

MINUTES  
**JOINT FINANCE-APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 25, 2026  
**TIME:** 8:00 A.M.  
**PLACE:** Room C310  
**MEMBERS:** Senators Co-Chair Grow, Woodward, Cook, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow  
Representatives Co-Chair Tanner (14), Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Harris, Green  
**ABSENT/  
EXCUSED:** Representative Green

**Co-Chair Tanner (14)** called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

**Ms. Janet Jessup**, Principal Analyst, LSO Budget & Policy, provided an overview of the Idaho Department of Fish & Game (IDFG), including its organizational structure. She also examined the consolidated fund analysis and explained the department receives no General Fund support and was funded through dedicated and federal funds.

**Ms. Jessup** reviewed the five-year appropriations and expenditures chart, the FY 2025 expenditures by expense class, and the five-year base snapshot. She noted many requests involved significant onetime expenditures for specific projects or equipment replacement and therefore did not appear as ongoing base increases.

**Ms. Jessup** presented the FY 2027 enhancement requests for the Department of Fish & Game. The requested ongoing enhancements include \$4M for Good Neighbor Authority projects; \$500K for fisheries inflationary costs; \$1.1M for temporary employee restoration; \$64K for customer communication services; \$791K for fisheries facility inflation; and \$279K for Office of Information Technology Services (OITS) software licenses and support. The requested onetime enhancements include \$8.2M for fisheries habitat projects; \$200K for wolf depredation response and control; \$10.3M for replacement items; and \$426K for OITS hardware.

In response to committee questions, **Ms. Jessup** confirmed IDFG was affected by the Rescissions Act. She explained the legislation contained a 3% rescission, an additional 1% rescission, and unallocated Change in Employee Compensation (CEC) funds agencies were required to revert if not distributed to employees. In this case, IDFG did not spend certain dedicated and federal CEC funds, so those amounts were removed from its budget. She clarified the money did not return to the General Fund but reverted to the original dedicated and federal funds within the agency.

In response to a committee question, **Ms. Jessup** explained the request for fisheries facilities inflation included laboratory costs and used a mix of dedicated and federal funds. She clarified the fisheries inflation costs enhancement of \$500K would be funded entirely with federal funds from the Bonneville Power Administration. Although both requests supported fisheries, the funding sources and purposes differed.

In response to a committee question, **Mr. James Fredericks**, IDFG Director, stated the agency had been unable to fully pay deprecation claims in six of the last seven years due to a \$1.8M spending cap, requiring prorated payments when claims exceeded that amount. He noted IDFG's efforts to minimize losses and prevent depreciations and highlighted the need for a sustainable solution, such as adjusting fees or identifying new revenue sources.

In response to a committee question, **Mr. Jon Oswald**, IDFG Administration Bureau Chief, explained the year-to-year fluctuations in the administration budget. He stated the differences reflected onetime projects, with larger requests in some years followed by smaller requests in others and noted timing of federal grants also contributed to the variations.

In response to committee questions, **Dir. Fredericks** indicated the majority of the IDFG budget for predators was devoted to management efforts rather than control, with control efforts focused primarily on wolves. He further explained both the workload and costs associated with chronic wasting disease had grown in recent years. He noted IDFG hired seasonal staff to support these activities and indicated costs would continue to increase as testing expanded to additional areas where the disease had been detected.

In response to a committee question, **Dir. Fredericks** explained the budget overlap between IDFG and the Office of Species Conservation (OSC). He stated both agencies requested spending authority for the same funds because OSC administered the money, such as from Bonneville Power and the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund, before passing it to IDFG. While OSC handled administrative and policy roles, IDFG retained responsibility for managing species and carrying out habitat restoration, creating an integrated process where both budgets reflected the same funding.

**Ms. Jessup** provided an overview of the Office of Species Conservation (OSC), including its organizational structure. She also examined the consolidated fund analysis, the five-year appropriations and expenditures chart, FY 2025 expenditures by expense class, the five-year base snapshot, and the budget enhancements for FY 2025 and FY 2026. She explained the agency's funding came primarily from federal sources, with some non-federal grants in the Miscellaneous Revenue Fund. She noted the FY 2023 \$5M appropriation for salmon migration and IJA projects had not yet been spent, and federal funds could only be used if cash was available. Most funds went to trustee and benefit payments to other agencies, including IDFG.

**Ms. Jessup** presented the agency's FY 2027 enhancement request for \$3M ongoing for fish habitat funding.

**Mr. Mike Edmondson**, OSC Administrator, answered a committee question about the proposed merger of OSC and the Office of Energy and Mineral Resources (OEMR). He explained the two offices already collaborated closely, as most energy transmission and mining projects initially came through OSC due to endangered species requirements. Mr. Edmondson stated OSC managed the federal review processes, after which the projects returned to the state level for permitting, coordinated in partnership with OEMR.

**Mr. Raúl Labrador**, Attorney General, addressed the committee and acknowledged a difficult budget year with cuts across state government. He said he ran a fiscally conservative office, returned significant funds to Idaho taxpayers, and avoided requesting funding beyond a maintenance budget in recent years. He explained he had not anticipated a 3% holdback, but the committee's action resulted in a \$1.6M ongoing reduction for FY 2027. He apologized for not explaining the impact sooner and said the cut would seriously harm his office. He asked for \$980K to be restored to avoid furloughs or removing 12 FTPs, noting most of his budget consisted of salaries, leaving few other areas to reduce.

**Attorney General Labrador** highlighted major accomplishments over the past three years. His office recovered or settled \$242M from tobacco companies, pharmaceutical companies, opioid manufacturers, and others, returning more than twice the Office's annual budget to taxpayers. He also reviewed significant improvements to the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Unit, accomplishments of the new Solicitor General division, and improvements to the Consumer Protection Division. He emphasized FTP reductions would necessitate either unpaid furlough days for employees or substantial staff reductions, both of which would significantly impact the Office's work.

**Co-Chair Tanner (14)** informed the committee many other state Attorneys General operated with significant dedicated funds, particularly through consumer protection funds. In Idaho, a portion of those funds was transferred to the General Fund each year. He noted Idaho appeared unique in relying mainly on General Fund support and wanted the committee to recognize this distinction.

**ADJOURN:** There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 9:46 a.m.

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Representative Tanner (14)  
Chair

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Alyson Jackson  
Secretary