

Inslee: Rural well issue shouldn’t distract lawmakers

GOP senator: Let’s ‘fix Hirst’ this year

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Gov. Jay Inslee outlined his legislative priorities Thursday for the last weeks of the session, a list that doesn’t include responding to the state Supreme Court decision that has closed rural Washington to new domestic wells.

“I think it would be most helpful in many, many places to find some solution to it, but it is not as important as funding the McCleary decision,” said Inslee, referring to the court’s order to spend more on education.

Senate Republicans say they want to address this year both McLeary and the Hirst decision. The 6-3 ruling in October will require individual property owners to prove their well won’t draw water from existing uses. Dissenting justices said the decision puts a massive and likely insurmountable burden on people applying for a building permit.

The Washington Farm Bureau has been among the Hirst decision’s leading critics, saying it will stop families from building homes for the next generation of farmers. Tribes and environmental groups say the decision recognizes that new wells could draw down fish-supporting rivers that already have low flows at times.

The GOP-led Senate has passed a bill to nullify Hirst. The Democratic-controlled House has not advanced legislation, though Democrats have proposed in two similar bills to create watershed-level committees to approve projects to keep new wells from usurping other uses of water.

“I think the House, from what I know of their proposal, has a more stable system ... that I think would reduce litigation,” Inslee said, speaking to reporters. “I’ll have more to say as these bills progress.”

The sponsor of the Senate bill, Moses Lake Republican Judy Warnick, said she was disappointed that the House hasn’t offered a bill and that Inslee hasn’t made passing one this year a priority.

“Obviously, I disagree with his assessment on this. We do need to deal with it,” she said. “It’s absolutely a slap in the face of rural Washington.”

Warnick said she’s ready to talk with House Democrats and come to an agreement.

“My leadership has asked me to negotiate with them,” she said. “But I don’t know what I would be negotiating with. I don’t want to negotiate against myself.”

House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Brian Blake, D-Abertideen, said last week he hopes the chamber can produce a Hirst bill, though no legislation had enough support to move from his committee.

Inslee said education funding was the top issue, but he volunteered other priorities. “There are a handful of other bills that I’m also tracking, and I’m hoping that will be delivered to my desk,” he said.

The list, which Inslee said was not comprehensive, included bills to help the homeless, and crack down on distracted driving and human trafficking.

Inslee placed an especially high priority on legislation to bring state driver’s licenses into compliance with the federal REAL ID Act.

Asked whether a Hirst bill was must-pass legislation, Inslee returned to education funding.

“They’ve got to focus on that. We can’t let any other issues intrude on their ability to get the first job done, which is the McCleary decision. That’s Hirst or anything else,” he said.

In a follow-up question, Inslee was asked whether lawmakers can handle more than one issue at a time.

“Well, they can obviously. What I’m saying is, they ought to focus on McCleary first,” he said.

Idaho FFA officers ready to meet new challenges

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Idaho’s new state FFA officers aren’t exactly sure what’s in store in the coming year, but they’re excited about the proposition of serving the organization.

On Saturday — newly elected and all smiles after a week of State Leadership Conference frenzy — they first wanted to eat, sleep and share their excitement with family and friends.

Lindsey Stowell, 17, from Vallivue, said becoming state president “feels amazing.”

“I’m super excited and extremely humbled they (members) gave me the opportunity to serve,” she said. FFA is an ag-based youth-leadership organization that gives members an opportunity to serve their community and helps them prepare for the future. While the leadership aspect is important, it’s also important to remember FFA’s roots run deep in agriculture, she said.

“As a team, I hope we reach out to as many chapters as possible and branch out from ag classes and visit more core classes,” she said.

She plans to study dairy science and nutrition at the University of Idaho and eventually run her own dairy.

“It’s been an emotional rollercoaster,” said Austen Thomason of Weiser, 18, the new state treasurer.



The new Idaho FFA state officers after the close of this year’s state leadership conference Saturday at the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls. From left are President Lindsey Stowell, Vallivue; Vice President Randy Clements, Clark County; Reporter Taylor Stephenson, Kuna; Treasurer Austen Thomason, Weiser; Secretary Sydney Anderson, Nampa; and Sentinel Peter Towne, Kendrick.

The interview process was long but a great experience. The candidates were the best of the best, and any one of them could have been chosen, he said.

“I’m really grateful. It really hasn’t set in fully yet, but it was an amazing experience and it’s going to be a great year with a great team. I’m really looking forward to what it has in store for us,” he said.

His main mission is to make sure FFA members and guests feel welcome — and to move the organization forward, he said.

He plans to major in agribusiness and minor in political science at the University of Idaho.

State Secretary Sydney Anderson, 17, of Nampa said being a state officer is surreal. She was feeling a rush of emotions and not sure just yet what to expect next.

Her mission, however, is to use her experience to help members rise to their potential, to shoot for more than they think they can achieve and be successful, she said.

She plans to study equine science or agribusiness at the College of Southern Idaho.

State Reporter Taylor Stephenson, 17, of Kuna said she was a little in shock but being

Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

but the adrenaline kicked in with the new officer announcement. The interview process was mayhem but fun at the same time, he said.

“It’s been crazy, it’s been life-changing,” he said.

While he was still somewhat in disbelief, he said his goal will be to make sure everyone knows there’s a place to go and opportunity to grow in FFA and agriculture, he said.

He plans to pursue ag education at the University of Idaho.

“It’s the best way for me to be involved in FFA the rest of my life. FFA is a family; I just want to be involved with my FFA family forever,” he said.

State Vice President Randy Clements, 16, of Clark County said the election process was interesting with unexpected aspects. He became good friends with all the candidates and it was hard to see most get cut in the process, he said.

His goal is to interact with members and help them grow, as well as raising interest in ag education and FFA, he said.

He plans to major in ag education at the University of Idaho.

“I want to be able to help students get involved in the organization I love and also be able to teach students about the industry I love,” he said.

All of the new officers will graduate from high school in May — including Clements, who will graduate a year early.

Next step pondered for Treasure Valley farmland preservation efforts

By **SEAN ELLIS**
Capital Press

BOISE — The group behind a year-long effort to explore options for preserving farmland in Idaho’s Treasure Valley hopes the effort leads to action.

“The goal of our effort was to educate the public and ... create a conversation about farmland preservation,” said Nampa farmer Janie Burns, chairwoman of the Treasure Valley Food Coalition. “We wanted to help inspire action.”

The TVFC brought in experts on the issue from other parts of the country and state to discuss farmland preservation efforts in their areas.

One of the ideas that seems to have risen to the top is the use of voluntary agricultural easements to protect farm ground from development. These types of programs pay farmers a cer-

tain price per acre in exchange for an easement that preserves the land as farm ground.

During the last event of the year-long educational effort April 10, Merrill Beyeler, a Leadore rancher and former state representative, said he plans to ask lawmakers next year to provide funding to help support some type of ag easement program in Idaho.

Federal dollars are available for these types of easements but they require 25 percent matches from the owner and from another source.

In Idaho, there is no stable funding source for that “other” 25 percent match requirement, Beyeler said.

“It’s going to have to be the state of Idaho, I think,” he said. “I will be exploring that possibility.”

He will be joined in that effort by Kristin Troy, executive director of the Lemhi Regional

Land Trust, which operates in Lemhi and Custer counties in Idaho.

Another idea that has arisen during the year-long educational effort is the possibility of asking Treasure Valley voters to approve a farmland preservation levy. The money would be used to fund easements.

That idea is being mulled by the Ada Soil and Water Conservation District, which sponsored the TVFC effort.

6EVOLVED

Utility. Unleashed.

A tractor this size delivers real utility when it’s simple to use.

And the 6E is.

There’s nothing complicated to slow you down. That improves efficiency when you’re stopping and starting throughout the day. Or jumping from one task to the next.

The controls are easily within reach of your right hand. And because they’re intuitive to use, even inexperienced operators can chew through a mountain of chores.

Add in the air-ride seat with 15 degrees of bi-directional seat swivel for more comfort, better visibility and improved convenience ... and get ready for a new level of productivity.

If you’re ready to get more utility from your utility tractor, see your dealer to check out the new 6E. Available with your choice of a 12F/12R or 24F/12R PowrReverser™ transmission, 105-, 120-, or 135-engine horsepower, open station or cab, 2WD or MFWD.



JOHN DEERE

Everything you need. Nothing you don’t.

JohnDeere.com/6E

John Deere Dealers

See one of these dealers for a demonstration

Belcorp Ag, LLC
Modesto, CA

Camp Equipment, LLC
Burns, OR
Ontario, OR
Weiser, ID

Campbell Tractor & Implement
Fruitland, ID
Homedale, ID
Nampa, ID
Wendell, ID

Evergreen Implement Inc.
Coulee City, WA
Moses Lake, WA
Ritzville, WA

Kern Machinery Inc.
Bakersfield, CA
Buttonwillow, CA
Delano, CA

Papé Machinery
Four Lakes, WA
Madras, OR
Merrill, OR
Moscow, ID
Ponderay, ID
Tangent, OR
Tekoa, WA
Walla Walla, WA

RDO Equipment Co.
Pasco, WA

Washington Tractor, Incorporated
Chehalis, WA
Ellensburg, WA
Lynden, WA
Quincy, WA

