

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 30, 2019

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Boyle, Vice Chairman Troy, Representatives Dayley, Kerby, Stevenson, Zito, Andrus, Giddings, Goesling, Marshall, Nichols, Raymond, Erpelding, Toone, Abernathy

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Teri Murrison, Crystal Rosen, ISWCC; Benjamin Kelly, Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts; Marv Patten, MPI; Brent Olmstead, CALS.

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

MOTION: **Rep. Abernathy** made a motion to approve the minutes of the Tuesday, January 22, and Monday, January 28, 2019 meetings. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Teri Murrison, Administrator ISWA, stated just under 30% of all lands in Idaho are privately-owned. Conservation the Idaho Way voluntarily implements projects improving water quality, restores streams, rivers, forest, range and croplands all while contributing to healthy soils. She said they are a small but effective agency funded in part by General Funds. She spoke to the core function of serving Idaho's 50 conservation districts by focusing on providing financial and technical assistance and educating people on voluntary conservation. She said district satisfaction with the commission has been at 90% since 2016.

Ms. Murrison explained the Resource Conservation and Rangeland Development Program (RCRDP) provides loans to land owners to implement conservative practices. She said after the recession, loan volume and interest generation dropped off. In order to remain competitive, interest rates were cut. She stated during the first six months of FY 2019, loan volume and interest in the program has continued to rebound. She reported on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) stating their goal to maintain 160 contracts in the program and conserve 17,000 acres of irrigated cropland were surpassed. She explained the Conservation the Idaho Way Tracker, containing technical assistance projects from FY 2017-19. She said over the next year it is expected the Tracker will expand to cover a wide variety of partners in Idaho.

In response to a committee question **Ms. Murrison** said Districts are required by statute to have a five year plan and are encouraged to create their own projects looking to ISWA for technical and financial support.

Benjamin Kelly, IASCD Executive Director, said as an association they believe in strong, independently lead conservation districts fully exercising their role to lead non-regulatory conservation efforts for private landowners throughout the State of Idaho. He explained after the Dust Bowl of 1930 the federal government created the Soil Conservation Service as part of the US Department of Agriculture. The feds pushed for the states to enact laws and create local conservation districts to manage and improve conservation efforts at the local level. Today Idaho has 50 conservation districts and they are the primary entities to provide assistance to private landowners and land users in the conservation, sustainment, improvement and enhancement of Idaho's natural resources. The IASCD was organized after supervisors found that soil and water problems extended beyond the boundaries

of their districts, and they needed an organization that could speak on their behalf at the state and national level. Mr. Kelly explained areas of conservation projects including farm, ranch and forestland conservation projects as well as water and air quality projects.

In response to committee questions, **Mr. Kelly** stated they represent the local level to the state commission who serves under the State Department of Soil and Water Conservation.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

Representative Boyle
Chair

Amie "Ivi" Taylor
Secretary