

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 02, 2021

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Kauffman, Vice Chairman Andrus, Representatives Boyle, Kerby, Giddings, Marshall, Nichols, Hanks, Cannon, Moon, von Ehlinger, Toone, Ruchti, Mathias

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Rich Waitley, AITC; Tim Cornie, Self; Jon Basabe, Kind Idaho

Chairman Kauffman called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Mathias** made a motion to approve the minutes of February 24, 2021. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 126: Continuation of the meeting of February 24, 2021.

Chairman Kauffman returned **H 126** to the committee for consideration, which was held for time certain from the meeting of Wednesday, February 24, 2021.

MOTION: **Rep. Andrus** made a motion to send **H 126** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

During discussion on the motion, several committee members supported sending the bill to the floor but reserved the right to change their vote on the floor.

VOTE ON MOTION: **Chairman Kauffman** called for a vote on the motion to send **H 126** to the floor with **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Kauffman** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Rick Waitley, State Director AICR (Agriculture In the Class Room), explained the history of the program beginning in 1986. The proceeds from the Idaho specialty license plate along with other sources of revenue help to advance agricultural literacy in Idaho classrooms, home schools and charter schools. He explained several programs available to give educators an Idaho agricultural experience in the class room while also earning needed continuing education credits. He said by influencing teachers through positive agricultural experiences through their agri-business partners, they in turn can show life on the farm in a more positive way to their students. He explained their goals to increase funding partners for agriculture education, increase visibility for AITC in schools and make improvements in curriculum and activities.

Anne Struthers, Idaho Preferred Marketing Specialist, said their mission is to connect Idaho agriculture producers with consumers, retailers and food service in the market place to help members be successful. Idaho Preferred was established in 2002, and now has over 320 members focused exclusively on Idaho food, beverage and other agricultural products. She said the website is the most effective tool in advertising with over 80% of the members satisfied with the programs' overall effectiveness. She said they use Facebook, Instagram and a newsletter to spread positive stories about the members and the products they represent. She said the Holiday Baskets have become a very popular item with over 50% of the participants receiving follow-up sales.

Roger Batt, Treasure Valley Water Users explained the organization represents canal and ditch companies and irrigation districts who work to meet voluntarily standards of TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) through BMP (Best Management Practices).

Mary Anne Nelson, DEQ, explained agricultural BMP are practices researched, studied, and implemented in the agricultural industry that provide for the protection of natural resources. These practices reduce soil and fertilizer runoff, properly manage animal waste, and protect water and air quality on the farms and often improve the bottom line by reducing operating costs. She said DEQ's mission is to protect human health and the quality of Idaho's air, land, and water. With over 95,000 miles of streams and rivers and 460,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs, water is one of Idaho's most important resources. DEQ has identified performance which impacts both point and nonpoint source pollution management. She stated DEQ intends to increase the percentage of Idaho's water ways that are supporting beneficial uses to 35% as currently the percentage supporting beneficial uses is 33%. She spoke of the federal funding Idaho receives which has steadily decreased over time. Since 2017, the State Legislature has appropriated monies to supplement the federal funding. These funds go to individual grantees to implement projects that help reduce pollution. She identified several successful projects which have provided an opportunity for state and local partners to work together in reducing impact from non point pollution.

Brian Olmstead, Twin Falls Canal Company general manager, said they have five districts represented by five board members making them the largest irrigation district in the state. Beginning in 2000 they realized they needed to be proactive, and entered into a large education program with farmers to implement BMP. He said an important goal is to not only make BMP improvements but to make them economically feasible for the farmer, dairymen, and sportsman. He described 14 projects using 319 funding programs and spoke of other sources of funding used over the past three years including the state flood management fund.

In response to a committee question, **Mr. Olmstead** said most of the wetland projects are built for water quality alone to meet the TMDL.

Dan Steenson, Sawtooth Law, said they have been implementing projects through the Treasure Valley over the last 10 years with grant funds from the 319 federal programs as well as from the state's flood irrigation program. He explained the TMDL objective for Boise valley tributary loading which consists largely of agriculture return flows, shows a reduction of 73%. He said the Treasure Valley is urbanizing rapidly with an average loss of 3,000 acres of farm land a year to urbanization but even so there are still significant amounts of agricultural fields. He said the target of the implementation effort is for flood irrigated fields. He said they need to find ways to accelerate the implementation efforts by continuing to apply for grants and notifying landowners of the grants available for these projects. He said there is a decline in phosphorous in conjunction with the implementation of these efforts.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

Representative Kauffman
Chair

Joan Majors
Secretary