, the presentation did not occur because the presenter was not present.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business, **Chairman Rice** adjourned the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

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Senator Rice  
Chair

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Carol Deis  
Secretary