

MINUTES
Approved by the Committee
Committee on Federalism
Thursday, July 23, 2026
9:00 A.M.
Room EW42
Boise, Idaho

Members in attendance: Cochair Senator Burtenshaw and Senators Harris, Carlson, and Ruchti; Cochair Representative Boyle and Representatives Shepherd and Hawkins; Legislative Services Office (LSO) staff: Alli Olson, Linda Jensen, and Jennifer Kish. Absent and excused: Senator Lakey and Representatives Mathias and Monks.

Others in attendance: Michael Bogurt; Leslie Shirts; Lauren Shirts; Jack Shirts; Frank Schwartz; Gordon Wilkerson, Washington County Commissioner; Vicki Purdy, Adams County.

NOTE: Presentations and handouts provided by the presenters/speakers are posted to the Idaho Legislature's website <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2026/interim/> and copies of those items are on file at the Legislative Services Office in the State Capitol. Recordings of the meeting may be available under the committee's listing on the website.

Cochair Sen. Burtenshaw called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.; a silent roll call was taken.

Land Grant University - University of Idaho

Rob McQuade, Director, University of Idaho Government Affairs, began a [University of Idaho presentation](#), shared by **Seth Vieux** online. **Matt Powell**, Associate Dean, College of Agriculture, University of Idaho, and **Dennis Becker**, Dean, College of Natural Resources, University of Idaho also presented.

- Sen. Harris, during the agriculture portion of the presentation, referred to the research center and asked when it would be fully operational. Mr. Powell said it depended on weather, the price of cows, and there being an increase in the cost of pouring cement. He anticipated that construction should be completed by October 31, 2026, and that working animals should be present by next spring.
- Sen. Ruchti asked whether the [Agricultural Commodity Risk Management] certificates students can receive are an add-on to an undergraduate degree or a stand alone program. Mr. Powell answered that it is an add-on but also a certificate program. He highlighted that growth of enrollment has more than doubled and students come from many different places.
- Cochair Sen. Burtenshaw referred to the quagga muscle infestation, noted the money and time the university spends on researching plant diseases and dairy industry issues, and asked whether the university could help the state with the [Idaho State] Department of Agriculture. Mr. Powell stated that the University of Idaho stood ready to help ISDA as needed, but does not wish to take away funding from them. He stated that, ideally, the university would receive funding specifically for this so that they do not take money away from ISDA. He stressed that quaggas will require a tremendous research program and all of the resources to make a change.
- Sen. Harris asked whether there were efforts in dealing with the screwworm from South America. Mr. Powell stated that there is increased surveillance but the university has not taken on direct research.
- Rep. Shepherd asked whether the university was conducting research surrounding the [chronic waste and disease] CWD issue. Mr. Powell replied that the university was not actively doing anything at the moment.

- Sen. Ruchti questioned funding cuts on the federal and state level and the affects on the ability for the university to "do the work" discussed here. Mr. Powell answered that it affects the ability to maintain some research aspects. He gave an example of the removal of \$11.5 million in research on the federal side during the spring of 2025; therefore, he stressed that state funding becomes much more important.
- Cochair Rep. Boyle, during the College of Natural Resources portion of the presentation, asked Dean Becker about the total amount of money lost to the state after the budget cut and the university having to eliminate an economist for forestry. Mr. Becker said there was no good solution or choice, but it was a convenient location where the cut was made because of a retirement that was happening. Cochair Rep. Boyle asked Mr. McQuade about a case he had highlighted where corporations were held liable for the actions of employees and asked whether that extended to universities. Mr. McQuade stated that he would follow up with the committee.

287(g) Program

Sam Hulse, Bonneville County Sheriff and Idaho Sheriff Association President, provided a [Federal Immigration Partnership Programs 287\(g\) Overview](#) handout to the committee.

- Sen. Harris asked about the cost of these programs to the county. Mr. Hulse confirmed that it varied depending on program models.
- Sen. Ruchti asked Mr. Hulse to explain traditional versus ICE warrants. Mr. Hulse said there is complication to the immigration system and that in addition to criminal warrants they may also issue administrative warrants. He briefly explained some nuances. Sen. Ruchti asked about task force models and when a sheriff is deciding whether to enter into such model, what considerations sheriffs take as it pertains to the relationship they have with the community. Mr. Hulse responded that, primarily, they consider whether you have resources because once you make an arrest for immigration you have to go through a certain process and it might take some time to get the arrested individual to an immigration approved facility. Additionally, deputies must be trained in these special processes. He stated it may begin to make members of the community fearful of the deputies as they may be immigration enforcement officers, which causes community members to be reluctant to report crimes. He noted that there is a lot of work to be done around immigration, but thinks that mandating local law enforcement to fill in where the federal government has failed is the wrong decision. Sen. Ruchti asked about what may be happening in Teton County and gave an example of traffic stops stopping every vehicle. Mr. Hulse stated he hasn't heard about that specifically, but provided examples of what may be happening based on what he has observed within his community.
- Rep. Shepherd asked whether Mr. Hulse has signed up for a program. Mr. Hulse stated he has signed up for the warrant service officer program wherein they can serve documents on behalf of immigration. Rep. Shepherd asked if there is any part of Mr. Hulse's department that is under direct authority from the federal government. Mr. Hulse responded that he has deputies integrated with Homeland Security for homeland security investigations, known as task force officers, who can take direct supervision from a federal agent. Under the warrant service structure, the officers are trained on how to serve the warrants but are not taking direct supervision or instruction from federal authorities.
- Rep. Hawkins requested documentation showing that under the task-force model the sheriff loses direct control over his deputies. He also noted that Post Falls is the first city to sign up for the 287(g) program through their mayor. Mr. Hulse briefly explained nuances based on the types of agreements and operations and offered to provide the requested documentation to the committee.
- Sen. Harris asked about detention centers and the difference between an ICE-approved detention center and a state jail. Mr. Hulse stated the state has its own jail standards and if you contract with ICE, there are additional standards that must be met to qualify as an approved facility. In

response to a follow-up question, Mr. Hulse stated he thinks there are three approved facilities in Idaho but may be off by one.

- Rep. Shepherd asked if the counties are compensated for being an approved facility and if the agreements have a sunset. Mr. Hulse stated that the majority of the agreements do have an exit and that compensation is available.
- Sen. Ruchti posed a hypothetical wherein a deputy goes to ICE training, returns, and is operating pursuant to an ICE mission and in the course of that mission harms someone, which results in a lawsuit, and asked if the federal government would defend that lawsuit and pay for the resulting injury. Mr. Hulse stated that this is a broad, evolving area, and described what is going on in Texas and the U.S. Attorney General's position.

Domestic Sheep Issues on Federal Land

Patxi Phillips, representing the Idaho Wool Growers Association (IWGA), opened conversation surrounding Idaho sheep producers. He introduced **Stan Boyd**, former Executive Director, IWGA, who discussed an agreement included in a [Domestic Sheep Issues on Federal Land](#) handout given to the committee. Mr. Boyd communicated that this issue was a battle and that he had never seen government go after an industry - and not rightfully so. He discussed several pieces of legislation that were introduced to address this issue, some of which were passed into law and others which were not.

- Sen. Harris observed that if wool growers were to be held harmless, it would have meant they would be able to keep their permits. Mr. Boyd responded, "You would think so." He stated that IWGA went to federal court three different times but the Forest Service kept implementing principles that led to lawsuits again.

Harry Soulen, President, Soulen Livestock Company, joined the discussion and related his family's background in the sheep business.

- Cochair Rep. Boyle thanked Mr. Soulen for explaining the difficulties when government does not live up to its word. She expressed the responsibility she felt towards them as her constituents.

Ron Shirts, Shirts Brothers Sheep, introduced himself and provided a testimony that he previously gave to the legislature with current notes included. He described the hard work demanded in the sheep business. Cochair Rep. Boyle noted that an article written by Joseph Shirts was contained in the handout. Mr. Shirts talked about the risks in "seeing the fight through" for their way of life, and said he believed they could win since they were model permittees. He expressed that he did not understand why the agreement was deemed "no good" by the people who signed it so many years after it was signed. He shared events where promises were not kept.

- Sen. Carlson shared that her in-laws went through the same struggles and that when allotments are taken away, a "way of life" is going by the wayside because of the damage that has been done.
- Sen. Harris asked what it would take to get the allotments back. Mr. Shirts replied that everything that took years to build is gone and said it might be too late for him to start up again; however, his brother, Frank Shirts, would be ready.
- Rep. Shepherd opined that the state must take control over public lands since the federal government has failed at managing them. Mr. Shirts concurred.
- Rep. Hawkins commented that after hearing much testimony, state agencies are part of what is attacking people's ways of life and that this committee should push back. Mr. Shirts related one of the most disheartening things was that the state said they had their back and then didn't.

Alan Schroder, Attorney, walked through a [Bighorn and Domestic Sheep Conflict on Federal Land](#) presentation for the committee. He discussed the 1977 agreement, litigation history, and potential actions that the state can take.

Don Knowles, veterinarian, joined via Zoom to offer a discussion on studies and definitions. He clarified that he is representing himself. He expounded on diseases, transmission, and organisms and further elaborated on domestic sheep and best management practices. He acknowledged that the Shirts family understood the science and kept healthy animals.

- Sen. Harris gave examples of cattle disease that comes from elk. He questioned why domestic sheep are being blamed for infecting wild sheep. Dr. Knowles suspected that there was an underlying agenda about the allotments.

Frank Shirts, testified to share what he described as the injustices his family business has endured. He also noted that the countryside is "a mess" after trees were planted where sheep would graze and that the land would burn at some point. He expressed his disappointment that his nieces and nephews are not able to take over the business.

The committee took a lunch break at 12:29 p.m. At 1:49 p.m., Cochair Rep. Boyle called the committee back to order.

Idaho Department of Lands Endowment Land Exchange

Cochair Rep. Boyle introduced **Jake Strohmeyer**, Operations, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), who provided two maps to the committee: [Payette Lake Endowment and Forest Service Lands for Consideration](#), and [Payette Lake Endowment and Forest Service Lands for Consideration Alternative](#). He said congressional action would be necessary for the federal portion of the exchange, which is being worked on. He noted that while Congress may approve, the land board retains the authority for final approval of an exchange. He stated that there are ongoing meetings and outreach will continue with the federal delegation, tribes, affected individuals, and interested community members.

- Cochair Sen. Burtenshaw asked what kind of leases Mr. Strohmeyer spoke to. Mr. Strohmeyer answered that on the endowment lands there are snowmobile parking lot, gravel pit, outfitter and guide, and sheep grazing leases. He said the intent is to work with the Forest Service to ensure lessees can continue operating under existing federal programs.
- Sen. Carlson drew attention to the 15,700 acres on the map, and asked about Section 22, where people recreate. Mr. Strohmeyer confirmed that Sen. Carlson was referring to Ponderosa State Park and confirmed that was not part of the exchange and that the potential exchange would not affect the park's acreage.
- Rep. Shepherd asked whether the exchange would change the authority of who governs water. Mr. Strohmeyer said it would not. Rep. Shepherd asked about estimates of increased revenue after the exchange. Mr. Strohmeyer said it would be a significant increase.
- Cochair Rep. Boyle asked which endowment owns the land currently. Mr. Strohmeyer said he will follow up with that information along with the projected increase in board-foot revenue.
- Rep. Hawkins asked about assurances on grazing leases. Mr. Strohmeyer stated that it is a decision the federal agency would have to make but he did not think that those leases had risks associated with it given that the portion of Payette National Forest that the endowment lands currently adjoins is currently open for sheep grazing, which is a historic use there.

Wolf Depredation Management

Jim Fredricks, Director, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), presented a [Wolf Depredation Management](#) slide show. He gave a brief overview of wolf management and depredation comparisons of wolf, bear, and mountain lion groups.

- Rep. Shepherd asked about potential state management of grizzly bears. The Director stated that the federal government has released a new 4(d) rule, which would allow Idaho to have more management latitude for grizzly bears. He noted that that would, however, not result in immediate ability to reinstate trapping as the state would have to go through certain processes

to get take authorizations and the state would still have certain constraints on it based on how the 4(d) rule is currently written.

- Rep. Hawkins asked how many grizzly bears were stuck in wolf traps. The Director stated that there has never been a grizzly bear killed in a legally set wolf trap in Idaho.
- Cochair Sen. Burtenshaw asked if you still had to get federal authorization prior to dispatching a grizzly bear under the 4(d) rule. The Director stated that the new 4(d) rule, if it goes through, would give Idaho the latitude to make that authorization but they would still be coordinating with the federal Fish and Wildlife Service. Cochair Sen. Burtenshaw asked if the proposed new 4(d) rule would change the trapping rules so that people can go back to trapping wolves. The Director stated he thinks that in time it has that potential but that there will be some processes to get there.
- Rep. Shepherd asked if an out-of-state hunter takes a wolf, can they use their deer or elk tag to tag the wolf. The Director stated that is correct. Rep. Shepard asked if that could be implemented for residents. The Director said it could be looked into.
- Cochair Rep. Boyle asked about the presence of cameras used to count wolves. The Director said those are gone but they have cameras for other purposes.
- Rep. Hawkins asked if it would make sense to give wolf tags to Idaho residents when they get other tags. The Director said they could look into it and noted the wolf tags do provide revenue for the Department.
- Cochair Rep. Boyle asked what wolf tag revenue goes towards. The Director stated he would look into it and provide the information.

Phil Davis, Cascade rancher, walked the committee through a [Davis Cattle Company Wolf Depredation](#) presentation. He stressed that the husbandry side of this is much more difficult. He explained the differences between subcutaneous hemorrhaging and decomposition of an attacked animal, as shown in the slide show. He noted there must be criteria that prove depredation. He expressed concern that his land may not be considered a high depredation area by Wildlife Services since they are not confirming many depredation claims.

- Rep. Shepherd asked how much the animals cost. Mr. Davis stated that the animals cost about \$3,500 a piece in the current market.
- Cochair Rep. Boyle asked Mr. Davis to explain the difference in his terrain versus other places, such as the forest. He stated he is on irrigated pasture and sees every one of his cows every day, which is how they know when an animal is missing and what happened to it. He explained how the adult wolves will train their yearling pups on cattle. He suggested Idaho look into UC Davis for a relevant publication about the cost to producers when their cattle are stressed. He emphasized that "we must fix this thing" with Wildlife Services or in-house, and further noted that Utah cancelled their relationship with Wildlife Services.
- Rep. Shepherd asked if he knew of any instance where a bear or mountain lion killed an animal and "walked away". Mr. Davis said no, that cougars make a kill then bury the remains to eat until they are gone, and that it is only a wolf trait to kill and not consume the remains. He stated that cougars are getting closer to towns due to their food sources diminishing but there have not been kills yet.

Committee Discussion

Sen. Harris made a motion to send a letter to state and federal government reminding them of their 1997 agreement, and to work towards reinstating sheep allotments. Rep. Shepherd seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Sen. Carlson asked that the committee do something about Wildlife Services and Cochair Rep. Boyle suggested investigating. Rep. Shepherd wished to revisit the original bill vetoed by former Governor Otter. Cochair Rep. Boyle concurred and said she was the House sponsor. The bill was suggested to be put before the committee at the next hearing.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:11 p.m.