

MINUTES

HOUSE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY, & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 22, 2016

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman Thompson, Vice Chairman Anderst, Representatives Raybould, Hartgen (Hartgen), Vander Woude, Nielsen, Anderson (Carter), Mendive, Trujillo, Beyeler, Chaney, Nate, Scott, Smith, Rusche, Jordan, Rubel

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representative(s) Vander Woude

GUESTS: Rich Hahn, Idaho Power; Carolyn Watts, SWCC; Lynn Tominaga; Teri Murrison, SWCC; John J. Williams, BPA

Chairman Thompson called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Smith** made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2016, meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

HCR 43: **Rich Hahn**, Idaho Power, presented **HCR 43** to the committee. Idaho Power will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in August. Mr. Hahn outlined the formative years of the Idaho Power Company. The Idaho Power Company officially began in 1916 with the cooperation of five struggling power companies who merged into a single entity. The demand for power grew with the invention of electric appliances for home and work, leading to the production of more dams and power lines. When the American Falls Dam was built on the Snake River, the town of American Falls had to be moved out of the path of the created lake. The company was planning bigger and better things, when the Stock Market crashed on October 29, 1929.

Mr. Hahn went on by outlining some of the changes the company has seen in the last 40 years. Formerly meter readers would go out to houses and read the meter to determine power consumption; now that information is read over the power line itself. In 1978, the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA) was formed in response to the energy crisis. It was meant to promote energy conservation (reduce demand) and promote greater use of domestic energy and renewable energy (increase supply) by utilizing small, independent hydroelectric projects. Today Idaho is developing wind and solar power.

MOTION: **Rep. Raybould** made a motion to send **HCR 43** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Anderst** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Chairman Thompson introduced **Rep. Ladd Carter**, who is sitting in for **Rep. Anderson**. He also introduced **Emilee Krein**, the new page for the committee. She is a senior at the Idaho Virtual Academy.

Teri Murrison, Administrator of the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, gave a presentation on the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission Annual Report, which is statutorily under the Department of Agriculture. The commission helps private landowners take care of and improve agricultural production and natural resources. It promotes cooperative and collaborative efforts by local people who know and work the land. In 2015, the commission assisted 40 of 50 districts with projects (up 2 from 2014), initiated 57 new projects (up 24 from 2014), worked on 106 ongoing projects (up 3 from 2014), and served 229 landowners.

The other primary core function of the commission is providing incentive-based and general conservation programs and services as assigned by the Legislature. One of those, the Resource Conservation and Rangeland Development Program, offers low interest loans to purchase equipment and install projects that have conservation benefits. Loan rates range from 2½ to 3½ percent. The maximum amount is \$200,000 per loan, \$300,000 per borrower. Last year the loan officer worked up preliminary responses to 48 requests for detailed information and processed 20 loan applications. Of those, seven were approved, loaning out almost \$400,000.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) conserves water usage on marginal farm ground in the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer. Participating landowners receive \$130 an acre per year from the USDA Farm Service Agency in exchange for not farming these lands. There has been talk lately of increasing the federal compensation per acre as a means to increase participation in the program. Any increased producer participation will necessitate an increase in the Commission's operating and personnel funds to administer and staff CREP's additional contracts. Last year 155 CREP contracts were signed in the region, enrolling 16.5 thousand acres, and saving over 66 thousand acre feet of water, significantly benefiting fish and wildlife.

The commission assists DEQ in preparing the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program implementation plans to strategically reduce agriculturally-generated pollutants in Idaho's impaired surface waters. In 2015, eight new plans were completed (up two from the previous year) and 16 are in process. Eighteen new or to-be-updated plans are pending.

Last year the commission updated the Idaho Agricultural Pollution Abatement Plan, Idaho's response to Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act. It represents the agricultural portion of the State Water Quality Management Plan. The Advisory Committee is composed of 19 members representing state and federal agencies and representatives from conservation, industry, and commodity groups. The final plan was certified by the Governor and won't need to be updated until 2026.

Ms. Murrison outlined the implementation of the Whiskey Creek/Bear River Project. Whiskey Creek was on the state list of degraded water. Parts of it had been buried in a pipe for 50 years, and part of it was being fouled by the proximity of cows near the creek. To remedy this, the barn and concrete pad were removed; all the pieces of the structure were recycled.

Then the creek was designed from scratch. The design included runs anchored by rock to form the stream channel and pools to slow the water. Willows and riparian vegetation were planted. **Cameron Williams**, the ranch owner, was satisfied with the project. In addition to the stream itself, he was provided with water troughs, a calving shed, and a solar panel. Whiskey Creek flows into Bear River, which eventually empties into the Great Salt Lake. The newly restored stream attracts wildlife and is a pleasant place to visit. Idaho agriculture cares about conservation.

Ms. Murrison answered questions from the committee, stating that the decision to use sod placement on the project was due to the season. It was October, and the committee was worried the creek would erode during the winter; so sod was used to hold it in place.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

Representative Thompson
Chair

Diana Seba
Secretary