

MINUTES
SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 05, 2020

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Heider, Vice Chairman Brackett, Senators Bair, Johnson, Mortimer, Patrick, Guthrie, Stennett, and Jordan

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: **Chairman Heider** called the meeting of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee (Committee) to order at 1:33 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Bair** moved to approve the Minutes of January 20, 2020. **Senator Patrick** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 27499 Relating to irrigation districts, to revise provisions for assessment purposes.

Paul Arrington, Executive Director and General Counsel, Idaho Water Users Association, introduced himself and provided background that Idaho Code § 43-732 assesses a service charge, in addition to regular assessments, when the cost of delivering water to small tract lands is substantially greater than the cost of water delivery to other lands in a district. He stated that this Routing Slip would allow the irrigation districts to more appropriately divide the groupings identified in Idaho Code § 43-732 to less than one acre, and one to ten acres. He explained the importance of the distinction since delivering water to small tracts of land is more costly and time consuming than the costs associated with delivering water to tracts of land from one to ten acres. He spelled out that the current trend is tracts being smaller than an acre. He identified the Glens Ferry District as where this concern stems from. He demonstrated that this division will allow irrigation districts that utilize this process to more appropriately and fairly assess their water users.

MOTION: **Senator Bair** moved to send **RS 27499, 27500, and 27532** to print. **Senator Mortimer** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan status report.

Brian Patton, P.E. Executive Officer, Idaho Water Resource Board Bureau Chief, Idaho Department of Water Resources, provided a background on Idaho's aquifer health and the efforts to manage the water storage therein over the past ten years. He detailed the water changes, aquifer storage and flows, and provided several data points and reports (see attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: **Chairman Heider** inquired about water flows during recharge season. **Mr. Patton** clarified that winter is when there is excess water, and that they do make efforts to harness and control the flows and where excess enters the aquifer.

Senator Patrick and **Mr. Patton** discussed the flows in American Falls – the amounts of water allowed to flow into canals versus being used to recharge the aquifer.

Senator Guthrie and **Mr. Patton** discussed water concentration and the 537,000 acre feet cloud seeding results. They discussed having met the Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan goals 10 years into the 30 year plan, therefore going forward the goals will focus on: flow and water right constraints which limit availability to recharge, the ability to meet infrastructure build out goals, and how to make the program operate more effectively and efficiently.

PRESENTATION: Cooperative ESPA dye tracing program update.

Neal Farmer, Special Projects Coordinator, Idaho Department of Water Resources, introduced himself and discussed that his team has worked for about 12 years on the Swan Falls Reaffirmation Agreement, The last ten years were engaged in groundwater dye tracking, which was a cooperative effort between the Department of Water Resources and Idaho Power Company. He detailed that the program had been audited and it passed with flying colors. He described that the team wanted to understand water flows, power generation, and water quality. He asserted that they were researching recharged water to determine what percentage, if any, of the flow actually goes into the aquifer to improve their understanding about where the recharge water travels to and where it does not. He expounded that they were building a data set to help ground water flows (see attachment 2).

Senator Brackett stated that going forward he thought it was important that this program continue to identify the most effective recharge sites and thereby concentrate recharge efforts at those sites. He supported the continuation to fund this program.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Heider** adjourned the meeting at 2:59 p.m.

Senator Heider
Chair

Erin Miller
Secretary