

MINUTES
JOINT MEETING

**SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

DATE: Thursday, February 23, 2023

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW02

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hartgen, Vice Chairman Nichols, Senators Foreman, Hart, Schroeder, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Semmelroth, and Taylor

Chairman Andrus, Vice Chairman Raymond, Representatives McCann, Ehlers, Gallagher, Garner, Pickett, and Sauter,

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Representatives Boyle, Cannon, Nelsen, Mathias, Nash and Roberts

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 Hartgen** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee and House Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:02 a.m.

WELCOME: **Chairman Hartgen** welcomed the BYU - Idaho Agricultural Policy Class of 2023 to the Committee meeting and thanked them for attending.

INTRODUCTION: **House Vice Chairman Raymond** gave a brief preview of the Utah Grazing Improvement Program. He cited Idaho ranked fifth in the nation as an agricultural state with \$11 billion in cash receipts. He mentioned Idaho was home to four new state-of-the-art harvest facilities, it was a testimony to the importance of livestock in Idaho. He indicated with improvement in the landscape, livestock production, and increased stock rates, Idaho could implement a program like Utah. He introduced Troy Forrest, Division Director, Utah Department of Agriculture.

PRESENTATION: **Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) - Grazing Improvement Program (GIP).** **Troy Forrest**, Division Director, UDAF - GIP cited its mission statement, to improve the productivity, health and sustainability of rangelands and watersheds. The program was designed to strengthen Utah's livestock industry, improve rural economies and enhance the environment.

Mr. Forrest mentioned the Rangeland Improvement Act was created in Utah Code Title 4, Chapter 20, §§ 4-20-101 through §§ 4-20-108. This created the GIP and provided the account that it was funded out of. He indicated the expenditures were used for rangeland improvements, control of predatory and depredating animals, control of noxious weeds, and the purchase or lease of lands for the benefit of grazing. It was also for watershed protection and development, and the general welfare of livestock grazing within a grazing district.

Mr. Forrest reviewed Three Creeks Grazing Project. It was patterned from a rest-rotational grazing management style after Deseret Land and Livestock. The project was designed to improve the rangelands, private lands, federal and state lands on which ranchers held grazing permits. The outcome resulted in a one-of-a kind collaboration to conserve rangelands and watersheds in the western United States. The focus was a grazing technique called time-controlled grazing. Activities included building infrastructure for better distribution of water and other

management practices aimed at balancing the landscape to improve resources (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: **Representative Pickett** questioned the use of satellite imagery for monitoring. **Mr. Forrest** replied, there was an online tool called Rangeland Analysis Platform. It was an innovative online tool that quickly visualized and analyzed vegetation data for the United States. It combined satellite imagery with thousands of on-the-ground vegetation measurements collected by Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), and National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

House Vice Chairman Raymond inquired about the types of funding the GIP received.

Mr. Forrest responded the funds came from the state of Utah, various organizations, private funds, and ranchers.

Representative McCann asked about the agreements with the BLM. **Mr. Forrest** replied, the BLM was constrained by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In order for a project to be funded they needed approval on the environmental effects of their proposed actions.

House Chairman Andrus questioned whether there was a guarantee of infrastructure on federal land when it was constructed, and how to measure landscape progress to prove it worked. **Mr. Forrest** replied there was no guarantee infrastructure would not be removed on federal lands in the future. He mentioned they had a global positioning system (GPS) and pictures, that measured the landscape change.

House Vice Chairman Raymond indicated his intention to introduce Legislation to create a Idaho Grazing Program in 2024 patterned after the Utah GIP.

INTRODUCTION: **Leadership Idaho Agricultural Class 43, 2022-2023.** **Rick Waitley**, President, Association Management Group, gave an overview of Leadership Idaho Agriculture (LIA). LIA was recognized as a premier leadership development program in Idaho. It was the only leadership organization in Idaho that worked to directly cultivate leaders in agriculture, Idaho's largest and most influential industry. He mentioned the graduates were among 1,070 that had graduated since 1986.

LIA class 43 graduates introduced themselves, where they were from, and their future plans.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Hartgen** adjourned the meeting at 9:02 a.m.

Senator Hartgen
Chair

Melissa Price
Secretary