

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 04, 2025

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Andrus, Vice Chairman Raymond, Representatives Cannon, McCann, Ehlers, Garner, Nelsen, Pickett, Sauter, Miller, Beiswenger, Dygert, Leavitt, Mendive, Shirts, Mathias, Achilles

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** none

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 Andrus called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Shirts** made a motion to approve the minutes of January 30, 2025. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Loretta Strickland, Acting Administrator, Agriculture Program Manager, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWC), explained the ISWC Commission supports 50 locally led conservation districts and 10 Natural Resource Conservationists, providing non-regulatory conservation programs, agency administration, and outreach to educate stakeholders on the value of conservation. The Water Quality Program for Agriculture (WQPA) offers cost-share funds for water conservation projects. In FY 2023-2024, **H 352** allocated \$5M to WQPA, funding 51 of 80 proposed projects. Conservation districts leveraged these funds with other sources, resulting in a total project investment of \$17.7M.

Devin Fielding, Treasurer of Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts (IASCD) and the Idaho Hay and Forage Association, outlined the mission of the IASCD to promote locally led, non-regulatory conservation across the state. The IASCD works with 50 conservation districts, supporting programs that improve soil health, water quality, and farm viability. Funding comes from base allocations, local contributions, and grants. He emphasized the importance of infrastructure upgrades for sustainability and the need for wise, collaborative decisions to ensure Idaho's natural resources remain viable for future generations.

Tori O'Neal, IASCD, said investing in young producers and conservation education ensures sustainable land use. Programs like WQPA fund practices that improve soil and water health, while hands-on youth projects foster future conservation leaders. Upgrading infrastructure and collaborating with stakeholders will protect Idaho's natural resources for generations to come.

Chanel Tewalt, Director, Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), provided an update on the quagga mussel infestation detected on September 24, 2023, in the Shoshone Falls Pool, Pillar Falls, and Twin Falls Reservoir. The ISDA has doubled water sampling efforts, expanded watercraft inspection stations (now 23 statewide, with over 1.2 million inspections), and increased monitoring, outreach, and lab capacity. A rapid response was initiated, including a 200-hour treatment using chelated copper. Officials emphasized the urgency of containment, potential fish mortality, and ongoing risks of westward spread. Concerns were raised regarding budget constraints, long-term staffing, and the need for continued public awareness and compliance.

Nic Zurfluh, Bureau Chief, ISDA, said quagga mussel delimiting surveys were conducted from Twin Falls Reservoir to Centennial Park, extending upstream to American Falls and downstream to CJ Strike to track mussel movement. An 8.6-mile treatment area in Twin Falls Reservoir was targeted using chelated copper at 1 ppm over 200 hours. The treatment ran from October 8 to October 19, applying 63,525 gallons, with copper levels monitored until returning to baseline on November 8. Challenges included the complex river system, hydropower facilities, and sensitive species. The response involved coordinated efforts, with two weeks each for survey, treatment, and post-treatment evaluation.

H 24: **Rep. Scott** presented **H 24**, legislation regulating the sale of alternative animal protein products in Idaho, including lab-grown protein and insect-based proteins. The bill requires clear front-of-package disclosures, establishes ingredient listing standards, and outlines penalties for non-compliance. Enforcement would be overseen by the ISDA.

Speaking **in opposition** of **H 24**, were **Elizabeth Criner**, Food Northwest, and JR Simplot Company, **Douglas Jones**, Growers for Biotechnology, **Melinda Merrill**, NW Grocery, and **Pam Eaton**, Idaho Retailers Association. Testifiers raised concerns since national labeling standards already ensure consistency for consumers. They noted if this legislation passes, organizations may be required to use two different labels—one for Idaho and another for other states.

MOTION: **Rep. Cannon** made a motion to **HOLD H 24** in committee. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

RS 32147: **Rep. Scott** presented **RS 32147**, to define terms and establish labeling requirements for alternative animal proteins. The legislation outlines regulatory oversight and enforcement measures, including penalties for non-compliance, ensuring clear consumer information and industry accountability.

MOTION: **Rep. Cannon** made a motion to introduce **RS 32147** and recommend it be sent directly to the Second Reading Calendar.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: **Rep. Shirts** made a substitute motion to return **RS 32147** to the sponsor. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Representative Andrus
Chair

Jayne Feik
Secretary