

MINUTES
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, March 11, 2021

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW40

MEMBERS: Chairman Gibbs, Vice Chairman Lickley, Representatives Moyle, Wood, Boyle, Vander Woude, Gestrin, Mendive, Kauffman, Blanksma, Addis, Moon, Manwaring, Okuniewicz, Yamamoto, Rubel, Davis, Mathias

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Richard Durant, Idaho Farm Bureau; Paul Arrington, Idaho Water Users Association; Nicholas Nelson, Idaho Rivers United; Colby Cameron and Matt Reiber, Division of Financial Management; Braden Jensen, Idaho Farm Bureau; Jon Kittell, self; Kelsey Helfrich, Helfrich River Outfitters; Aaron Lieberman, Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association; Brian Brooks, Idaho Wildlife Federation; Jerry Meyers, self; Jonathan Oppenheimer, Idaho Conservation League; Colby Blair, The Last Resort; Terry Meyers, self; Jonas Seiler, self

Chairman Gibbs called the meeting to order at 1:30pm.

MOTION: **Rep. Mathias** made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2021 and March 9, 2021 meetings. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

S 1123: **Rep. Andrus**, District 28, explained in the late 1800's the federal government purchased what is now known as Lava Hot Springs including over 170 acres of surrounding lands, then in 1902, granted the lands and hot springs to the state of Idaho for the purpose of public use. Later, all rights to the operation, management, control, maintenance, and improvements were vested in the Lava Hot Springs Foundation, an agency within the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. He stated this legislation would convert the Lava Hot Springs Foundation to a continuously appropriated account. This action would treat the Foundation like other similarly situated organizations and would benefit the Foundation by allowing it to more quickly respond to needs using its dedicated funds while still retaining Legislative oversight.

In response to a committee question regarding how this legislation would impact bonds, **Matthew Reiber**, Budget Analyst, Division of Financial Management, stated there would not be any bonding restrictions and this legislation would not impact any current bonds. He stated in order for any state agency to bond out a project, they need to go through the Building Authority and the Legislature for approval.

In response to a committee question asking if there are other agencies that have continuously appropriated accounts, **Colby Cameron**, Bureau Chief, Regulatory and Legislative Affairs, Division of Financial Management, stated there are approximately 47 other programs within other agencies that have continuously appropriated authority. For example, the Potato Commission and the Barley Commission are similar to the Foundation in that they are appointed by the Governor, meet publicly, and adopt their own budget. He concluded by explaining, there is statutory language stating if the Legislature gives continuous appropriated authority, it doesn't preclude the Legislature from appropriating budgets for them in the future if the situation changes.

Chairman Gibbs requested the record reflect no one signed up for remote testimony and no one came forward from the audience to testify.

MOTION: **Rep. Wood** made a motion to send **S 1123** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Andrus** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

SJM 103: **Senator Bayer**, District 21, stated, recently Idaho Congressman **Mike Simpson** announced a \$33B plan to breach the four lower Snake River dams for the benefit of salmon and steelhead recovery. She stated **SJM 103** opposes the removal or breaching of the dams on the Columbia-Snake River System and its tributaries. She explained, the system of dams was constructed to control flooding, generate hydroelectricity, store municipal and irrigation water supplies, and enable vessels to travel from the mouth of the Columbia River to Lewiston, Idaho, the most inland port in the nation. These dams also provide recreational opportunities and fish and wildlife conservation benefits. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer (COE) owns and operates the dams on the river system and the Bonneville Power Administration markets and transmits the electricity generated by the hydroelectric dams. She remarked, this system of dams created a marine highway, which is the most environmentally friendly way to move cargo, moving over one billion tons of goods annually, from Lewiston, Idaho to Astoria, Oregon. Wheat, Idaho's number two crop, is grown in 42 out of the 44 counties with half of the wheat being exported, almost all through the Columbia-Snake River System.

To further provide an understanding of the importance of this system of dams, **Senator Bayer** explained, a tug can push a barge with a ton of wheat 575 miles on a single gallon of fuel. As a comparison, it would take approximately 150,000 trucks and approximately 39,000 railcars, using nearly five million gallons of diesel, to move that same amount of wheat. Utilizing this system of dams makes it possible for fuel efficient, low carbon, safe, and reliable barge transportation. She continued, this river system is also a top west coast system for forest product exports, mineral exports, second in the nation for soy exports, and a major gateway for auto imports. Senator Bayer explained this system of dams provide enough clean energy to power 1.87 million homes and removing the dams could destabilize the power grid, increase overall greenhouse emissions, and more than double the risk of regional power outages. She concluded in 2008, 2014, and 2020 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) produced opinions stating breaching the four lower dams was not a necessary action for salmon recovery and the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) suggested ocean conditions and salmon predators, not the dams, are contributing to the declining salmon and steelhead runs, and this includes those in undammed rivers.

Richard Durant and **Braden Jensen**, Idaho Farm Bureau, both spoke **in support** of **SJM 103** stating agriculture is the backbone of the state economy and the barge system is the most economical mode to transport those products.

Paul Arrington, Idaho Water Users Association, spoke **in support** of **SJM 103** stating this memorial recognizes the sovereignty of Idaho in managing its water resources.

Jon Kittell, self; **Kelsey Helfrich**, Helfrich River Outfitters; **Aaron Lieberman**, Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association; **Nicholas Nelson**, Idaho Rivers United; **Brian Brooks**, Idaho Wildlife Federation; **Jonas Seiler**, self; **Jerry Meyers**, self; **Jonathan Oppenheimer**, Idaho Conservation League; **Colby Blair**, The Last Resort; and **Casey Baker**, self, all spoke **in opposition** to **SJM 103**. They were of the opinion by keeping the dams in place, it continues to create a negative impact on the small town businesses that depend on the fishing industry in regard to the economic benefits fishermen/women and tourists bring to lodging, restaurants, stores, and outfitters and guides. Additionally, those in opposition opined science is being ignored, the memorial is a flawed one-sided document, and that fish are vital to the ecological health and people of Idaho.

Chairman Gibbs requested the record reflect no one else signed up for remote testimony and no one else from the audience came forward to testify.

Senator Bayer stood and closed. She stated science has determined destroying the four lower Snake River dams would have a high environmental and economic impact and very likely would not accomplish the intention of saving salmon and steelhead. She reiterated, barging is the safest, lowest cost, and most environmentally friendly mode of transportation for trade. By transporting goods up and down the river system, hundreds of thousands of trucks are kept off of the highways. She concluded by stating the four lower Snake River dams are important to the Northwest's power needs, provide important support for the transmission systems, and help keep the power system low in carbon emissions.

MOTION: **Rep. Wood** made a motion to send **SJM 103** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

ROLL CALL VOTE: **Rep. Moon** requested a roll call vote on **SJM 103**. **Motion carried by a vote of 14 AYE, 3 NAY, and 1 Absent/Excused.** **Voting in favor** of the motion: **Chairman Gibbs, Reps. Lickley, Moyle, Wood, Boyle, Vander Woude, Gestrin, Mendive, Kauffman, Addis, Moon, Manwaring, Okuniewicz, and Yamamoto.** **Voting in opposition** to the motion: **Reps. Rubel, Davis, and Mathias.** **Rep. Blanksma was absent/excused.** **Rep. Troy** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.

Representative Gibbs
Chair

Tracey McDonnell
Secretary