

MINUTES  
**SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 04, 2026

**TIME:** 1:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Burtenshaw, Vice Chairman Hart, Senators Guthrie, Harris, Okuniewicz, Cook, VanOrden, Kohl, and Taylor

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** None

**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 Burtenshaw** called the meeting of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee (Committee) to order at 1:30 p.m.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Kohl** moved to approve the Minutes of January 14, 2026. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Harris** moved to approve the Minutes of January 19, 2026. **Senator VanOrden** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Harris** moved to approve the Minutes of January 21, 2026. **Senator Guthrie** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**S 1238**

**FISH AND GAME - Amends existing law to provide for public comment and reporting requirements.** **Senator Foreman** explained this legislation required Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) to provide a 30 day public comment period prior to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission (Commission) adopting, repealing, or amending any notices of proposed proclamation on season setting proposals. This proposed legislation had been fully coordinated with IDFG Management and had been endorsed by the Idaho Wildlife Federation. **Senator Foreman** added that he recently learned that **S 1238** might negatively impact outfitters because of the timing involved in the process of setting seasons and issuing tags.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Okuniewicz** asked what the current practice was for this type of comment period. **Senator Foreman** responded 14 to 16 days was the existing comment period. **Senator Kohl** asked if there was a different comment period time frame that would be suitable to him and to the outfitters. **Senator Foreman** responded that could best be answered by IDFG, but he believed there was a solution that would work with the 30 day comment period.

**Senator Taylor** asked if all of the Commission meetings that took public comment would be compressed into the same 30 day window or if they would remain spread out over a certain amount of time. **Senator Foreman** responded that this legislation did not compress all of the Commission meetings into a 30 day period. The process where the Commission reviewed harvest data, held meetings, and requested public comment was a lengthy process.

**TESTIMONY:** **Eric Weiseth**, Executive Director, Idaho Outfitter and Guides Association (IOGA), and **Jeff Bitton**, President, IOGA, testified against **S 1238**. Both stated IOGA was not opposed to public comment, but felt there was ample opportunity to provide public comment on IDFG proposals. They were specifically concerned about the possible outcomes related to March big game season setting. Outfitters received the final numbers on the tags they would receive to operate in the fall by the middle of May, which was a small window of time. If allowing a longer comment period pushed out the March season setting, the amount of time outfitters had to sell their trips would be even shorter. **Mr. Bitton** also stated this legislation did not specify if the 30 day comment period was prior to or after the season setting.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Kohl** asked Mr. Bitton if there was a way to modify this legislation to fit the needs of outfitters while also maintaining the intent of the legislation. **Mr. Bitton** responded there were two things wrong with this legislation. The first was that it did not specify if the 30 day comment period was prior to or after adopting. Second, it did not account for hard winters when collecting data was delayed.

**TESTIMONY:** **Ellary Tucker-Williams**, Legislative and Community Engagement Coordinator, IDFG, stated IDFG did not take positions on legislation. The Commission took positions, but they had not reviewed this legislation. She stated that after conversations with Senator Foreman, she believed this legislation was feasible, but implementation would be challenging. It required IDFG to reassess their timelines and how they collect data. It would be IDFG's intent to adjust timelines on the front end to not impact groups like the outfitters, but there were many moving parts related to when proclamations were published. She explained IDFG provided public comment opportunity at various points throughout the process that was between two to four weeks, depending on how tight their timelines were.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Harris** asked if there was a way to ease the concerns of the outfitters by changing the language in this legislation. **Ms. Tucker-Williams** responded that IDFG's intention was to adjust timeframes on the front end to not impact the March Commission meeting, but there were many factors that influenced the process, and it was impossible to say that extending the comment period would not delay March season setting. **Senator Guthrie** asked what were some benefits to this legislation. **Ms. Tucker-Williams** responded that the benefit of this legislation was consistency for sportsmen. She added that because of IDFG's various timelines, the written comment period varied, although no matter how long that period was, IDFG received most of their written comments on the first and last day of the comment period.

**Senator Foreman** stated the purpose of this legislation was to help sportsmen, but not to interfere with business activities. He was unsure if this legislation could be implemented without a negative impact on outfitters and he asked the Committee to hold **S 1238** subject to the call of the Chair.

**MOTION:** **Senator Okuniewicz** moved to hold **S 1238** subject to the call of the Chair. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**SCR 115**

**SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER RESOURCES - States findings of the Legislature and supports the consolidation of the Soil and Water Conservation Commission into the Idaho Department of Water Resources.** **Senator Harris** explained this was a concurrent resolution that supported the consolidation of the Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) into the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR). This resolution aligned with statewide efforts to review policy, statute, and agency structure to ensure effective and efficient government, including the Governor's Executive Order 2025-06, the Idaho Code Cleanup Act. This resolution also proposed ensuring that the Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the Department of Water Resources retained their core missions. The director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources was also the acting director of the Soil and Water Conservation Commission, so the Soil and Water Conservation Commission director position would be eliminated. This would result in the savings of \$107,000 in personnel costs included in the Fiscal Note.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Senator Okuniewicz** asked why this legislation was a concurrent resolution as opposed to a bill. **Senator Harris** responded this was to avoid interfering with a similar bill in the House of Representatives. **Senator Taylor** stated all of the commissioners in his district supported this legislation. He hoped that going forward, funding to support water quality programs for agriculture would continue, despite the two varying mission statements. **Senator Harris** responded that this was one of the things needing focus, but consolidation, in his view, would help the soil districts by giving them more support. **Chairman Burtenshaw** asked if all of the districts affected by this legislation were involved in this legislation. **Senator Harris** responded that as far as he knew they were.

**TESTIMONY:**

**Tori O'Neil**, President, Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts, testified in favor of **SCR 115**. She believed that this consolidation would provide better coordination and clearer structure. She shared about the development of this legislation, which included the broad solicitation of member input across all districts in Idaho, open conversation, and a structured review process. She believed the districts reached a consensus, which led to a resolution supporting this consolidation at the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation District's annual conference in November. She thought the language in this legislation was clear about the Soil Commission's identity and about preserving their mission.

**Mat Weaver**, Director, Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), did not testify for or against **SCR 115**. He stated he had been the acting administrator of the Soil Water Conservation Commission since May 2025. He supported the testimony of Ms. O'Neill and agreed there was extensive stakeholder engagement and opportunity for people to participate in the process of evaluating this merger. He would review that process in the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee in detail on March 10 and would include slides that spoke to the merger in his IDWR agency update on Monday, February 9, in this committee.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Senator Cook** asked if there was a chance this merger might interfere with his ability to focus on water. **Mr. Weaver** responded that he did not think so, because the Soil Commission continued to exist with all of the duties and authorities that it already set forth in statute. They would continue to be the body that made the difficult decisions and set policy. He thought his relationship with the Soil Commission would be very similar to the relationship that existed between the IDWR director and the Idaho Water Resource Board, who had separate and distinct authorities and duties set forth in statute.

**MOTION:**

**Senator Cook** moved to send **SCR 115** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

- NOTE:** **Chairman Burtenshaw** stated he would reorder the mining presentations at their request.
- PRESENTATION:** **Ben Davenport**, Idaho Mining Association (IMA), spoke about the purpose and history of the IMA and introduced a few of the important mineral projects happening throughout Idaho.
- Thompson Creek Mine Operations Update.** **Don Weeks**, General Manager, Thompson Creek Mining Company, provided an update on and some history of the Thompson Creek Mine, located between Challis and Stanley, in the mountains of Idaho (Attachment 1). He shared Thompson Creek was part of Centerra Gold's molybdenum business unit. He shared Centerra's exploration projects, the general layout of the Thompson Creek Mine facility, their permitting status, their achievements in 2025, and their objectives for 2026. He explained what molybdenum was and how it was used.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Cook** asked how molybdenum was used for nuclear. **Mr. Weeks** responded that it was used in the steel of nuclear reactors. **Chairman Burtenshaw** asked how they started in 1967, but were just starting to dig. **Mr. Weeks** responded that they first staked their mining claims in 1967, started initial operations in 1983, and went into care and maintenance in late 2014 or early 2015. They were in care and maintenance until about 18 months ago. Centerra was now refurbishing the mine and the processing facility. **Senator Okuniewicz** asked how much of the molybdenum on the planet this mine represented. **Mr. Weeks** responded that Thompson Creek did not represent a huge component of molybdenum, which was produced all over the world, but it would produce about 10 million pounds a year over the next 12 years.
- PRESENTATION:** **Liberty Gold Black Pine Mine - Project Overview.** **Matthew Zietlow**, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Sustainability, Liberty Gold, provided an update on Liberty Gold and their Black Pine Mine project in southeast Idaho (Attachment 2). He shared about the Black Pine Project location and setting, about the long history of mineral exploration and mining at the site through the 1990s, and about their plans to restart mine operations. He shared some project highlights, their efforts at community engagement, and their timeline and next steps. They intended to start construction in early 2028.
- PRESENTATION:** **Perpetua Resources Update on the Stibnite Gold Project.** **Mckinsey Lyon**, Senior Vice President External Affairs, Perpetua Resources, reviewed Perpetua's Stibnite Gold Project (Attachment 3). This project was located in the historical Stibnite Mining District in Valley County. She spoke about the history of the area and the benefits of the project, the development and the clean-up of the historic site, and the expected amount of gold and antimony production from this project. She spoke about the importance of antimony, their plan to improve water quality, open miles of blocked fish habitat, and reestablish lost wetlands. She reviewed their project timeline, which concluded with production likely in 2029.
- DISCUSSION:** **Vice Chairman Hart** asked for a breakdown of the property ownership, including if it included patented or unpatented claims or property owned by the State of Idaho. **Ms. Lyon** responded that about 90 percent of the mineral resource was located on privately held land. **Vice Chairman Hart** asked if most of the development was on private land, then were they deeply involved with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to obtain permits. **Ms. Lyon** responded that they had undergone very complex state permitting requirements in addition to federal permitting requirements, including with DEQ. **Vice Chairman Hart** asked if there would be other minerals they would recover besides gold and antimony. **Ms. Lyon** responded they also had silver as a by-product of the mine, and they were constantly evaluating for other materials, but they were only permitted to produce gold, antimony, and silver.

**PRESENTATION:** **Integra Resources The DeLamar Project: An Economic Driver for Idaho.** **Emily Hendrickson**, Manager, External Affairs US, Integra Resources, reviewed the DeLamar Project, which was a gold and silver conventional open pit oxide heap leach operation in Owyhee County (Attachment 4). She shared some of the project's history, their feasibility study, permitting schedule, their relationship agreement with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes, and some project highlights. This was a previously disturbed site in a historic mining district and they hoped their investment would be an economic driver for the community.

**DISCUSSION:** **Vice Chairman Hart** asked if the permitting process was scientific or political, and asked her to share about working with various agencies. **Ms. Hendrickson** responded that over the past five years or so, they had been collecting baseline data at the mine site and moving forward with the Bureau of Land Management on a quicker timeline than projects have seen in the past. She added that this was an incredibly scientific process, but their primary interest was a durable, thorough, and responsible permitting decision. **Vice Chairman Hart** asked if there were any existing permits they were able to utilize. **Ms. Hendrickson** responded they had two existing Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) at the Delamar site and they conducted exploration activities and things of that nature under modifications to those existing EISs.

**PRESENTATION:** **America's Gold and Silver Scaling High-Grade Silver and Antimony Production in Idaho's Silver Valley.** **Peter McRae**, Executive Vice President Corporate and Legal Affairs, Americas Gold and Silver shared some background on America's Gold and Silver and their leadership team (Attachment 5). He shared about the Coeur d'Alene Mining District, historical silver production in the Galena Complex, and the potential of the Galena Complex and the Crescent Mine. He shared on their completed and planned enhancements and upgrades, on the advantages of the long hole stoping method in mining, and recent vein discoveries. He shared some details on the Galena Mine, which was the largest active antimony mine in the United States, and on the Crescent Mine, which was a fully permitted silver mine on privately owned land.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Burtenshaw** adjourned the meeting at 2:55 p.m.

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Senator Burtenshaw  
Chair

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Shelly Johnson  
Secretary