
Conservation the Idaho Way

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IDAHO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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2015

Idaho Conservation

**SUMMIT
& TOUR**

**SUMMIT MESSAGE: "KEEP UP, LEVERAGE, EXPAND
CONSERVATION THE IDAHO WAY"**

About the Summit

When Commissioners agreed to host this year's Pacific Northwest joint state conservation agencies' meeting in Boise and also invited EPA officials from Washington DC to tour projects in southern Idaho, it seemed logical to combine them.

So, at the end of several days of touring projects in southern Idaho sponsored by local conservation districts, cities, a county, and associations, we convened a state conservation agency Summit in Boise. It was no small feat and we're happy to say that next year it's Washington's turn.

Representatives from Oregon, Washington, and Montana joined the National Association of State Conservation Agencies leadership and some old and new partners to learn more about Conservation the Idaho Way.

The overarching message delivered by speakers at the Summit? Keep up the good work, leverage resources, and expand Conservation the Idaho Way!

Our cover shows Erika Larsen with EPA's 319 Program in Washington D.C. contemplating a very healthy Marsh Creek riparian corridor on Jim Guthrie, Sr.'s ranch near Inkom. This month we feature photos and info from all four days of dining and touring, and an article about the Summit written by Steve Stuebner.

If you couldn't be there, enjoy! If you'd like to see more, please visit our page on Facebook: "Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission".



Partners Chris Banks (IASCD), Pauline Bassett (Caribou SCD), and Allan Johnson (Conservation Commission) on the daylighted and reconfigured banks of Whiskey Creek near Grace, Idaho.

In this issue:

TOUR PHOTOS

- Day One: Dinner in Lava Hot Springs 3
- Day Two: Lava Hot Springs to Pocatello 5
- Day Three: Twin Falls to Boise 6
- Day Four: Boise River System 7
- Day Five: Idaho Conservation Summit 10

- SUMMIT MESSAGE: Keep up, leverage, expand Conservation the Idaho Way 4

- TOUR & SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS 12

DAY ONE: DINNER IN LAVA HOT SPRINGS

There's too little space and too many photos to identify everyone. Please contact us if you'd like more info.



Caribou SCD sponsored an excellent dutch oven dinner. Pictured are Caribou supervisors and staff, and members of the Banks family, caterers.



From left, Nick Peak, Bill Stewart, Ralph Fisher, Idaho EPA, and the Commission's George Hitz.



Former Commission employee Steven Smith (now DEQ 319 Program) and members of the Banks family.



Lisa Transtrum and her Bear Lake SWCD supervisors.



Chris Banks, Conservation Basics LLC, Autumn Banks, and Delwyne Trefz, Commission district support specialist.

The Commission thanks the Caribou SCD for warm hospitality and hard work in providing Tour participants with a fabulous meal! It was a great kickoff to the Summit week.

Thanks also to the following individuals: Wilder Hatch, John Lau, Rulon Wistiseu, Pauline Bassett, Caribou District; Chris & Autumn Banks, Conservation Basics; John, Rhonda Banks & the Banks family; Garth Boehme, Mark Parker, Lisa Transtrum, Bear Lake SWCD; Tana Beckstead, Haydn Carson, Franklin SWCD; Anita Hamann, Division of Financial Management; Ray Houston, Legislative Services Office; Carolyn Firth, Allan Johnson, Dave Radford, Jerry Trebesch, Leon Slichter, Norman Wright, George Hitz, Delwyne Trefz, Conservation Commission; Perry Beale, Washington Conservation Commission; Kit and Connie Tillotson, Idaho Association of Conservation Districts; Steven & Cindy Smith, DEQ; Allison Wiedeman, Bill Stewart, Nick Peak, Erika Larsen, and Ralph Fisher, EPA.

If we've neglected to mention anyone, please forgive us. We appreciate you too. What a fun evening!



Lt. Governor Brad Little welcomes attendees to the 2015 Idaho Conservation Summit.

SUMMIT MESSAGE: KEEP UP, LEVERAGE, EXPAND CONSERVATION THE IDAHO WAY

By Steve Stuebner

During a week-long series of soil and water conservation tours in southern Idaho in the third week of July, Idaho conservation leaders and Environmental Protection Agency officials were impressed with the results.

H. Norman Wright, chairman of the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, attended the full week of tours, which included water-quality improvement projects on Pebble Creek and Whiskey Creek in Eastern Idaho as well as wetlands enhancement projects to catch sediment and filter phosphorous in Twin Falls and Boise. The group also toured drip-irrigation demonstration projects in Canyon County, among other stops.

The voluntary projects are led by local farmers and conservation districts, with assistance from partners such as the Conservation Commission, state and federal agencies and non-profit conservation groups.

"These farmers and producers are doing

way more than anybody could have imagined," Wright said. "We only saw projects in SE Idaho, the Magic Valley and Western Idaho, and I know that North Idaho and Eastern Idaho producers are doing very similar exemplary work.

"It just makes me want to thump my chest and say, it really makes me proud to be an Idahoan to see all of these things happening to improve our environment."

Added Jim Werntz, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency office in Idaho, "There were some really great projects with big results. It's amazing how much gets done with those 319 funds in Idaho."

After three days of tours, the Conservation Summit culminated with a keynote address by Amos Eno of the Resources First Foundation and an unprecedented round-table discussion by multiple state and federal agencies that are engaged in a wide diversity of conservation projects in Idaho and

neighboring states.

"Let's start telling our stories together," said Teri Murrison, administrator of the Conservation Commission. "We need to aggregate our successes and share that information with decision makers and the public."

Lt. Gov. Brad Little opened the Conservation Summit by complimenting farmers, district officials, the Conservation Commission and Natural Resources Conservation Service for the many results yielded by conservation partnerships. "Endangered species issues get all the attention, but the most important thing is to protect the soil and water -- you take care of those two things and everything else will follow."

Eno encouraged Idaho's conservation leaders to step up investments in private land conservation because of the value of fish and wildlife resources and biodiversity on private lands. "Private lands are five times as important as other lands because they

SUMMIT, Cont. on Page 9

DAY TWO: LAVA HOT SPRINGS TO POCATELLO



Traveling on the bus for most of the day allowed folks to discuss the projects they were seeing.



The State Revolving Fund riparian restoration of an old dairy site on Trout Creek was a joint project of Caribou SCD and Soda Springs.



Participants visited Pacific Corp.'s Cove Power Plant, decommissioned as part of a settlement agreement during the FERC process.



Senator Jim Guthrie, Jr. talked about all the riparian improvements his parents Jim & Carol Guthrie have made to Marsh Creek, reducing bank failure and erosion.

The Commission thanks Mayor Jim Smith, Soda Springs, for the great lunch, Commission Chair Steve Hayden & Linda Tigert, Bannock County; Hana Sanger, City of Pocatello; the Portneuf District for a wonderful dinner, and the Franklin, Bear Lake, and Oneida SCDs for very interesting (and entertaining) presentations.

Thanks to the following: Pauline Bassett, Caribou SCD; Chris Banks; Garth Boehme, Mark Parker, Lisa Transtrum, Bear Lake SWCD; Chris Hatch, Tana Beckstead, Haydn Carson, Franklin SWCD; Anita Hamann, Division of Financial Management; Ray Houston, Legislative Services Office; Carolyn Firth, Allan Johnson, Dave Radford, Jerry Trebesch, Leon Slichter, Norman Wright, George Hitz, Delwyne Trefz, Conservation Commission; Dave Schmidt, Larry Mickelsen, NRCS; Perry Beale, Washington Conservation Commission; Lynn Vanevery, Bruce Olenick, Steven Smith, DEQ; Allison Wiedeman, Bill Stewart, Nick Peak, Erika Larsen, and Ralph Fisher, EPA; and Kerry Christiansen, Cent./No. Bingham SWCD. Thanks to landowners: Nathan Hale, Jim & Carol Guthrie, Kent Clegg, Michael & Ashley Tingey, Max & Teri Nichols, Joe Frank & Lisa Swenson, Mike & Roxie Holsten, and Cameron & Janell Williams.

If we've neglected to mention anyone, please forgive us. We appreciate you too!



At the Pebble Creek Restoration site, Delwyne Trefz went over the amount of state funding available annually to local conservation districts.

DAY THREE: TWIN FALLS TO BOISE



Jay Barlogi, Twin Falls Canal Co., shows a significant improvement in water quality as a result of the Lower Perrine Wetlands project.



Brian Olmstead, Twin Falls Canal Co., explains the complicated system of historic tunnels built to move water under and across the Magic Valley.



The W Drain near Malad Gorge provides wastewater from the Northside Canal to irrigate 230 acres in the Hagerman Valley, replacing spring water which now flows into the Snake River.



The Si-Ellen Dairy near Jerome is a confined animal feeding operation that marries agricultural production with responsible resource management practices.

The Commission thanks the Roth family, owners of Si-Ellen Dairy, and Idaho Dairymen's Association for a fantastic lunch.

Thanks also to the following individuals: Brian Olmstead and Jay Barlogi of the Twin Falls Canal Company; Terry Patterson, College of Southern Idaho's fish hatchery; Maryellen Roth; Mike Roth; Bob and Randy Naerebout, Idaho Dairymen's Association; Wyatt Prescott, Britany Hurst, Idaho Cattle Association; Brian Oakey, IDSA; Steve Thompson, NRCS; Anita Hamann, Division of Financial Management; Ray Houston, Legislative Services Office; Carolyn Firth, Leon Slichter, Norman Wright, Rob Sharpnack, Delwyne Trefz, Conservation Commission; Perry Beale, Washington Conservation Commission; Balthasar Buhidar, Greg Eager, Mindy Reynolds, and Katie Shewmaker, DEQ; Glen Gier, Snake River SWCD & IASCD; Allison Wiedeman, Bill Stewart, Nick Peak, Erika Larsen, and Ralph Fisher, EPA.

If we've neglected to mention anyone, please forgive us. We appreciate you too!



Si-ellen Dairy employs over 200 employees., many of them from Burma.

DAY FOUR: BOISE RIVER SYSTEM



Overlooking Hyatt Hidden Springs Reserve in Boise, an urban stormwater treatment system.



Ada SWCD Chair Glen Edwards and grandson, standing next to one of two no-till drills rented to farmers in Ada and Canyon Counties.



Bob McKellip, landowner, Canyon SWCD supervisor, with tubing from his drip system for mint fields



The Dixie Drain is the site of a City of Boise Phosphorus Offset Project insuring water quality goals are met for water returned to the Boise River.



Considerable work has been done on the Project. When complete, it will allow Boise to meet its phosphorus removal requirements in its EPA discharge permit by treating the Dixie Drain, an agricultural drain high in phosphorus in lieu of costly mechanical upgrades at the city's treatment facilities.



Ready to tour the Project.

DAY FOUR: BOISE RIVER SYSTEM, (CONT.)



Kasey Garrett, Aqua Irrigation, at E&B Farms' permanent drip system on hops.



E&B Farms' pump system.



Oregon Conservation Commission Barbara Boyer, Manette Simpson, and Whitney Collins take advantage of a bit of shade.



After a long day, the tour bus headed back to Boise.

The Commission thanks the Ada SWCD for providing lunch, and to Lance Holloway, DEQ; Jim Wyllie, City of Boise; Glen Edwards, Ada SWCD; Bob McKellip, McKellip Farms; Vincent Tromboli & City of Boise Staff at Dixie Drain site; and Kasey Garrett, Aqua Irrigation at E&B Farms.

Thanks also to the following individuals: Curtis Elke, Paris Edwards, NRCS; Ray Houston, Legislative Services Office; Paul Calverly, Ada SWCD; Carolyn Watts, Cheryl Wilson, Rhonda Yadon, Delwyne Trefz, Leon Slichter, Norman & Kathy Wright, Conservation Commission; Perry Beale, Washington Conservation Commission; Barbara Boyer, John Byers, Whitney Collins, Tim Kerns, Manette Simpson, Oregon Conservation Commission; Mike Brown, NASCA; Steve Stuebner, Stuebner Public Relations; Jayson Pyron, USFWS; Bas Hargrove, TNC; Jim Wertz, Bill Stewart, Nick Peak, Erika Larsen, and Ralph Fisher, EPA.

If we've neglected to mention anyone, please forgive us. We appreciate you too!

SUMMIT, *Cont. from Pg. 1*

control all the water,” Eno said. “They host the vast majority of both wetlands (70%) and endangered species habitats (75%). Private lands are our reservoirs of biodiversity. These lands have our greatest potential for conservation.”

Eno quoted Aldo Leopold, “The geography of conservation is such that most of the best land will always be held privately for agricultural production. The bulk of responsibility for conservation thus necessarily devolves upon the private custodian, especially the farmer.”

Murrison observed that traditional Conservation partners’ (Commission, local conservation districts, and NRCS) efforts



Keynote speaker Amos Eno, Resources First Foundation and Private Landowner Network.

are proof that Conservation the Idaho Way is working. She also said that when the accomplishments of other conservation efforts are added, Idaho has a very impressive record of accomplishments. It’s time, she said, to look beyond the traditional and incorporate new partners.

Accomplishments of Idaho’s traditional partners in 2014 included implementing conservation systems on 193,625 acres of cropland and on 107,090 acres of other land use types. Grazing and pasture management systems were implemented on over 539,000 acres, and 487 acres of riparian areas were protected, restored, enhanced, and created.

Additionally, joint state and federal efforts on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement

Program (which conserves water by removing marginal farm ground from production in exchange for \$130 per acre annual payments by the Farm Service Agency to landowners) totaled almost 590,000 participating acres.

Reporting on private land conservation efforts in Idaho via the Sect. 319 grant process, Jennifer Martin of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality said 35 EPA/DEQ 319 projects were completed in 2014, reducing nitrogen by over

60,000 pounds per year, phosphorous by over 49,000 pounds, and sediment by almost 12,000 pounds.

Enos, as well as numerous other participants in the Conservation Summit, pondered how to raise more funds for conservation projects on private land, since there is a large backlog of projects competing for \$1.5 million in Sect. 319 grants statewide. Enos suggested that Idaho ranchers could create a “cattlemen’s land trust” similar to the California Rangeland Trust, Colorado Cattlemen’s Ag Land Trust, or the Texas Ag

Land Trust.

The Lemhi Regional Land Trust, founded a number of years ago in Salmon, Idaho, is a positive example, he said. Dustin Miller of the Idaho Governor’s Office of Species Conservation, noted in his speech that a recent conservation purchase had occurred in the Lemhi Valley in which a 5,000-acre conservation easement had been purchased along the Lemhi River, which, combined with existing easements on neighboring ranches, will protect 20 miles of



On left, EPA’s Idaho Administrator Jim Wertz, and Commission Chair Norman Wright.

the Chinook salmon spawning habitat on the river, or 60 percent of all the spawning habitat on the Lemhi River.

“The land will stay as a working cattle ranch,” Miller said. “But these projects show the compatibility of ranching and fish conservation.”

To form a statewide Ag land trust would require a major fund-raising effort, Eno said. “You have to get out your tin cup!” Several other Idaho groups are exploring how to come up with more state or private funds for conservation projects.

Everyone agreed that the NRCS’ Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) represents the “gold standard” of private land conservation efforts to protect, enhance and preserve sage grouse habitat. From 2010-2014, there were 121 SGI contracts signed by property owners in Idaho, leading to the investment of \$10 million in conservation actions protecting 459,000 acres of private land for sage grouse and 27 conservation



DAY FIVE: IDAHO CONSERVATION SUMMIT



The Summit was held in a room overlooking the Capitol and the mountains beyond.



Ada SWCD Chair Glen Edwards welcomes Summit to Boise, Commission Chair Norman Wright looks on.



Art Beal & Benjamin Kelly, IASCD, set up for the Summit.



Commission Chair Norman Wright did a great job emceeding.



Mike Brown (NASCA executive director) and Shana Joy (NASCA President) listen intently to state updates during the afternoon session.



Chair Norman Wright introduces keynote speaker Amos Eno.

SUMMIT, *Cont. from Pg. 9*

easements protecting 54,000 acres. "This is huge!" Miller said.

In visiting several drip irrigation projects in the Treasure Valley, conservation leaders were impressed with the results. Canyon County farmer Bob McKellip shared the outcome of a drip irrigation project on a field where he's grown sugar beets, peppermint and wheat. On the mint crop, he got a 35 percent increase in yield with the drip system, while using half the water and half the fertilizer, compared to using conventional furrow irrigation.

The \$85,000 drip system was funded with a Sect. 319 water quality grant, cost-shared by the farmer. "This system would pay off in three years without the grant," he said.

Previously, the farm fields along Elm Road used to have an annual erosion rate of 3.32 tons of sediment per acre, which flowed



Construction is underway on the City of Boise's phosphorus offset project at the Dixie Drain.

into Five Mile Creek. There also was dissolved phosphorous runoff from the field. Under the drip system, "there is zero runoff," McKellip said.

"This system is working very well from a conservation and economic perspective," said Delwyne Trefz, district support services coordinator for the Conservation Commission. "This project alone has potential to save 24 tons of sediment per year, 48 pounds of phosphorous per year, plus 540 acre-feet of water savings per year. These drip projects are awesome projects!"

The plastic tubes are buried 7 inches deep in the soil, so it's possible to harvest a sugar beet crop without disrupting the drip sys-

tem, McKellip said. He hopes to keep it in the field for 8-10 years. Rodent control is key to preserve the plastic water lines, he said.

Ralph Fisher, former NRCS agronomist who works for the EPA in Idaho, said he thought the efficiency of the drip system is what may be needed to conserve water in times of drought in the future. "If you think about what's happening with the drought in California, we should be starting to look at efficiencies to carry us through times of drought, and the drip systems are a good example of that."

The only barrier to expanding drip irrigation systems are the cost. High-value crops like onions can support the cost of converting to drip irrigation, but it takes longer to pay off drip systems serving lower-value crops. "Sixty percent of the onion fields in Idaho are on drip irrigation," McKellip said.

Next, the conservation tour visited the Dixie Drain project near Parma, an innovative phosphorous reduction project that's under construction at the moment. It will be operational in June 2016, according to Sean Wilson, a chemical engineer and project manager for the City of Boise Public Works. McAlvain Construction is building the facility.

The project is designed to remove 140 pounds of phosphorous from the Dixie Drain Ag return flow before cleaner water is released to the lower Boise River by running Ag return flows through a series of settling ponds where chemicals are applied to reduce the phosphorous. EPA officials like the project because it's possible to



The Dixie Drain.

measure the results.

The \$16 million Dixie Drain project benefits the lower Boise River water-quality effort. It is being paid for by Boise urban residents who are served by the Boise wastewater treatment plant. The goal is to remove 1.5 pounds of phosphorous from the Dixie Drain for every 1 pound of phosphorous released into the river from the Boise treatment plant.

The goal of the TMDL plan for the lower Boise River is to reach a phosphorous standard of .07 micrograms per liter of total phosphorous in the lower Boise River, compared to .5 today. That is a big step forward that'd be hard to achieve through any other means, officials said.

"This is the project that broke the logjam for the lower Boise TMDL," Werntz said. "You have to credit the City of Boise for forging ahead. They've gotten through a lot of hurdles to get it done. We're pretty excited about it."



Boise project manager Vince Trimboli explains the design of the Dixie Drain.

SUMMIT, *Cont.. from Pg. 11*

Washington Conservation Commission Executive Director Mark Clark brings Summit participants up to speed on efforts in Washington's progress. On left, Oregon Commission's John Byers.

Barry Burnell, administrator of the water quality division at the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, said he sees big opportunities for additional cooperative projects that benefit farmers in the lower Boise River and cities upstream. Cities could partner with farmers to reduce phosphorous on Ag return flows to receive credits for phosphorous loading upstream, he said.

"I'm really excited about the prospects of pollution trading in the Treasure Valley," he said. □

Boise writer Steve Stuebner specializes in covering conservation success stories for the Conservation Commission.

SUMMIT & TOUR PARTICIPANTS

Once again, the Commission deeply appreciates the contributions and participation of the following (with affiliation acronyms).

Governor Butch Otter & Lt. Governor Brad Little; Amos Eno, Resources First Foundation; Allison Wiedeman, Erika Larsen, Jim Wernitz, Nick Peak, Bill Stewart, EPA; Commissioners Norman Wright, Dave Radford, Jerry Trebesch, Leon Slichter, and Allan Johnson, Carolyn Firth, George Hitz, Carolyn Watts, Cheryl Wilson, Delwyne Trefz, Rhonda Yadon, ISWCC; Kristina Fugate, ID AG; Kit Tillotson, Art Beal, Glen Gier, Benjamin Kelly, IASCD; Perry Beale, Mark Clark, Ron Schultz, WA Conserv. Commission; John Byers, Barbara Boyer, Mannelle Simpson, Tim Kerns, and Whitney Collins, OR Conserv. Commission; Shana Joy, Mike Brown, NASCA; Dustin Miller, Josh Uriarte, OSC; Tom Schultz, Sharla Arledge, Emily Callihan, & Karen Sjoquist, IDL; Brian Oakey, ISDA: Sal Palazzolo, IDFG; Bill Maslen & Pat Zimmer, BPA; Curtis Elke, Steve Thompson, Paris

Edwards, Dave Schmidt, Larry Mickelsen, NRCS; John Tippets, Barry Burnell, Lance Holloway, Jennifer Martin, Dave Pisarski, Julia Achabal, David Anderson, Katie Carberry, Greg Eager, Bruce Olenick, Mindy Reynolds, Katie Shewmaker, Steven Smith, Lynn Vanevery, Tim Wendland, DEQ; Anita Hamann, DFM; Ray Houston, LSO; Lisa Transtrum, Garth Boehme, Mark Parker, Bear Lake SWCD; Pauline Bassett, Wilder Hatch, John Lau, Rulon Wiltiseu, Caribou SWCD; Glen Edwards, Joan Cloonan, Paul Calverley, Ada SWCD; Wendy Green, Adams SWCD; Kerry Christiansen, Central/North Bingham SCD; Hannah Singer, City of Pocatello; Laurel Sayer, Coalition of Idaho Land Trusts; Chris Banks, Conservation Basics LLC; Linda Tigert, Chair Steven Hadley, Bannock County; Tana Beckstead, Haydn Carson, Chris Hatch, Franklin SCD; Brian Olmstead, Jay Barlogi, Twin Falls Canal Co.; Terry Patterson, CSI; Wyatt Prescott, Britany Hurst, Idaho Cattle Association; Bob & Rick Naerebout, Idaho Dairymen's Assoc.; Doug Jones, Clean Water Partners; Mark Bostrom, DNR-MT Conservation Agency; Bas Hargrove, TNC; David Mabe, NOAA; Pegi Long, Power SWCD; Steve Stuebner, Stuebner PR; Doug Newbold, Weiser River SWCD; Jason Pyron, USFWS; Torrie Cope, Idaho Press-Tribune; Cindy Snyder, Magic Valley.com; Ben Lyda, KMVT; Mayor Jim Smith, Soda Springs; Mayor Brian Blad, Pocatello; Chair Wilder Hatch, Caribou SCD; Kevin Koester, Portneuf SWCD; Nathan Hale; Jim Sr. & Carol Guthrie; Senator Jim Guthrie Jr.; Kent Clegg; Michael & Ashley Tingey; Max & Terry Nichols; John & Rhonda Banks; Joe Frank & Lisa Swenson; Mike & Roxie Holsten; Cameron & Janell Williams; Robin Haderler, Jim Wyllie, Vince Trimboli, Boise; Bob McKellip, McKellip Farm; Kasey Garrett, Aqua Irrigation; and Maryellen & Mike Roth, Si-Ellen Farms. □

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Conservation the Idaho Way: Sowing Seeds of Stewardship