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## Idaho



Courtesy of Bill Schaefer

Idaho State Sen. Michelle Stennett, right, representing District 25, answers questions Feb. 12 in Capitol Park following the Idaho Sportsmen's Rally for Public Lands in Boise.

## Rural lawmakers back federal land transfer report

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

BOISE — Rural lawmakers are backing the recent recommendations of a state-commissioned report, calling for Idaho to invest at least \$750,000 to continue laying the groundwork for the transfer of federal lands to state ownership.

The report, released in late January, included feedback from public hearings and was drafted by an interim legislative committee convened in April 2013.

It asserts Idaho could make a legal case that the federal government, which owns 62 percent of land in the state, has breached its contract through poor land management.

The federal government spends \$392 million per year for wildfire suppression and management of Idaho public lands, according to the Congressional Research Service. By contrast, the report concludes Idaho manages healthier public lands, which also generate an annual return of \$23 per acre.

"That would be a tax savings to the taxpayers of the U.S.," said Rep. Ken Andrus, R-Lava Hot Springs, a rancher who chairs the state's Agricultural Affairs committee. "There's no question we could take the model we use to manage our state forest lands and apply that same model to the federal government."

The report stops short of suggesting litigation against the federal government, noting Utah will likely test those waters. In the meantime, the report calls for the state to reconvene the interim committee and invest \$500,000 for a more in-depth economic analysis of effects on Idaho's coffers. Furthermore, the report calls for spending \$250,000 to fund a permanent working group,

with a full-time staff member and administrative assistant, to implement transfer-related policy changes the Legislature may approve.

Andrus and Idaho House Speaker Scott Bedke, R-Oakley, addressed the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation about the issue during its recent Legislative Conference.

Bedke, also a rancher, stressed no problems resulted when Idaho assumed control of some federal land under former Gov. Cecil Andrus. Bedke believes the state's best bet is to take control of small parcels through transfer "pilot projects."

Farm Bureau also supports the report's recommendations, advising the state to "proceed with caution," said spokesman John Thompson.

Jim Patrick, a Magic Valley farmer who serves on the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee, agrees with moving forward but said his model would be "a little slower and not spend so much."

Critics of the report hosted a Feb. 12 rally outside the Capitol. They argue the state can't afford the expense of taking over Idaho's federal lands. Sen. Michelle Stennett, D-Ketchum, a committee member who coauthored a minority report, said Attorney General Lawrence Wasden has questioned the constitutionality of a federal lands transfer. She advocates greater collaboration with the federal government to address land management challenges.

University of Idaho's Policy Analysis Group estimates the state would incur anywhere from a \$111 million annual loss to \$24 million in profits through a complete land transfer, contingent on timber sales. New jobs from increased timber sales, however, could generate up to \$363 million in new revenue.

# Bill would allow only commercial beekeepers to vote on assessment

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — A bill introduced in the Idaho Legislature would ensure only commercial beekeepers who are subject to the state's per-hive assessment can vote on whether to increase it.

Idaho's 66 commercial beekeepers pay an annual assessment of 5 cents per hive to fund the Idaho Honey Commission's research, education and promotional efforts.

Under Idaho law, a referendum has to be held to change the assessment, which can go as high as 10 cents per hive.

Hobbyist beekeepers — those with fewer than 50 hives — who are registered with the

Idaho State Department of Agriculture can vote in a referendum.

They can voluntarily register with the ISDA and pay a \$10 registration fee, but they are not subject to the per-hive assessment.

Sixty-five hobbyist beekeepers are registered with the ISDA.

"This creates a situation where the hobbyists who are registered beekeepers could have a vote to double the assessment on the commercial guys, but they're not subject to that assessment," Idaho Honey Industry Association representative Jim Lowe told members of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee.

"In keeping with the spirit

of a true referendum, those who are obligated to pay the assessment should be the ones who vote to increase or decrease it."

Jonathan Millet, a commercial beekeeper from Marsing, said it's only fair that those who have to pay the assessment should vote on whether to change it.

The Senate ag committee unanimously voted to introduce the bill, which would also allow the honey commission's three members to be chosen from anywhere in Idaho.

Idaho statute currently says commissioners have to come from each of three districts: Eastern and Southwestern Idaho and north of the Salmon River.

Lowe said Idaho's commer-

cial beekeeping community is relatively small and it's sometimes a challenge to find beekeepers from each of the districts who are qualified to serve on the commission.

"It's not always easy to find people who are interested in serving on the commission," said North Idaho beekeeper Andrew Tuckett, president of the IHIA. "I think if someone is interested in serving on the commission, then they should be allowed to, regardless of which region they come from."

A separate bill that would also do away with the Idaho Cherry Commission's two districts and allow its five commissioners to come from anywhere in the state has been introduced in the House.

## Gould confirmed for another term as ag director

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould told Idaho lawmakers a few days before they confirmed her to another four-year term that she has unfinished business.

Gould said some of her goals include enhancing the department's range program, continuing to grow farm exports and seeking more opportunities for Idaho's organic growers.

"We have a lot of ideas; we just need the time and resources to do it," she said.

The Senate on Feb. 11 voted to re-confirm Gould, the ISDA's first female director. She has led that department for eight years and will become the longest-serving ISDA director at the end of her third term.

Sen. Jim Patrick, a Republican farmer from Twin Falls, said Gould helped guide the department through severe funding cuts during the recession and has presided over the Idaho farming sector's recent successes.

Idaho exports have doubled since Gould took over as director, rising from \$1.3 billion in 2007 to \$2.6 billion in 2013, according to USDA's Economic Research Service.

The state has set a record for total farm cash receipts each of the past four years and net farm



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould, right, speaks with Sen. Abby Lee, R-Fruitland, Feb. 5, following a confirmation hearing. The Idaho Senate has confirmed Gould to another four-year term.

income has set a record for two straight years.

"I think she's done a good job," Patrick said. "The agriculture community has prospered during (her tenure)."

Gould, who owns and operates a ranch in Buhl and has degrees in political science and public administration, previously served 16 years in the Idaho Legislature.

During her second year as director, in 2008, the ISDA's budget was cut by 13 percent.

She told lawmakers her greatest accomplishment as di-

rector "was leading the agency through the worst recession in recent memory while still maintaining services to Idaho's most important industry."

"I spent some years trying to figure out just how to whittle," she said. Now, she added, "We would like to be able to do some positive things."

She said that includes expanding the department's range program.

The ISDA's range photo monitoring program has helped ranchers who graze cattle on Bureau of Land Management

allotments document changes in vegetation they can point to when seeking to renew their grazing permits.

More than 1,600 Idaho ranchers lease 11.5 million acres of BLM land and Gould said demand for that program's services has increased five-fold since last summer.

Gould said the agency would also like to explore opportunities to hold the state's organic producers benefit from Amy's Kitchen and Clif Bar, two organic food companies that have recently located in Idaho.

## University offers pre-licensing training for pesticide applicators

The University of Idaho is offering four pre-licensing training for pesticide applicators with multi-day training events in February and March.

The training is set for:

• Jerome, Feb. 20, Idaho Fish and Game regional office, 324 W. 417 E

• Idaho Falls, Feb. 24-27, ISU Student Union, 1784 Science Center Drive.

• Lewiston, March 3-6, LCSC Williams Conference Center, Fourth Street and

Ninth Avenue.

• Caldwell, March 17-20, UI Caldwell Complex, 1902 E. Chicago St.

The course will cover important material from the study manual as well as extra emphasis on calibration. Study material must be purchased and read before the training.

To purchase manuals and see licensing information, view the Pesticide Licensing Guide at the Idaho State Department of Agriculture web-

site [www.agri.state.idaho.us](http://www.agri.state.idaho.us). Select the licensing and registration ink in the left column.

Cost is \$75 for the private applicator course, which includes the manual, and \$100 for the professional applicator course and includes lunches and breaks.

For program information or to register online, visit [www.extension.uidaho.edu/ipm](http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/ipm) or contact Jaqueline Lucero at (208) 364-4581 or [jaqueline@uidaho.edu](mailto:jaqueline@uidaho.edu).

## Idaho ag exports set record for fourth straight year

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — The value of Idaho agricultural exports set a record for the fourth straight year in 2014 and exceeded the \$1 billion mark for the first time.

That happened despite a significant slowdown in dairy exports during the second half of the year. Dairy sales account for a third of all Idaho ag exports.

The stronger U.S. dollar and West Coast port disruptions also affected Idaho ag exports, said Laura Johnson, who manages the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's market development Division, which released the export data.

Despite those factors, Idaho ag exports in 2014 totaled \$1.02 billion, a 4.3 percent increase over the 2013 total.

Idaho dairy exports reached a record \$353 million in 2014 but slowed significantly during the latter part of the year.

According to the U.S. Dairy Export Council, the total value of U.S. dairy exports increased 6 percent in 2014 to a record \$7.1 billion.

But U.S. dairy export volume declined 8 percent in the fourth quarter compared with the same period in 2013 and U.S. dairy exports by volume finished the year with five straight months of negative performance compared with 2013.

USDEC Vice President of

Communications Alan Levitt told the Capital Press in an email that U.S. dairy exports in 2015 are expected to be below 2014 levels due to more challenging world conditions.

Cheese exports are expected to be down 5 to 10 percent, he said, butter could be down by as much as 60 to 70 percent and whey and lactose are expected to be flat.

The world market is softer this year because of heavy supply from Europe and New Zealand and decreased demand from China and Russia, Levitt said.

"As a result, world prices are much lower this year, which creates more competitive pressure for the United States," he said.

Miscellaneous grain and seed was Idaho's No. 2 ag export category in 2014 with \$135 million in sales, a 5.7 percent increase over 2013. That category was led by vegetable seed sales of \$44 million, rapeseed at \$36 million and alfalfa seed at \$13 million.

Idaho vegetable exports totaled \$130 million, 3 percent more than the 2013 total. That category was led by kidney bean sales of \$22.7 million and green pea sales of \$22.2 million.

The totals are based on Census Bureau data calculated for the ISDA by Global Trade Information Services. The data, which is released quarterly, is based on the zip code of the exporter of record and doesn't capture a lot of Idaho farm products, such as wheat, that are shipped to other states before being exported.

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