

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 22, 2018

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Boyle, Vice Chairman Dayley, Representatives Bell, Miller, VanOrden, Burtenshaw, Kerby, Troy, Stevenson, Amador, Armstrong, Hanks, Zito, Erpelding, Toone

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Rep. Boyle

GUESTS: Roger Batt, Treasure Valley Water Users Assn; Barry Burnell, Treasure Valley Water Users Assn; Teri Murrison, ISWCA; Dennis Tanikuni, Idaho Farm Bureau; Mike Somerville, Idaho Association of Conservation Districts; Wyatt Prescott, ICA; Brandy Kay, IWGA; Darin Taylor, City of Middleton; Dan Steanson

Vice Chairman Dayley called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

H 538: **Rep. Dayley** said the bill is to fulfill the original commitment to the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board by changing the sunset date from 2019 to 2020.

Dennis Tanikuni, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation; **Wyatt Prescott**, Idaho Cattlrmens Association and **Brandy Kay**, Idaho Wool Growers all spoke **in support of H 538**.

MOTION: **Rep. Miller** made a motion to send **H 538** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Boyle** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Roger Batt, Treasure Valley Water Users Assn., said the association came last year to the committee and did a presentation of Best Management Practices for Agriculture. He said as a result of that presentation the committee was able to help get funding through DEQ's budget and as they had promised are here to report back on some of the projects they were able to do.

Dan Steanson, Sawtooth Law Office, said the challenge for the Treasure Valley area is to significantly reduce sediment and phosphorus to the tributaries in the Boise River. The problem with excessive phosphorous is it stimulates an over abundance of aquatic plant growth. He said the goal for reduction of phosphorous sources from water shed off fields is 73%. He explained in the Boise Valley there is almost 110,000 acres of still flood irrigated land discharging to the Boise tributaries and then into the Boise River. He said these are the acres targeted for treatment, and stated that the cost to convert to non-return flow practices is very significant.

Barry Burnell, Water Quality Administrator, said last year appropriation funds were awarded to be used statewide for agriculture and ranching projects. The funds were dedicated to be used on high priority water shed projects. He explained the application process for requesting funds which were reviewed by the Basin Advisory group. The goal was to fund the projects by October and then to begin implementing immediately. He said the date of completion has been extended to June 2019 in order to capture all the dollars appropriated. He listed the 7 projects having made application and reported on the four projects accepted, their goals and status of each project to date.

Darin Taylor, Mayor of the City of Middleton, explained the Mill Slough Water Quality Improvement plan. He talked about the different drainage waters coming into the mill slough. He said the first phase included construction of weir structure, installation of automated gated to control water level and removal and reuse of sediment. Future plans include adding small diversion structures, excavation of channels on City Property and adding treatment ponds and wetlands. He said with the completion of phase one, there is a 15% reduction of phosphorus. When the second and third phases are completed they will have more than doubled the reduction of phosphorus to 33%.

Dan Steenson, Director of the Lower Boise Water Council, explained they made application to DEQ for funding to be able to take the drain water carrying sediment and apply it to land so the water isn't carrying the sediment into the Boise River. He said they then convert the practice to a non return flow sprinkler project. He said they have identified several projects that should be ready by irrigation season. He concluded by stating there are several projects across the state that could benefit from similar practice.

Teri Murrison, Administrator ISWCA said the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission's mission is to facilitate coordinated non-regulatory, voluntary and locally led conservation by federal, state and local governments including Idaho's conservation districts and other partners to conserve, sustain, improve and enhance soil, water, air, plant and animal resources. She stated private lands, forestland, rangeland and cropland are all incredibly important to Idaho and to the United States in general. She said private landowners care for 71% of the lower 48 states, 82% of our wetlands, and 80% of endangered species. In Idaho, about 30% of all land is privately owned. She said conservation the Idaho way is locally led balancing the economic health of communities and natural resources. She said voluntary stewardship projects across the state undertaken by our local state and federal partnership, the Conservation Commission, Idaho's 50 soil and water conservation districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Services all work together to improve water quality, restore streams, rivers, forests, range and croplands. The three core functions of the Commission, she said, are providing financial and technical support to Idaho's 50 locally led conservation districts, providing incentive based and other voluntary conservation programs and services and to educate and inform the public, decision makers, partners and other stakeholders about the value and benefit of good agriculture stewardship.

Ms. Murrison said among the challenges facing the commission is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. It is their intent to retire irrigated crop land and reduce consumptive water use. She said their goal has been to enroll 50,000 acres. Producer have been slow to enroll she said, in part due to the cropland rental rates being higher than the enrollment rates at this time. Because of this, they have asked for an increase in rate making them more competitive. Ms. Murrison said more loans were made in the first two quarters of this fiscal year than all of last year.

Mike Somerville, member of Idaho Association of Conservation Districts said the projects reported on by **Mayor Taylor** and **Dan Steenson** were made possible through a partnership including the lower Boise River Water Shed Project and the Canyon Soil Conservation District. He said their job is to offer technical assistance in putting the projects together. He said as they build partnerships, everyone has a function. He said it is his job to organize local farmers to be eligible for those types of funds as they become available.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Representative Dayley
Chair

Joan Majors
Secretary