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Idaho

Bill would create dyed fuel enforcement program in Idaho

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — A bill that would create a dyed fuel enforcement program in Idaho has been introduced in the Legislature.

Members of the Senate Transportation Committee voted unanimously Feb. 2 to print the bill, by Sen. Bert Brackett, a Republican rancher from Rogerson and the committee's chairman.

Brackett said his bill would create a basic enforcement program with the goal of stopping any illegal use of dyed fuel, which is also called dyed diesel and is exempt from state and federal fuel taxes because it's only for use in off-road, unlicensed vehicles.



Associated Press File

The Idaho Legislature is considering an enforcement program aimed at keeping untaxed dyed diesel meant for tractors, combines and other off-road equipment from being used in cars and trucks.

bureaucracy with this," he told Food Producers of Idaho members recently. "The goal is not to increase revenue through penalties. It's to increase compliance."

"The whole gist of this

proposal is that it will be reasonable," Brackett said.

Dyed fuel is heavily used in the agricultural, mining, timber and construction industries.

Idaho Farm Bureau Feder-

ation and Food Producers of Idaho both sent white papers to lawmakers outlining their concerns about a possible dyed fuel enforcement program.

Brackett said those papers were helpful as he was putting the proposal together and his legislation addresses their concerns.

Law enforcement officers in Idaho currently don't have authority to test fuel tanks for dyed fuel, which is tinted red so it can be easily identified. Brackett's bill would allow certain officers and weigh stations to do that.

A 2016 report by the state tax commission, state police and transportation department estimated that as much as \$11 million worth of the fuel is ille-

gally used in Idaho each year.

IFBF's white paper challenges that premise.

Based on the report's estimate, that means about 37 million gallons of dyed fuel was used illegally on Idaho highways in 2015, IFBF pointed out. "We question whether one-sixth of the dyed fuel consumed in ... Idaho is illegally used on Idaho's highways."

But IFBF and other farm groups have told lawmakers that they are willing to discuss a dyed fuel enforcement program as long as it doesn't unfairly target agriculture and isn't burdensome.

Brackett's bill would set the fine for a first offense at \$250. It would go to \$500 for a second offense and \$1,000 for a third offense.

The FPI and IFBF white papers oppose joint jurisdiction of an enforcement program with the federal Internal Revenue Service.

"Yes, Idaho will have sole jurisdiction over the program," Brackett said. "There will be no joint jurisdiction with the IRS."

The white papers also called for an outreach and education program before the program goes into effect, and Brackett said that would happen. His legislation would be effective July 1 and require a six-month outreach effort before enforcement actions begin.

That means any enforcement wouldn't begin until early next year.

"That's ample time to get the word out," Brackett said.

Well driller stays busiest in winter

By DIANNA TROYER
For the Capital Press

Rich Scrivner and his two-man crew seek shelter in his "dog house" during winter while drilling irrigation wells in the Raft River Valley of southeastern Idaho.

"It's what I call my trailer," says the Malta resident. "I get a fire burning in the stove, and we're toasty no matter what's going on outside."

Before he bought the wooden dog house, ranchers stacked up round bales around his trucks to provide shelter when he began drilling in the valley in 2003 to help a friend who had too much work.

Winter is his busiest time.

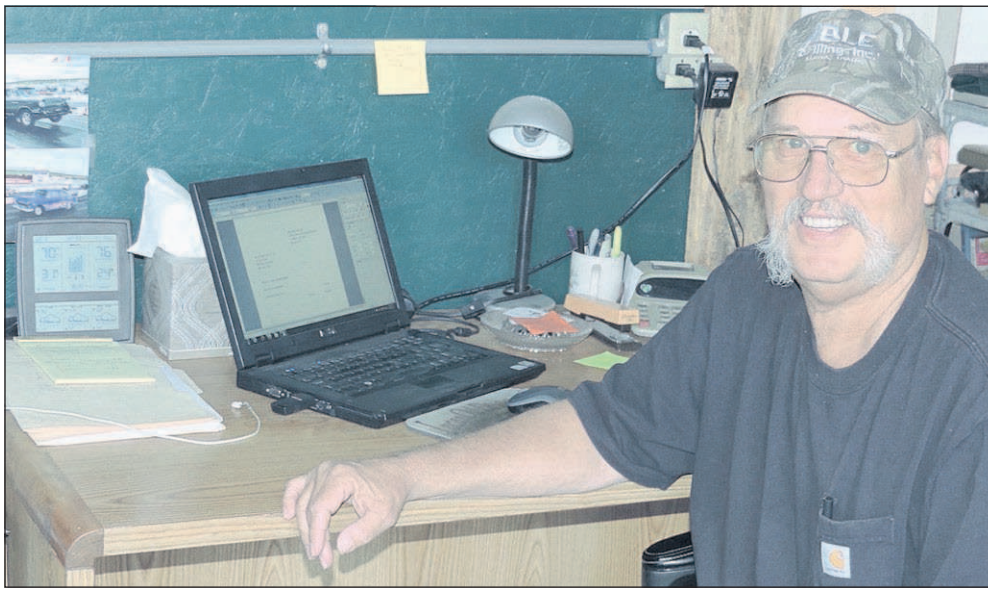
"From mid-October to May, it's go, go, go. Farmers need the water in summer, so I do my drilling and maintenance during their downtime."

Scrivner, 67, says drilling wells has been a gratifying career for decades.

"Every job is different," he says. "You never know what you'll run into. When I'm done, I have a great sense of accomplishment. Like gold, silver, or copper, water is a valuable commodity. Unlike metals, though, you can't live without it."

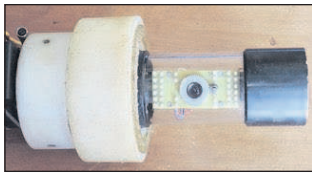
He encourages irrigators to do routine maintenance on their wells.

"It's a lot cheaper, about \$18,000, than drilling a new



Photos by Dianna Troyer/For the Capital Press

Rich Scrivner works on billing when he isn't drilling an irrigation well.



Rich Scrivner relies on a small camera to diagnose problems that require repairs.

600-foot-deep well that will cost about \$180,000 for the drilling, electrical lines, pump and pipe."

For repair and maintenance, Scrivner relies on a camera and a scrubbing device.

"If you're not using a camera, you're making an educated guess about what's wrong," he says.

To remove mineral buildup, he uses a high-pressure pump that sprays 9 gallons of water a minute at 5,000 pounds per square inch.

"That jetter head can make a casing look new," he says.

The area's geology can damage a well. A fault line runs through part of the Raft River Valley, so as the earth moves it often shifts the well casing slightly.

To make it straight and round again, he inserts a swedge, a large cone-shaped piece of metal with a cable attached to it, into the casing.

"Then you beat on it," he says, laughing.

As the swedge descends

and pressure is applied, the casing becomes round and straight again.

He stores the massive tools of his trade along the edges of his one-acre property. Drill bits range in diameter from 16 to 24 inches. They weigh 1,500 to 1,800 pounds and stretch 6 to 8 feet long. Next to them are 150-pound wrenches he must maneuver with a hydraulic winch to tighten the bits onto a drilling stem.

Since 2003, he estimates he has drilled 30 new irrigation wells in the region as far south as Park Valley and as far north as Paul. A typical well provides 3,000 gallons of water a minute.

Oregon professional to lead southern Idaho economic development

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization has hired Connie Stopher to serve as its new executive director, effective March 15.

The announcement was made on Feb. 1.

Stopher has been executive director of the South Coast Development Council in Coos Bay, Ore., since 2014. In that position, she was responsible for launching the council's business retention and expansion program and assisting with numerous business startups, expansions and relocations, which have added hundreds of new jobs throughout the region, according to a press release from SIEDO.

In her new position with SIEDO, she will be responsible for leading the economic development activities in Southern Idaho to develop and grow the region by working closely with SIEDO's executive board, member cities and counties, the College of Southern Idaho, Business Plus (a regional private business nonprofit organization), regional and state agencies and site selectors.

Her efforts will be focused on talent attraction and business recruitment, expansion and retention.

"The region has seen tremendous success over the last several years, and I'm excited to be working with the talented individuals and communities that have supported that growth," Stopher said in the press release.

Stopher brings extensive skills in all areas of economic development, having run a successful similar organiza-



Courtesy of SIEDO

The Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization has announced the hiring of Connie Stopher as the new executive director. Stopher was the executive director of the South Coast Development Council in Coos Bay, Ore.

tion in Oregon, said Dan Olmstead, SIEDO chairman.

"She offers the ability to develop a vision for the region to move the organization and economic successes in southern Idaho forward. She has already connected with several of our regional partners in the interview process and is ready to hit the ground running," he said.

Stopher has also served as an economic development specialist for Bannock Development Corp. and human resource workforce training instructor at Idaho State University.

She earned a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor of arts in political science from ISU.

Brad Wills has served as SIEDO interim director since October, after Jeff Hough resigned in September due to personal reasons.

Water quality impacts pesticide performance

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Poor water quality is often overlooked when pesticides aren't performing as they should.

But water is the main ingredient in a tank mix, and the quality of that water is the first thing applicators should investigate.

Water can make up 99 percent of the mix, so its quality is critical, Ronda Hirnyck, University of Idaho state pesticide coordinator, told those attending a pesticide seminar at Agri-Action on Friday.

Poor pesticide performance could be a matter of water acidity or minerals or suspended solids in the water, she said.

"If you have a problem, remember water quality could be an issue," she said.

The most common complaint associated with water quality is that herbicides aren't working effectively. Most herbicides are weak acids. If the water pH — a scale that measures acidity — is not compatible, it causes the pesticide to break apart so it's no longer effective. That can happen quickly, in anywhere from minutes to hours.

Most herbicides work best in water with a pH of 4 to 6.5. Chemical stability varies, but most herbicides need a pH below 7 or neutral. More alkaline water negatively affects chemical stability.

"The bottom line is you probably need to get the pH down because the mix is not going to be effective," she said.

A pH of 3.5 to 6 is satisfactory for short-term storage. A pH between 6 and 7 is probably OK if it is sprayed within an hour or two of mixing, she said.

Applicators can use a litmus strip to test pH. If it's greater than 7, they should consider adding a buffering agent or acidifier or finding an alternative water source.

Minerals in water can also affect the efficacy of pesticides. Water hardness is the measure of positively charged minerals, and most water is hard. Most pesticides have negative charges. The minerals act like a magnet, absorbing the chemicals in the water. They tie up the pesticide and reduce its effectiveness.

Noticeable effects are seen

in 2,4-D and glyphosate at hardness as low as 150 parts per million, she said.

The amount of total dissolved solids can be tested by evaporating water to dryness and measuring the remaining minerals. Dry ammonium sulfate can be added to water to reduce hardness, she said.

Suspended solids in water can also be an issue in pesticide performance. Some pesticides — such as glyphosate — are attracted to soil particles and will bind with any suspended soil particles in the water, reducing efficacy.

Applicators can test the level of suspended solids by dropping a quarter in a 5-gallon bucket of water. If they can't see the quarter, the water is too turbid. The remedy

is to find an alternative water source, she said.

Water quality issues that affect pesticide performance can be remedied, she said.

"You just need to sample water so you know what you have to begin with. As easy as it is to sample water, it's worthwhile to test," she said.

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