

MINUTES
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 23, 2023

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW40

MEMBERS: Chairman Mendive, Vice Chairman Shepherd, Representatives Boyle, Vander Woude, Blanksma, Manwaring, Yamamoto, Durrant, Hill, Nelsen, Pickett, Raymond, Tanner, Burns, Necochea, Galaviz

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representatives Raybould, Mickelsen

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Vice Chairman Shepherd called the meeting to order at 1:31 P.M.

MOTION: **Rep. Durrant** made a motion to approve the minutes of February 21, 2023. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 143: **Rep. Burns**, District 26, described the bill, which changes fish and game code to allow for a three-day non-resident fur buyer license.

Rusty Kramer of the Idaho Trappers Association and the National Trappers Association testified **in support** of the bill.

Amber Worthington, Deputy Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), testified **in support** of the bill.

MOTION: **Rep. Vander Woude** made a motion to send **H 143** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Burns** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

H 144: **Rep. Boyle**, District 9, described the bill, which allows for lifetime trapping licenses.

Amber Worthington, Deputy Director of IDFG, testified **in support** of the bill.

Rusty Kramer of the Idaho Trappers Association and the National Trappers Association testified **in support** of the bill.

MOTION: **Rep. Blanksma** made a motion to send **H 144** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Boyle** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

H 156: **Rep. Boyle**, District 9, described the bill, which would reclassify rattlesnakes as predatory wildlife.

John Cossell Jr., a professor at Northwest Nazarene University, testified **in opposition** to the bill. As a professional herpetologist, he disputed the characterization of rattlesnakes as dangerous, and that Idaho rattlesnakes are not as venomous as those from neighboring states.

In response to a question from the committee about the continued survival of other species on the list, **Mr. Cossell** returned to the podium and said rattlesnakes would be vulnerable to extermination because of their much slower reproduction and their winter gathering in large numbers which would allow them to be killed in large numbers at once.

Amber Worthington, Deputy Director of IDFG, testified on the bill. The Department is neutral on the bill.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Worthington** clarified local ordinances often supersede IDFG rules on similar species, and she is not familiar with all such ordinances. She also said the Department's biggest concern with the bill is how the change in law would affect the treatment of live possession.

Charles Peterson, a retired biology professor from Pocatello, testified **in opposition** to the bill because of its detrimental effect on rattlesnake populations if they are allowed to be killed without limits when they gather in large numbers for a large area for the winter. He also noted rattlesnakes' important role in the ecosystem.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Peterson** expanded upon the current laws governing rattlesnakes in Idaho and surrounding states.

Jonathan Oppenheimer of the Idaho Conservation League testified **in opposition** to the bill.

In closing, **Rep. Boyle** stressed it is not the intent of the bill to affect Fish and Game's ability to control the possession of live rattlesnakes.

MOTION: **Rep. Blanksma** made a motion to send **H 156** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

ROLL CALL VOTE: A roll call vote was requested. **Motion carried** by a vote of **9 AYE, 5 NAY, 4 ABSENT AND EXCUSED**. **Voting in favor** of the motion: **Vice Chairman Shepherd, Representatives Boyle, Blanksma, Manwaring, Durrant, Hill, Pickett, Raymond, Tanner**. **Voting in opposition** to the motion: **Reps. Yamamoto, Nelsen, Burns, Necochea, Galaviz**. **Absent and excused:** **Reps. Vander Woude, Raybould, Mickelsen, Chairman Mendive**. **Rep. Boyle** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Rep. Raymond, District 31, introduced the presentation about Utah's Grazing Improvement Program, a model he would be interested in emulating in Idaho. He noted several ranchers work on both sides of the state line, and have seen the benefits of the program on the Utah side. He also noted he is drafting legislation to create a similar program in Idaho.

Troy Forrest, Director of the Grazing Improvement Program at the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, described the Grazing Improvement Program in Utah. Its goal is to help ranchers more effectively communicate their grazing concerns to federal land managers. He gave examples of projects the program had worked on. This includes land management and drilling water wells. The drilling of wells allows many additional acres to be opened for grazing.

In response to a question from the committee, **Mr. Forrest** said many of the wells are on federal land, but part of the program's work is to ensure rights-of-way exist to ensure the ranchers who need them can still have access once the land reverts to federal control.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:46 P.M.

Representative Shepherd
Vice Chair

Cameron Douglas
Secretary