

MINUTES  
**HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

- DATE:** Monday, February 16, 2026
- TIME:** 1:30 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room EW42
- MEMBERS:** Chairman Raymond, Vice Chairman Shirts, Representatives Cannon, McCann, Garner, Nelsen, Pickett, Sauter, Miller, Beiswenger, Dygert, Leavitt, Mendive, Hall (Stone), Healey, Mathias, Haws
- 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 Raymond** called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Haws** made a motion to approve the minutes of February 12, 2026. **Motion approved by voice vote.**
- Rep. Dygert** introduced Idaho FFA state officers; **Matthew Waite, Lizzy Mueller, Emily Sorenson, Gabe Kitamura, Anna Hernandez, and Alie Misenheimer.** **Chairman Raymond** put the committee at ease to congratulate the officers. **Rep. Dygert** introduced **Hadley Brown**, the National FFA Creed Speaking Competition winner. **Chairman Raymond** put the committee at ease to congratulate Ms. Brown.
- H 503:** **Rep. Manwaring** presented **H 503**, explaining the legislation moves the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWC) under the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) to cut administrative overlap and save money, while keeping the Commission's role and responsibilities the same. It's expected to save about \$107,000 in personnel costs, with possible additional savings in other areas.
- Braden Jensen**, representing the Idaho Farm Bureau, and **Mat Weaver**, Acting Administrator of the ISWC and Director of the IDWR, spoke **in a neutral capacity** regarding **H 503**.
- Tori O'Neal** spoke **in support** of **H 503**.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Mathias** made a motion to send **H 503** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Manwaring** will sponsor the bill on the floor.
- SCR 115:** **Rep. Miller** presented **SCR 115**, in support of consolidating the Soil and Water Conservation Commission with the Idaho Department of Water Resources to improve efficiency while preserving each entity's core mission. The resolution encourages collaboration among the Governor, the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts Board, the Legislature, and the Department's Director. The consolidation is expected to streamline administration, reduce duplication, and save an estimated \$107,000 in General Fund personnel costs.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Mendive** made a motion to send **SCR 115** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion Carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Miller** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

**Mathew Weaver**, Acting Administrator of the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Director of the Department of Water Resources, presented the FY 2025 Annual Performance Report, highlighting the Commission's support for Idaho's 50 conservation districts through voluntary, nonregulatory programs. Core functions include financial and technical assistance, conservation loan administration, aquifer and water quality initiatives, and coordination with state, federal, and local partners.

**George Hitz**, Deputy Administrator, reviewed FY 2025 performance and financial results, reporting \$1.58 million distributed to conservation districts and \$2.5 million invested in 16 Water Quality for Agriculture projects. Staff assisted nearly 3,000 landowners, provided extensive technical support, advanced CREP enrollment, and implemented conservation practices on more than 43,000 acres. He also noted strong district satisfaction.

**Tori O'Neal**, President of the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts, highlighted locally led conservation projects—including flood-to-pivot conversions, stock tanks, the Rotary Bridge project, and wildfire response—and emphasized the two-thirds state, one-third landowner cost-share model. In 2025, outreach reached 6,482 students, demonstrating voluntary, family-driven conservation remains effective across generations.

**Britany Hurst Marchant**, Executive Director of the Idaho Wheat Commission, reported the self-funded, grower-governed Commission (FY25 budget: \$3.6 million) supports Idaho's family-run wheat industry through research, marketing, and education. In 2025, Idaho led the nation with 93.5 bushels per acre, producing 106 million bushels—all No. 1 grade—with about half exported to expand markets and ensure long-term industry viability.

**ADJOURN:** There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:09 p.m.

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Representative Raymond  
Chair

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Jayne Feik  
Secretary