

Public Lands & Natural Resources Committee

September 15, 2025 | 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm
The Riverside Hotel Juniper Room

MEETING MINUTES

1:30 pm Call to Order | *Chair Sherry Maupin*

- *Welcome and Introductions*

1:35 pm Approval of January and June Meeting Minutes (Action Item)

- Skip Brandt motioned to approve the January minutes as amended. Don Hall seconded. Motion carried.

1:40 pm Good Neighbor Authority Expansion

Regional Wildlife Biologist Tara Ball, Idaho Department of Fish & Game (IDFG)

- Updates on the good neighbor authority program
 - Second entity in Idaho to enter into the good neighbor authority agreement. Started this process in 2019. Recreation services, prescribed burn services, habitat restoration, and more are a part of this agreement. Fish and Game doesn't expend separate GNA funding. All funding goes straight to being implemented with existing fish and game resources.
 - It also allows the use of local contractors. Fish and game has been working to grow the good neighbor authority statewide. Increased spending on this program would reduce the shutdown of beneficial projects, which has been a trend as of late due to federal and state executive order. IDFG has the existing capacity to grow GNA, but the added spending authority is a missing piece. Additional spending authority allows the GNA program to jump onto projects before they pass by.

1:55 pm National Environment Policy Act Updates

Natural Resource Counsel Micah Christensen, Wyoming County Commissioner Association (WCCA)

- DEQ regulations are almost all gone, with a handful of categorical inclusions. Everything else has been moved to the BLM handbook. No changes have been made yet because there has been no response from DOI. DOI's previous regulations had two specific titles that described what cooperating agencies could do in the NEPA process. Expressed cooperation roles are now gone and don't exist within the handbook.

- Owyhee County has used coordination vs. cooperation with the BLM. Cooperation is a term used under NEPA to describe the work behind the scenes to work with an agency on developing alternatives and implement a plan or action. Coordination requires a federal government to look at and consider county plans.
- In 2008, it was decided that counties needed to be more engaged in federal land management planning. But there isn't enough money to fund this kind of participation. This position was created to essentially facilitate the counties ability to participate in these processes, and Michah's position with the WCCA was created. It is to help train county commissioners on the NEPA process. There is also a lot of work done to review the CFR to analyze the potential impact on counties. There is a lot of work done on behalf of counties to help draft and submit comments, create templates to fill in information, etc.

2:00 pm Good Neighbor Authority Changes
Washington Office Forest Management Stewardship and Good Neighbor Authorities (GNA) Program Manager Robert Barnhart, United States Forest Service (USFS)

- Good Neighbor Authority - Authorizes states, counties, and tribes to perform forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration services and recreation services on and off National Forest System Lands.
- The Explore Act: Majority of the provisions are recreation, lease, and access related. The law included expansion of the Good Neighbor Authority.
- Specific Updates to Good Neighbor Authority provided through the Explore Act Include:
 - Recreation services
 - Could include financial or technical assistance
 - Extends authority for tribes and counties to sell federal timber and retain funds as revenue
 - Authorized restoration on and off federal land.
 - Extended the revenue temporary authority to Oct 1, 2018.
 - Looking at all databases and forms to make sure that they reflect agency wide changes.
 - Putting together a webinar with NACo to cover next steps for GNA

2:20 pm Public Land Swaps and Idaho Version of Payment in Lieu of Taxes
Senator Ben Adams, District 12

- The structure has always remained the same hopefully we can propose alternatives to this structure
- Sen. Adams stated a month ago proposed an amendment to the Idaho constitution to change the way Idaho handles federal land from land swaps.
- The main consideration is Idaho should not sell it off - 62% of federal land would be entered into endowment and sold off. The proposal is available to anyone who emails to ask for a copy.

- The change would be to have the land acquired to be held in trust for the benefit of all Idahoans with a required legislative approval of 2/3rds to sell any of it off.
- This will impact local government by impacting the PILT as the rate of revenue is not adequate by constitutionally required counties to be compensated for any loss in revenue due to federal land becoming state land.
- Would improve state cooperation with local government cooperation
- How will this impact timber? It will revitalize the small timber mills and there would be certainty in what the administration is doing with the land (opposed to federal administration changes)
- How will the PILT formula be calculated - this will come in statute. IAC will hash it out with Legislators to get it to be fair.
- Improves communication as it removes federal from the chain of communication.
- Meant to start the discussion over the next century to have land that are more financially beneficial if the State managed them with a narrow focus on where the money goes.
- Question: Don Hall: How will this impact public access? (the state focuses on making money not access) Senator: the amendment will separate endowment from new trust with the trust focusing on access and productivity
 - Vicky: Can you restore fire suppression budgets? Will this restore some of the counties who have lost revenue from the impeded logging industry. Senator: I want to fund the fire suppression budget. To bring back those industries, and this is a novel approach and such we don't have a track record, but there is excitement about working with the state vs the federal government as there are less impediments.
 - Mitch Reggarr: Not in agreement with proposal - believes it is already being managed well and they have a requirement not to sell land reserved for timber. Senator: The department of lands will still manage the land - just like the endowment land the board will dictate where it will go. The August 15 draft is the most current draft of the bill.
 - Skip Brandt: the concern is how the land is managed and the endowment land is managed to make money. If you don't manage it to make money then the risk of other groups will impede the land's usefulness with a variety of recreational uses that are not profitable. Senator: If the State managed the environmentalists in D.C. will not govern the rules the Legislators will. Additionally, Legislators will pick the profitable land to take from the federal government.
 - Senator exchanges are great but he doesn't want to sell the land and to keep the land public.

2:40 pm Proposed Resolution: (Action Item)

- PLNR-01: Coordination of Federal Land Use Decisions | *Chair Sherry Maupin*: Seth Grigg presented the Resolution Cindy Bachman asked this is coordination not cooperation
 - *Motioned By: Jack Johnson*
 - *Seconded By: Skip Brandt*

- *Result: Unanimous approval - moves forward.*

3:00 pm Adjournment

Natural Resources & Public Lands Committee

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