

Public Lands Committee

September 26, 2022 | 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Boise Centre | Room 130

MEETING AGENDA

Call to Order | *Chair Wayne Butts*

Idaho County Commissioner Skip Brandt made a motion to approve the minutes from February 2022, Twin Falls County Commissioner Jack Johnson seconded. Motion carried.

WOTUS Update and Roundtable

EPA is going through a comment period on the new proposed rule. There was a listening session with the EPA, but it wasn't very fruitful. There were commissioners from each state, the water users' group, conservation groups, and the state executives. We were hoping to get confirmation for a follow up meeting, but it doesn't look like that is going to happen. It is in regard to drainage areas.

Wind Turbines

We are having issues with these turbines being proposed on public lands. Our citizens are largely against this. There is tax revenue; however, the county is not interested. We like our public lands the way they are. These new turbines are being proposed to be up to 740' tall. They kill birds of prey as well as there are other issues for wildlife. There are two projects going on currently. Four counties have all passed resolutions in opposition to these projects. We are trying to get the governor's office involved in this opposition. They aren't on public lands yet but as soon as there is one, it will open the door to having them everywhere. The electricity generated doesn't even benefit Idaho. The electricity goes out of the state. Maybe NACo could join us in this fight. The turbines are owned by corporations.

There are three different companies that own the turbines in Bonneville County and are all on private land. Washington County has also been approached to have these on public lands.

Commissioners will work with IAC to address this issue. Maybe a policy document could be developed. Please send all resolutions to Skip Brandt.

NACo Update – Jonathan Shuffield

- SRS/PILT – Formula and election
Counties are going to receive \$549M in funds this year. Idaho had a great showing at the PILT fly in. FY23 starts on Saturday. Congress hasn't passed the appropriations bills yet. They will probably pass a continuation so there isn't a government shutdown. We have strong support for PILT and SRS from both the house and senate appropriations committees.

SRS – counties received a three-year extension on the reauthorization. That was done at the 2017 funding levels. Funding will stay level for the next three years. Summer of 2023 counties will be able to elect 25% or SRS. Then they will also again elect the % of title 1, title 2, and title 3.

- Local Tribal Assistance Fund
This new batch of money (\$1.5B) will be for eligible revenue sharing counties and will be split into two years. These funds are to be pointed towards PILT and SRS counties. We have been pushing treasury to understand the intent of this. Treasury believes they need to distribute funds to all counties across the country based on their interpretation of eligible revenue sharing counties. There may be a formula that is weighted towards the public land's counties. The funds are supposed to go out by Friday by law. You can go to the portal to see how much money your county is eligible for. You will need to apply. There are a few things that treasury must consider when creating the formula but there isn't anything concrete.

There is an idea of suing treasury. WIR is meeting and will discuss the merit of filing suit or not, but it is important to know what the formula is first. We do know that none of the 9th circuit counties can file the suit. We are looking for a county in the 10th circuit. Then there would have to be a determination of who the attorney will be, but all of this is premature.

It has been suggested that 1% of the funds be set aside to help create a national center for public land counties. This will be to help research for counties on public lands issues. The guidance from treasury very clearly discusses lobbying. It is strict and is not able to be used for lobbying. We need to figure out the financing for this center. It is supposed to help relieve some pressure from the counties.

Open Discussion

Fire Wise gave an introduction.

The meeting was adjourned.

Public Lands Committee

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