

MINUTES  
JOINT MEETING

**SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, March 11, 2015

**TIME:** 1:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** WW02

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Bair, Vice Chairman Vick, Senators Cameron, Siddoway, Brackett, Heider, Stennett and Lacey

Chairman Raybould, Vice Chairman Gestrin, Representatives Andrus, Shepherd, Wood, Boyle, Gibbs, Miller, Bateman, Burtenshaw, Mendive, VanOrden, Pence, Erpelding and Rubel

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Nuxoll, Representatives Moyle, Vander Woude and Youngblood

**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:** **Chairman Bair** called the Joint Meeting of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee (Committee) and the House Resources and Conservation Committee (Committee) to order at 1:30 p.m.

**WELCOME:** **Chairman Bair** welcomed the members of the audience; the members of the two Committees; the guest speaker, Ms. Nora Rasure, Regional Forester of the Intermountain Region; and Andy Brunelle, Capitol City Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service to the Joint Meeting.

**Chairman Bair** announced that upon adjournment from this meeting, the House Committee would remain to conduct Committee business and the Senate Committee would move to WW55 to conduct their Committee business. He then invited Chairman Raybould to speak. **Chairman Raybould** said he had nothing to add and suggested they proceed with the presentation.

**SPEAKER:** **Ms. Rasure** said the Intermountain Region covers central and southern Idaho, parts of Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and a small piece of California. In the Idaho region, it includes five national forests: the Boise, Payette, Salmon-Challis, Sawtooth, and Caribou-Targhee. **Ms. Rasure** said she would also cover the national forests in the northern part of the State, which are: the Clearwater, Nez Perce, and Idaho Panhandle.

**Ms. Rasure** said the mission of the USDA Forest Service is to "sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nations' forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." She said it manages and protects 154 national forests and 20 grasslands in 44 states and Puerto Rico. The Intermountain Region covers 12 national forests and one national grassland in Nevada, Utah, and portions of Idaho and Wyoming. **Ms. Rasure** stated that it has the world's largest forestry research organization and provides technical and financial assistance, as well as works in partnerships with state and local government agencies, businesses, private landowners, and tribes.

The USDA Forest Service in Idaho has 1,560 employees in the national forests, 450 people in other forest service work, and more than 400+ seasonal positions. Geographically, employees are spread across 57 communities in the State. **Ms. Rasure** pointed out that many of the decisions that are made, are made at the local level by district rangers or forest supervisors with local input.

Regarding fire management, the Forest Service is committed to maintaining and fielding a safe, effective response organization that can be mobilized for managing wildland fires or other emergencies. They partner with the Interagency Dispatch Centers located in Coeur d'Alene, Grangeville, Boise, Salmon, Idaho Falls and Shoshone. There is a National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) located in Boise.

In the past three years, hazardous fuel has been reduced by 325,000 acres in Idaho. From 2001 to 2014, 950,000 acres have been treated. Implementing hazardous fuels projects and landscape restoration projects to protect communities and habitats has created jobs. Numerous hazardous fuels projects have helped with fire suppression and/or community protection from wildfire.

Governor Butch Otter was among the first to submit a proposal for the designation of insect and disease treatment areas. The first two projects coming are: Jasper Mountain (north of Priest River) and Williams Creek (between Banks and Smiths Ferry). Additional projects are being identified for 2016.

**Ms. Rasure** stated that they have an active range program that covers 690 allotments on 9.6 million acres in the State. It supports 762,428 animal unit months for cattle and sheep. The Forest Service has also been working closely with the State of Idaho, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to identify conservation concerns to manage sage grouse. The deadline for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determination on its proposed rule is September 30, 2015. National forest lands in Idaho make up 1.9 million acres or 11 percent of sage grouse habitat.

There are many recreational opportunities in the Idaho national forests. It was noted that there were 6.6 million visits, with 1,080,000 being skiing-related. Visitors spent \$372 million while recreating in the Idaho national forests. The Idaho national forests contain:

- 389 campgrounds,
- 56 picnic areas,
- 256 trailheads,
- 9 downhill skiing areas,
- 460 special use permits for outfitting and guiding,
- 12,838 motorized trails,
- 10,349 non-motorized trails, and
- 709 recreation residences.

There are always challenges in the wilderness areas of Idaho. In the Frank Church Wilderness there are more than 2,400 miles of trail. During the past few years, the Forest Service has increased their maintenance in the wilderness by using volunteers, student conservation associations, and partnerships with the Frank Church Foundation.

**Ms. Rasure** said the Forest Service offers many opportunities for mining. In the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, they work closely with numerous operators in the phosphate mining industry. That industry provides significant numbers of high paying employment. In the Salmon-Challis National Forest, the Thompson Creek Molybdenum Mine has been in operation for more than 30 years. The Idaho Cobalt Project is approved, but not yet developed. The Payette National Forest has the Golden Hand Mine in the Frank Church Wilderness, and Midas Gold is developing the Golden Meadows Project near Stibnite. The Boise National Forest has the Cumo Mine, which is an exploration project and the Atlanta Gold project.

**Ms. Rasure** said other examples of working together are the eight forest collaboration efforts, of which three are supported by the Collaborative Forest Land Restoration Act of 2009 funding: the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative, the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, and the Payette Forest Coalition. The others are the Acceleration of Restoration Activities, Salmon-Challis, Upper North Fork Project, partnerships with forestry and stream habitat, Idaho Parks and Recreation, Idaho Fish and Game, and Idaho Department of Lands.

**Ms. Rasure** closed her presentation by saying that they are honored to be one of the stewards of public resources in Idaho and to see that these resources continue to meet the needs of generations to come. She then thanked the Chairmen for allowing her to come and speak to them and the Committee members.

**Chairman Bair** thanked Ms. Rasure for her presentation and said that questions would now be taken from Committee members.

**Senator Brackett** said that two years ago in his district, they set up a Rangeland Fire Protection Association, and since then, five or six more have been formed and are in various stages across southern Idaho. He inquired if the Forest Service had done anything along that line for landowners. **Ms. Rasure** said she appreciated his interest and that the Forest Service is working with the State of Idaho, BLM, and the Rural Fire Protection Association to make sure they have the right resources in place at the right time, so that they can use people closest to the fire to respond quickly. To that end, may they all work together to make sure there is equipment available, provide training as needed, and work together to make the best use of those resources.

**Senator Brackett** said they have a Rangeland Fire Protective Association from Three Creek to the Nevada line, and they asked about operating and doing the initial attack on Forest Service land and the answer was no. He then inquired as to what it would take to provide that initial response. **Ms. Rasure** said they currently have arrangements with the State where the Forest Service and the State trade off suppressing fires. She feels the work they are doing with the BLM is making progress and helping them to go in the right direction, so by continuing conversation and the development of those associations, it will evolve over time. **Senator Brackett** said the ranger for the Forest Service is in Nevada, and he will continue to work with him to make this happen.

**Representative Andrus** asked when it comes to harvesting more timber on forest land or increasing grazing, what is your ability to make those decisions from your office, or how much is coming from Washington. **Ms. Rasure** stated that the decisions for the amount of grazing or timber harvest are normally made by the district ranger or the forest supervisor. Those decisions are made at the local level, especially with timber harvest or stream restoration. Many of those activities are influenced by the funding that they receive to do the work. Congress, in setting the budget, frames what work they will be able to accomplish and they've also been looking for ways to provide treatment on the national forest, and that would increase the timber production.

**Vice Chairman Vick** inquired about the fuel reductions program and stated that he had two questions. First, how do you decide what areas will be done? **Ms. Rasure** said those decisions are made at the local level. **Vice Chairman Vick** asked as far as the process that is used to do the fuel reduction, do you use commercial logging, or what is the process. **Ms. Rasure** said they have a variety of tools that they can use to do that work, and predominantly they use mechanical and prescribed burning, as they are the two primary ways to do that work.

**Senator Siddoway** said his question has to do with domestic sheep and bighorn sheep. He thinks he understood at the four states' Wool Growers Fall Meeting in Park City, Utah, Ms. Rasure said that before any more domestic sheep were removed from their allotments, the Forest Service would do everything they could to find alternative allotments. **Ms. Rasure** said they wanted to look at all the management options they had to address conflicts where they had occurred. Using other allotments to replace allotments where there had been conflict would be one of the tools they would look at; there are other ways.

**Senator Siddoway** said they have seen the Payette Principles in action in Idaho, and they have lost over 13,000 head of sheep in their inventory due to those Payette Principles that called for removal of domestic livestock from Forest Service allotments where the bighorn occur. What was heard at that four states' Wool Growers Fall Meeting in Park City, Utah, was a threat to remove 15,000 head of domestic sheep from 6 allotments on the Uinta National Forest because of 14 bighorn sheep in that vicinity. He asked Ms. Rasure if that is still a possibility. If it is, he asked, would she detail the efforts of finding alternative allotments. **Ms. Rasure** said they are working on bighorn sheep assessments across all the national forests in the four states, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming. They had been focusing on Utah and Wyoming, so she doesn't have much information on Idaho and Nevada yet. They are working with state agencies to gather this information to be included in their assessments. After the meeting last Fall, it has slowed down, and they are making sure they have the right information from the states and that they understand it correctly.

**Senator Siddoway** stated that Idaho's Director of the Department of Agriculture was at the Fall Meeting, and she encouraged USDA Forest Service to reassess how the Payette Principles were being utilized here in Idaho. **Senator Siddoway** said there have been efforts, and the Idaho Woolgrowers have made efforts to get in touch with Tony Padillia who was working on that and had attended the meetings for the last three or four years. **Senator Siddoway** said their efforts seem to be frustrated and inquired if Tony was still around and employed. **Ms. Rasure** said he is a range manager and apologized that he had not responded to the Senator. She said that she would follow-up on the issue.

**Representative Erpelding** said his question has to do with outfitters and guides receiving special use permits on forest service property. He asked what is the Forest Service doing to help mitigate the amount of outfitters using forest service land to make a living. **Ms. Rasure** responded by saying they have to limit the use so that people will have a quality experience and also protect the land. They have a process they use and it has been brought to their attention by others. **Ms. Rasure** said they are having conversations about that issue now and it has been ongoing for some time. The Forest Service is interested in having a relationship with the outfitters and guides who are providing access to the public.

**Representative Erpelding** inquired about the wilderness designation and the roadless rule. **Ms. Rasure** said she would be happy to follow-up and discuss that issue with him.

**Chairman Raybould** said that a few years ago in eastern Idaho, they had a very extensive lumber industry. That industry fell apart because when the allotments were put up for sale, the lumber companies would bid on it and be awarded the contract, then immediately find themselves in court with the environmental community opposing the sale of the timber. Consequently, it would take two, three, or four years to settle those cases, and in the meantime, the mills didn't have any raw materials to work with, so they went out of business. He asked if anything is being done now in eastern Idaho to open up the Caribou-Targhee National Forest for timber sales so that the lumber industry may work its way back into that part of the State. **Ms. Rasure** said there is a new forest supervisor there, and he is interested in managing the landscape there through timber sales. In order to get the industry back, there has to be a long-term commitment. Where it is successful, there are collaborative groups that come together, as opposed to having something pulled back or overturned later. **Ms. Rasure** said that she expects the new forest supervisor to look for new opportunities.

**Representative Gibbs** asked if one violates the Forest Wilderness Act by using a chainsaw, what is the penalty for that. **Ms. Rasure** replied that it has been a few years since she was a law enforcement officer and she does not know, but offered to find out. She said usually a citation is not their first choice in how they handle a situation. She said using a chainsaw does violate the wilderness act and it was created by Congress.

There were no further questions from either Committee. **Chairman Bair** thanked Ms. Rasure and Mr. Brunelle for the presentation. He then reminded the Committee members of their respective meetings following adjournment.

**ADJOURNED:** **Chairman Bair** adjourned the Joint Meeting at 2:20 p.m.

**CONVENED:** **Chairman Bair** called the meeting of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee (Committee) to order at 2:30 p.m. in WW55. All members were present.

**HJM 5** **Representative Beyeler** presented **HJM 5**. It calls upon the President of the United States of America to embrace a collaborative process in managing the Boulder-White Clouds area of central Idaho, rather than taking unilateral action that excludes the citizens of Idaho.

This area has been suggested as a potential national monument that could be established under the provisions of the Antiquities Act of 1906. **Representative Beyeler** said that cattle ranching and agriculture are the main economic drivers in central Idaho, and they would be substantially impacted by any land management decisions regarding this landscape. A national monument designation would impact local wildlife management as well as hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities in central Idaho.

**Representative Beyeler** said that any effort to reach a decision regarding lands of Idaho administered by federal agencies should be made with local collaboration rather than by unilateral administrative processes that exclude the citizens of Idaho.

**Senator Stennett** said she wished to thank Representative Beyeler for putting this Joint Memorial together.

**TESTIMONY:** **Mr. Bob Geddes**, representing the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF), said that this Memorial complies with the policies of the IFBF. Representative Beyeler had asked for (and they offered) their help in drafting this memorial. **Mr. Geddes** said that Representative Beyeler had done an excellent job in stating some of the concerns, and he hopes **HJM 5** will make an impact as it reaches its way to Washington D.C. He said that IFBF supports **HJM 5**.

**Representative Beyeler** stated that he visited with the offices of Congressman Simpson, Senator Crapo and Senator Risch to make sure any efforts would not jeopardize any of their work. He then thanked the IFBF for their help.

**MOTION:** **Senator Brackett** moved that **HJM 5** be sent to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Stennett** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. Senator Stennett will be the floor sponsor.

**HJM 7** **Representative Thompson** presented **HJM 7** and said it is a statement that the Idaho Legislature supports Idaho's hosting of an enhanced geothermal system test site. It encourages the Department of Energy, the Administration and Congress to join Idaho in exploring the favorable geologic conditions of the geothermal resource research area on the western edge of the Idaho National Laboratories (INL).

**Senator Heider** said that he noted that the geothermal power plants on the Raft River and areas in Cassia County are included and asked how they play into the INL system. **Representative Thompson** deferred the inquiry to Mr. Brian Whitlock, Director of State Government Affairs for the Idaho National Laboratory.

**Mr. Whitlock** said specific to Senator Heider's question, the Raft River project actually sits in a high temperature zone, and what the enhanced geothermal system will do is go much deeper than where the Raft River is situated. It is a hotter, more continuous resource, deeper down into the earth than what you are experiencing in Raft River; however, Raft River was part of some of the original research done on geothermal work at the INL. **Senator Heider** then asked if they planned to go into these geothermal areas that have potential along the south hills and drill deeper wells to see what the potential is. **Mr. Whitlock** said that right now, what the Department of Energy is trying to do is establish whether or not enhanced geothermal systems are viable and something that the nation can pursue as an energy resource. Particular to the INL site, there has been a location identified in the southwestern portion that meets all the criteria that is specified and would be a test site where this research would be started. If the research proves out and the technology can be deployed, then it would be very beneficial to the 13 western states.

**MOTION:** **Senator Cameron** moved that **HJM 7** be sent to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Vick** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. Senator Heider will be the floor sponsor.

**MINUTES:** **Senator Nuxoll** moved to approve the Minutes of February 25, 2015. **Senator Siddoway** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**ADJOURNED:** With no further business to come before the Committee, **Chairman Bair** adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

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Senator Bair  
Chair

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Juanita Budell  
Secretary