

MINUTES
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 21, 2023

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW40

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

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representatives Vander Woude, Blanksma, Manwaring, Tanner, Burns

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.

Chairman Mendive called the meeting to order at 1:36 P.M.

MOTION: **Rep. Galaviz** made a motion to approve the minutes of March 15, 2023. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

S 1143: **Rep. Britt Raybould**, District 34, presented the bill, which would provide seasonal restrictions for antlers and horns to protect wintering big game. These restrictions would bring Idaho's policy into line with surrounding states and set up a specified hunting season for shed hunters to protect herds and reduce stress on them during the winter season.

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

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Worthington** clarified there would be an exemption to the season for private lands and private landowners, and this legislation would only affect public lands. She also clarified Fish and Game does not currently have any authority over antler shed collection at this time. She noted the need for the legislation driven by people pursuing the animals on snow machines, snowshoes, and other methods, and current law does not adequately address the specific circumstances of shed hunting. She said the Department does not intend to add a tag system or anything similar.

Brian Brooks, representing the Idaho Wildlife Federation, testified **in support** of the bill.

MOTION: **Rep. Yamamoto** made a motion to send **S 1143** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Vice Chairman Shepherd** and **Rep. Boyle** requested to be recorded as voting **NAY.** **Rep. Raybould** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Chairman Mendive turned the gavel over to **Vice Chairman Shepherd** for consideration of the rule.

**DOCKET NO.
13-0102-2201:** **Vice Chairman Shepherd** re-introduced the rule to the committee.

MOTION: **Rep. Mickelsen** made a motion to approve **Docket No. 13-0102-2201.** **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Vice Chairman Shepherd turned the gavel back over to **Chairman Mendive.**

Gary Spackman, Director of the Department of Water Resources, continued his presentation on the Department's performance measures. He noted the importance of prioritization in determining the performance metrics the Department uses. He noted concerns about the uptick of pending applications currently waiting for action of the Water Supply bank, as both the timeframe for addressing cases and the backlog of cases has been on the rise. The number of drilling permits for groundwater wells has grown from around 3,000 to around 5,000 since FY 2017, and the Department has been working to ensure quality standards remain high even with the increased volume. He described the creation of a new water district on Jordan Creek in Owyhee County, and briefly described other water district work across the state. He laid out the goal of 250,000 acre-feet of groundwater recharge per year, and he hopes this year's increased snowpack would allow the target to be surpassed.

In response to questions from the committee, **Director Spackman** said the Department is not able to look at every single domestic well being drilled to ensure there is appropriate sizing, and because of multiple water sources it would be beyond the Department's resources to thoroughly enforce. **Rep. Mickelsen** suggested the enforcement of this issue would be something the Department and the committee to begin working on.

In response to further questions from the committee, **Director Spackman** noted an example from last year in Rigby when the Department put a moratorium on use of wells, although the Department did not have the authority to stop use of domestic wells, even though they often had more junior water rights. If some users choose to pay fines and keep pumping, he suggested he has some authority to issue penalties to violators independent of the enforcement authority of the water districts, limited to \$300 per acre for irrigation, and perhaps those limits on penalties could be reconsidered.

Katie Oelrich, Wildlife Staff Biologist at the Department of Fish and Game, gave a presentation on Idaho's gray wolf management plan. The goal of the plan is to maintain a viable, self-sustaining wolf population which minimizes conflict with both livestock and ungulate populations. It also includes improving monitoring techniques through technology.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Oelrich** noted the current population goals of around 500 wolves align with the US Fish and Wildlife Service's 2009 Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Delisting Rule.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:42 P.M.

Representative Mendive
Chair

Cameron Douglas
Secretary