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Idaho

Idaho bill aims to reduce irrigation sediment

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

BOISE — A bill moving through the Idaho Legislature would give irrigation districts authority to issue special assessments on irrigators whose practices contribute too much sediment to the water supply.

Norm Semanko, executive director of the Idaho Water Users Association, said the fees would cover costs now borne by the districts of building infrastructure or taking other ac-

tions to clean runoff.

"Every once in a while, we find a land owner who is not willing to correct the problem, and it ends up going as an assessment on all landowners in the district to fix the problems caused by one individual," Semanko said.

The Idaho Senate passed the bill unanimously, and it's awaiting approval by the full House, after passing the House Resources and Conservation Committee March 13 by a voice vote.

An amendment has been added to the bill requiring that districts give irrigators prior notice to fix any problems before incurring a fee.

Semanko said cities had questions about what land could be assessed fees but were satisfied upon learning that the bill applies only to irrigators represented by irrigation districts. Furthermore, districts must opt in to receive the authority by approving a bylaw or resolution. Semanko said a number of irrigation districts

have expressed interest in updating their bylaws in order to participate.

Semanko said irrigation districts have a legal duty to meet minimum water quality requirements, and irrigators testified during discussion on the bill that sediment-laden water reduces farm yields and damages pumps and other equipment.

Semanko said the greatest sediment challenges stem from producers who still flood irrigate, and building sediment retention ponds or adding a

product that removes sediment from suspension, called polyacrylamide, are the most common solutions.

The bill was suggested by the South Board of Control, which represents the Homedale, Idaho-based Gem Irrigation District. Clancy Flynn, South Board of Control manager, said the majority of irrigators are willing to cooperate on solutions to sediment in runoff, but the legislation would help in a few cases.

"It's been a perpetual prob-

lem I would imagine since the beginning of furrow irrigation in the district," Flynn said.

Flynn said pivots that put out water too quickly can also pose problems.

"All districts have to deal with it to some extent," Flynn said.

Flynn said the Gem Irrigation District utilizes drainage canals that return farm runoff, often laden with sediment from flood irrigation, back to the main canal, directly to other water users or to the Snake River.

Idaho cottage foods bill sent back to House committee

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Legislation that would set statewide standards for Idaho's cottage food producers has been sent back to a House committee and its future is uncertain.

The House Health and Welfare Committee sent the bill to the full House with a "do-pass" recommendation after tough questioning from several lawmakers and opposition from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.

But it has been returned to the committee so stakeholders can try to work out their disagreements, said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Clark Kauffman, a Republican farmer from Filer.

Kauffman said the sides can either agree on language for a different bill or choose to go with the status quo.

"I think we'll have to see if we even need a bill," he said. "My goal is to get everybody on the same page and if we don't have to have legislation, that's even better."

The bill would allow people to sell a limited amount of non-risky food produced in their unlicensed home kitchens directly to consumers.

Cottage food producers would be required to register online with the IDHW and put labels on their products that include any potential allergens.

Cottage food producers would not be subject to in-home inspections or licensing requirements and the bill sets a \$30,000 cap on gross sales to be eligible.

Cottage food producers who pushed for the bill said the state's seven health districts, which operate separately under the IDHW's oversight, have different standards for cottage foods.

They said it was necessary to codify the industry in state stat-

ute to provide the industry legal certainty and allow them to operate with consistency around the state.

But Patrick Guzzle, who manages the IDHW's food protection program, told lawmakers the health districts' rules are generally consistent.

That's one of the issues upcoming meetings with stakeholders will try to solve, Kauffman said.

"We're trying to figure out if there is a difference in rules among the health districts or if there is a difference in rules by the farmers markets or whether it's a combination of things," he said.

Rep. Fred Wood, R-Burley, the health and welfare committee chairman, said there is still a lot about the legislation that is not fully understood, including the role farmers' markets play in determining cottage food rules.

"This is just not soup yet," he said, using a common phrase in the Idaho Legislature that refers to legislation which hasn't been thoroughly vetted. "It just needs more time."

A separate cottage foods bill sponsored by Rep. Caroline Troy, R-Genesee, was printed March 12 and is only for discussion purposes, according to several sources.

That legislation is a streamlined bill that codifies the existing practices of the health districts regarding cottage foods.

Guzzle said the department will hold a series of meetings around the state beginning April 27 to hear from stakeholder on the issue.

"I'm hopeful that we can reach a workable solution for everybody without requiring legislation," he said.

For more information about the meetings, contact Guzzle at (208) 334-5936 or guzzlep@dhw.idaho.gov.

Idaho House, Senate split on proposed elk importation rule

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho lawmakers so far are split on a proposed rule that would lift import restrictions on domestic elk from states where the meningeal worm is endemic.

The worm is a parasite that can cause fatal neurological problems in elk, sheep, goats, llamas and alpacas.

Idaho law currently prohibits the importation of domestic cervids — elk, deer, caribou and moose — from areas east of the 100th meridian, which runs roughly from the middle of North Dakota south through Texas.

Idaho commercial elk breeders, who pushed for the new rule, said they need to be able to import elk from states east of the 100th meridian to compete with other Western states such as Colorado, Montana, New Mexico and Oregon, which have lifted similar restrictions.

Idaho's import restriction has limited the number and genetics of elk that Idaho's 30 commercial breeders can compete for, said Rulon Jones, a commercial elk breeder from Firth.

"It's hard to compete with other states because ... all of these states can import elk from the same states we can and also



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press file

Elk at CA Bull Elk Ranch near Richfield, Idaho, are seen in this file photo. The Idaho Legislature is deciding whether elk from east of the 100th meridian can be imported into the state.

from the states we can't," he said.

The proposed rule change would mitigate the risk of disease exposure by requiring domestic cervids to be treated for meningeal worm within 30 days of being shipped to Idaho.

Shawn Schafer, executive director of the North American Deer Farmers Association, told lawmakers that the 100th meridian is the approximate western edge of the worm's traditional range.

Schafer, who supports the rule change, said Idaho lacks

the intermediate host, a mollusk, that areas east of the 100th meridian have, which would make it impossible for the worm to complete its life cycle here and be passed on.

Elk, along with sheep, alpacas, llamas, cattle and horses, are dead-end hosts, which means they can't pass the worm on, and none of those other species have similar import restrictions, Schafer said.

"The meningeal worm is where the meningeal worm can be. God has already taken care of it," he said.

Schafer's testimony was supported by veterinarian Glen Zeborth, who specializes in elk, but opposed by two other veterinarians and members of wildlife organizations. Some of them said lifting the import restriction could endanger Idaho wildlife as well as other livestock such as sheep.

Rep. Donna Pence, D-Gooding, said the testimony on the technically difficult issue was conflicting and she voted against the rule because "I just don't feel we can take a chance of bringing that in."

Clif Bar breaks ground in S. Idaho

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Groundbreaking ceremonies for Clif Bar Baking Co.'s first owned and operated bakery, which will produce two of its energy and nutrition bars, drew a large and enthusiastic crowd here on March 12.

The new \$90 million, 270,000-square-foot bakery will help the company meet

growing demand worldwide and bring more than 200 jobs when it opens in the spring of 2016, company officials said.

It could also bring new opportunities for local organic growers, according to Clif Bar CEO Kevin Cleary.

"We're very interested in locally grown (and) very interested in organic oats," he said.

Cleary declined to reveal the amount of oats the company purchase but said it's "a lot."

The company utilizes 120 different organic ingredients — fruits, nuts, seeds and grain — among its 19 brands and about 150 products, he said.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Kit Crawford and Gary Erickson, co-owners of Clif Bar & Company, raise a shovel of soil during a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of Clif Bar Baking Co. in Twin Falls, Idaho, on March 12.

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