

DISTRICTS HELP BATTLE AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES INVASION

Several of Idaho's local conservation districts are waging war against the introduction of quagga and zebra mussels into our rivers and lakes. These nasty non-native hitchhikers are a nightmare: slipping into waterways quietly, riding concealed in boats that have plied infected waters, and then reproducing exponentially. Idaho has no known infestations. Yet.

Idaho's 50 soil and water conservation districts (SWCD) do a lot of different things to improve water quality and prevent wind and soil erosion, but one of the little known things that some districts do every year is inspect boats for zebra and quagga mussels coming into the state.

The Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District stays busy operating two of the state's highest volume inspection stations for the Idaho Department of Agriculture near Sandpoint. The Bruneau Soil and Water Conservation District conducts inspections on Idaho State Highway 51 and Highway 95, the Oneida SWCD performs inspections on Interstate 15 near Malad, and the Franklin SWCD mans an inspection station on the Idaho-Utah border near Preston.

Idaho Department of Agriculture (ISDA) officials say that it's been beneficial to have the districts working on the state boat-inspection program, which monitors 15 stations statewide.

"It's been huge," says Lloyd Knight, administrator of the Plant Industries Division of ISDA. "It's been a big help to us. The district personnel know the local areas,



Inspectors say goodbye to invasive mussels that rode in on the "Hello".

and they have a good understanding of the kinds of boat traffic coming through."

The ISDA boat-inspection program has been running since 2009, when Rep. Eric Anderson, R-Priest River, passed a state law creating a boat-inspection program at key locations where major highways come into Idaho from neighboring states. An invasive sticker program administered by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation collects the funds for the boat-inspections. As of 2012, the state program raised \$850,000 to cover the costs of the inspections and administering the program.

The whole point is to keep quagga and zebra mussels, invasive species that quickly proliferate, from invading Idaho's river systems, reservoirs and lakes. "We think the program has been very successful," Knight says, "but there's always that nagging feeling in the back of your mind wondering if anything is slipping through."

The invasive mussels already have occupied the Great Lakes region of the United States for 20 years, and they also have infested several reservoirs in the Colorado River system, including Lake Mead behind Hoover Dam. More than 1.5 trillion mussels exist in Lake Mead, 10 times the number that were recorded in 2007, according to an Associated Press report.

Rep. Anderson has been working to require the National Park Service to conduct a boat-washing program at the reservoir to prevent the mussels from spreading to other western states.

The mussels not only clog pipes and dam infrastructure, they also attach to boat dock systems, boat hulls, motors, intake systems, and bilge water. The mussels also are harmful to the aquatic ecosystem.

Idaho's boat-inspection stations do not operate 24/7 12 months a year, but they do



Mussels quickly reproduce to damage equipment and infrastructure like this boat propeller.

operate throughout the summer months, and get a lot of traffic. In 2012, Bonner County SWCD inspected about 10,400 boats at two inspection stations and sold \$44,300 worth of invasive species stickers at the stations.

Linda O'Hare, administrator of the Bonner County Soil and Water Conservation District, says the boat-inspection program is a good fit. They operate a station north of Sandpoint, and another one on the Idaho-Washington border. She said the ISDA grant program has been streamlined for districts to apply for funds to operate the inspection stations, and the program operates smoothly. The Bonner District has 12 inspectors who are hired seasonally; some of them are retirees who come back year after year because they like working in the program.

"When we first started, we had a lot of dirty boats come through, but after the ad campaigns started and the word got out, the boats are much cleaner now," O'Hare says. "The majority of the people thank the inspectors when they come through, and are very appreciative of the program."

The advertising campaign included renting space on billboards next to busy highways in Idaho, instructing boaters to "Clean, Drain and Dry" their boats after a recreating outing.

From the outset in 2009, the Bonner SWCD was enthusiastic about the program because of the many beautiful lakes in North Idaho. No one wanted the lakes to



Illustrating how they proliferate, anti-mussel crusader, Idaho legislator Eric Anderson holds a license plate covered with them.

get contaminated, O’Hare said. “It was a huge undertaking to get geared up for the inspection program, but our district was very passionate about it,” she says.

Kate Wilson, who was the coordinator of the Lake Pend Oreille Basin Commission at the time, was particularly passionate. “She was like this little ball of fire, and you couldn’t help but to get behind the program,” O’Hare says. Wilson helped

get the inspection stations set up, and she helped train the inspectors. She has since moved on to become the aquatic invasive species program coordinator for Alberta, Canada.

The Bonner SWCD does about one-fourth of all the inspections statewide. In 2012, there were 42,348 inspections conducted at 15 different inspection stations throughout the state, and 57 boats were carrying quagga or zebra mussels. So far this year, there have been 38,959 inspections through the month of August, and 12 of them carried the invasive mussels.

The Bonner District washed the first boat suspected of carrying zebra/quagga mussels into Idaho. It was named the “Hello” boat. Police authorities tracked the boat from Utah to Sandpoint, before it was thoroughly hot-washed at the City Beach inspection station. “I remember watching how thoroughly the inspectors had to wash that boat,” O’Hare says. “It was quite the process.”

Anderson is still working on getting more western states engaged in mandatory boat-inspection programs. Oregon, California, Montana, Wyoming and Nevada have

programs, but Washington does not participate as yet. And, he’d like to see more aggressive programs at the sources of the problem, such as Lake Mead.

“Two-thirds to three-fourths of the boats that are fouled with invasive mussels are being hauled by people who are going boating somewhere other than Idaho,” Knight says. “We have boats that come from all but one or two states in the nation passing through our state. That’s a concern because that means there are a lot of risk pathways for those boats to cause more contamination wherever they end up.”

For more information, click here to see the ISDA web site on invasive species and boat inspections: http://www.agri.state.id.us/Categories/Environment/InvasiveSpeciesCouncil/Inspection_Stations_ALL.php. □

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**SEPTEMBER 12TH
COMMISSION MEETING
HIGHLIGHTS**

Commissioners met in Buhl in September to conduct regular business and hear district input on the technical assistance allocation process. After the meeting, the group toured the Balanced Rock and Snake River Conservation Districts’ wetlands and water quality improvement projects done in partnership with the Twin Falls Canal Company. For a run down of the tour, see page 4.

During the meeting, Commissioners recognized past Chair Dick Bronson for his service, and approved three Resource Conservation and Development Program (RCRDP) loan applications totaling \$386,500. The loan officer also reported that an additional loan was approved in September for \$27,000.

The Chair assigned Commissioner representatives for IASCD Fall Division meetings as follows:

Chairman Wright
Division 1, October 10 in Hayden
Division 2, October 11 in Orofino
Division 5, October 23 in Montpelier

Commissioner Bronson
Division 3, October 8 in Caldwell

Commissioner Radford
Division 6, October 24 in Driggs

Commissioner Stutzman
Division 4, October 30 in Richfield

FY 2014 local match funding recommendations from the District Allocation Work Group (DAWG) were approved by the Commission. Staff was directed to distribute allocation checks. No hold back was directed for FY 2014.

Opportunity for district and individual comments on the technical assistance allocation process followed. No comments were received.

The Commission holds field meetings every two years. The last was held in Coeur d’Alene in June 2011. □



NOVEMBER DISTRICT TRAINING & REGULAR MEETING

Join us in Boise during the
Idaho Association of Soil
Conservation Districts'
Annual Conference

SUNDAY
November 17, 2013

IDEA Training

Topics include:

- **Social Media #101**
- **Skillsoft online training**
- **Website instruction**

TUESDAY
November 19, 2013
11:00 -12:30

**Commission Meeting &
Listening Session**

COMMISSIONER PROFILE

NORMAN WRIGHT Board Chairman

New Board Chair Norman Wright is not new to Idaho, agriculture, nor to conservation. He's a man of ideas and boundless energy. The conservation partnership in Idaho greatly benefits from his vision and leadership.



Where do you live? I live in American Falls.

What do you do in your "civilian" life? I worked for USDA Farm Service Agency for 33 years and retired three years ago. I am currently serving my 10th year on the American Falls City Council and also serve as Chairman of the American Falls District Public Library. I have been an active Lion for 35 years and served in many positions at the District and Club level, including club president and District Governor.

How long have you served on the Conservation Commission? I was appointed in October of 2011.

What do you like about serving on the Conservation Commission? It gives me an opportunity to make a positive impact on improving conservation in Idaho for the benefit of all Idahoans.

What are your passions in life? I am a dedicated do-it-your-selfer. Currently I am working on an addition to our house. Sometimes it seems I am moving one step forward and two backward, but I think I am making progress. I play golf when I have time, but this year I have only been out twice. I try and make a positive difference in my community.

What is your favorite thing about Idaho? I am a native Idahoan. Both of my parents moved here from Kansas and I was born in Caldwell and raised on a farm. I love living in a rural state where you can get around fairly easily. In Idaho, when we think of going 60-70 miles on a highway, we plan on an hour of travel time, no matter what time of day it is. Outside of Boise, we don't usually even think about rush hour traffic. I love the beauty of the mountains and the four seasons, even though winter lasts too long sometimes.

Tell us about your family. I have one son, Greydon, who works for the Idaho Transportation Department as an

engineer in training. My oldest daughter, Denice, is a junior at Idaho State University studying civil engineering. My youngest daughter, Nicole, is a sophomore at Idaho State University studying political science and history. She plans to go to law school. My wife of 32 years, Kathy, teaches math at American Falls High school. We have a miniature schnauzer who thinks she is family too.

If money were no object, what would you do to improve the farms, ranches or natural resources in Idaho? I'd fully implement all conservation plans and cost share 90% plus on their implementation. As a result, it would be absolutely amazing how much soil we could save, water we could clean up, and cleaner air we would be breathing. It would benefit not only Idahoans, but residents of surrounding states as well. We'd have better wildlife habitat, more jobs from the construction of projects, and more farms and ranches would be showcases for Conservation the Idaho Way.

What is your vision for the future of Idaho agriculture? In the future, agricultural exports would continue increasing as more new markets open up. Governor Otter has made a tremendous effort in this area with his trade missions, and they have been paying off- not just for agriculture- but in other industries, as well. We can't sit around. We must keep aggressively working to maintain and increase our success. We will continue to educate all Idahoans on how important it is to have productive farms and ranches. We all have to eat and our food comes from Idaho farms and ranches, even though some people think it comes from the grocery store. In my vision, agriculture continues to occupy a key and growing spot in our economy, and is vitally important to all of us. I'm honored to do my part to see this vision come to fruition.

□

NEWS

Latah District deserves kudos for their work with the City of Troy to remove an unused dam blocking the migration of steelhead on Little Bear Creek.

Though hanging onto water storage facilities is generally a good idea, Dutch Flat Dam was built to supply water to the City in 1919, but was abandoned for water storage in 1925. Due to heavy sedimentation, an estimated 10,000 cubic yards will have to be removed. The Dam now “holds back” a meadow, not water.

The Latah Conservation District worked with the Idaho Governor’s Office of Species Conservation and Bonneville Power Administration to obtain funding for the project.

Good job, Latah. This project promotes Conservation the Idaho Way!



Clark District showcased the Stoddard Stockwater Pipeline on their annual tour in September. Supplying water to thirsty livestock and wildlife, the pipeline runs up, down, and across 15 miles of steep rugged terrain from top to bottom.

It’s an engineering marvel, designed by Mike Stoeber, NRCS Engineer. The system includes 13 miles of HDPE Poly

Twin Falls area districts hosted a 319 project tour for Conservation Commission members and staff on September 12th.

Phase I of the E Coulee Water Quality Project was completed in the fall of 2010 and was operational during the 2011 irrigation season.

Water from the E and 5A drains was collected in two small sediment basins that act as cleaning cells to filter out most of the suspended sediment. As water flows through these two cleaning cells, it enters a large sediment basin to filter out additional suspended sediment, nutrients and bacteria. After the water leaves the large sediment basin, it flows down the remainder of the original E Coulee channel (approximately one-half mile) and then flows through a small pond before discharging into Salmon Falls Creek.

The system initially operated as designed, but it was soon apparent that additional measures were needed to reach the level of water quality improvement desired, so construction of two additional polishing



cells near the rim of Salmon Falls Creek was completed in the spring of 2012. A sprinkler irrigation system was also installed on a highly erodible 40-acre field directly above the complex to reduce irrigation-induced erosion.

Completion of both phases of the constructed wetland projects and the irrigation system conversion is expected to reduce total suspended solids by 1,030 tons per year and total phosphorus by 7.9 lbs. per day.

Overall, 319 funding invested in related Twin Falls County water quality work has been \$2.23 million, an amount that has been matched by 40% local dollars. Great work, partners!

pipe, ranging from 2.5” to 1.25” diameter and from 160 PSI to 400 PSI pressure rating. At one point in the system pressure reaches 320 psi. The system supplies spring water to a network of four storage tanks (two 16,000 gallon storage tanks, and two 10,000 gallon storage tanks). Water is supplied in eight rubber tire troughs, each with a capacity of approximately 1000 gallons.

The stockwater system was designed and partially funded by the NRCS, in cooperation with the landowner (Russ Stoddard), the District, BLM, and others. The Stoddards invested a considerable amount of time and money in to the system and fulfilled a 30-year dream of Russ’s father of getting water

to the higher ground.

Historically, 600 head of cows had no water on the ridges 1,000 feet above the green in the photo at left. Previously cows had to walk up to five miles to reach the creek in the canyon for water.

“That’s a lot of climb for a cow and calf every day. It led to a lot of disease and the whole allotment wasn’t used. This is a heck of an improvement,” Stoddard says. “Now cows are using the whole allotment, calves are staying healthy, and they’re gaining more weight. It’s made a big difference to us.”

It’s also been good for the land. Great job and thanks to our partners in Dubois!

COMMISSION

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