



# CAPITOL REVIEW

## A WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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### A Weekly Legislative Report

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#### AERIAL APPLICATORS

With a growing agricultural, suburban and urban interface in Idaho, it is important to recognize and protect the ability for agricultural applicators and aircraft to access agricultural lands. H606 seeks to do just that by adding to the definition of agricultural operations under the Right to Farm Act of Idaho. Agricultural aircraft must travel to and from agricultural lands and treatment areas to perform their vital functions. There have been more **instances of complaints and negative confrontations because new people to rural Idaho do not understand that they live in areas where aerial applications on fields will be taking place.** H606 does not relieve pilots from Federal Aviation Administration regulations related to low-flying and congested areas but does allow them to continue their current practices but **does allow for the “ingress” and “egress” for aircraft to access fields.** Food Producers of Idaho supported H606 this week and the legislation will likely be heard next week in the House Agricultural Committee.

#### SUGARBEET 101

The Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association presented in front of both the Senate and House Ag Committees this week and gave a short primer for those legislators not intimately familiar with the commodity. The association was formally known as the Idaho Sugarbeet Growers Association but recently went through a name change to include more growers in the region. Executive Director Brad Griff stuck to the basics and shared that the sugarbeet is a cousin to the red garden beet, though sugarbeets are white and much larger. He also explained that you won't find sugarbeets in the produce section of the grocery store. The true value of a sugarbeet is the sugar that must be extracted.

A fully grown sugarbeet is about a foot long, **weighs three to five pounds, and contains about 18% sucrose (sugar) in its root.** One sugarbeet produces an average of about a cup of sugar. Our region grows 180,000 acres of sugarbeets in Idaho, Oregon,

and Washington, **accounting for 20% of sugarbeet production in the country.** Nationally, sugarbeets are grown on 1.2 million acres in 11 states and are refined into sugar at 22 farmer-owned facilities in those regions. While most Americans might think of sugarcane as the primary sweetener in their morning coffee, beet sugar accounts for 55% of U.S.-produced sugar.

Sugarbeets contribute \$300 million in revenue, accounting for about 10% of our region's total cash receipts from crops. Processed sugar from our region's sugarbeets brings in about \$900 million in annual revenue. Amalgamated Sugar, a grower-owned sugarbeet processing company, has about 1,600 employees and accounts for 2.5% of all manufacturing jobs in our region. The pulp byproduct from sugarbeets is used as high-quality, inexpensive feed to beef and dairy cattle. **About 7 million tons of our region's sugarbeets are hauled a year, providing additional trailer manufacturing and truck operator jobs.**

In 2005, the United States Department of Agriculture approved the commercial use of genetically engineered (GE) sugarbeets. Since then, growers have used GE sugarbeets with a minor genetic change to tolerate the herbicide glyphosate. **This allows farmers to use a limited amount of herbicide to eliminate weeds while not damaging the sugarbeet.** Thanks to this technology, growing sugarbeets now requires fewer and safer pesticides, less fuel, less water, and a smaller carbon footprint. Growing GE sugarbeets allows farmers to grow more sugarbeets on less land while using fewer chemicals. **In the past 20 years, growers have used 85% less pesticides and reduced diesel fuel use by 60% per ton of beets produced thanks to this technology.** Growers have also produced 57% more tons of sugarbeets per acre and 67% more pounds of sugar per acre. The sugar (sucrose) in GE sugarbeets is molecularly and chemically identical to conventional sugarbeets, sugarcane and organic sugarcane. The overwhelming consensus of scientific experts and

organizations around globe is that GE crops are safe to eat, have the same nutrition and composition as conventional crops, and have no links to new allergies or diseases. The World Health Organization, United Nations Food and Agriculture organization and the American Medical Association have all conducted comprehensive studies proving the environmental benefits of GE crops and their suitability for human consumption.

### SOIL & WATER COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

A bill to increase the number of commissioners appointed to the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission has been introduced. Currently there are 5 commission members, and **the increase would be 7 appointments made by the governor**. H642 would allow for the conservation districts to put forward names to the governor to choose from for 6 of the positions, with the governor to choose the 7<sup>th</sup> at large. The reason for the change is inside of the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts there are 6 divisions covering the entire state and would **allow each division to submit names to the governor with regional representation in mind**. The 7<sup>th</sup> position would be to break any ties on the commission

and more importantly, to allow the governor to choose an individual with a specific expertise, i.e. financial or technical, that may be needed.

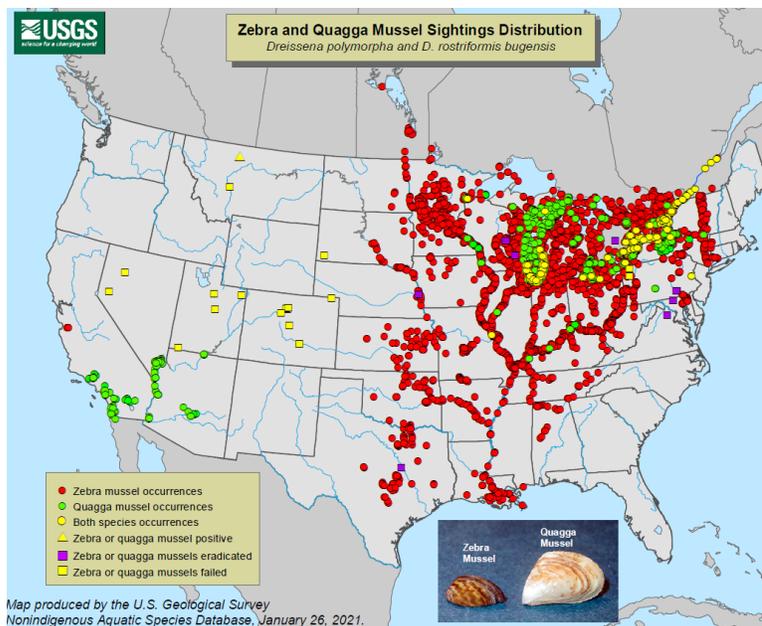
### IHFA DON HALE HALL OF FAME AWARD

The Idaho Hay & Forage Association (IHFA) met in Twin Falls on Thursday for their annual conference. **Mike Standlee, founder of Standlee Hay Company, was named by IHFA to the Don Hale Hall of Fame**. Standlee founded the company in 1981. Mike's original pioneering vision was to grow and market Premium Western Forage throughout the United States. His vision has since expanded to providing Idaho's exceptional forage around the globe.

Mike is an active participant on the Standlee Executive and Advisory boards and fulfills the leadership role driving innovation as well as overseeing special projects. Mike leverages his over 40 years of forage and agri-business experience to drive innovation at Standlee. Standlee has 400 employees with operations in eight states. We appreciate our growers and look forward to continued growth of Idaho Forage. Mike and his wife Whendy live in Twin Falls.

### INVASIVE SPECIES

During this past week, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture presented to the House and Senate Agricultural Affairs committees regarding the invasive species program. The Invasive Species Council was established in 2001 by Executive Order of the governor and was followed by the **Idaho Invasive Species Act that was signed into law in 2008**. Shortly thereafter the roadside inspections began to look for mussels. Since 2018, there has been over \$3 million in ongoing appropriations from the General Fund. There has also been **\$1,800,000 in one-time federal spending allocated from the Water Resource Development Act**. Finally, \$1,500,000 has been divvied up from the Invasive Species Fund.



During the 2021 inspection season and 13<sup>th</sup> year of the program, there were **approximately 114,000 watercraft inspected and 52 watercraft were found to have mussels**. This was coordinated through 18 different inspection sites with 9 local station cooperators. Due to Idaho being the first state in the Pacific Northwest to implement a program and other states and Canadian provinces coming along side, the region remains invasive mussel free. In 2016, Montana stepped up its effort of monitoring and funding due to mussels being identified at the Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs. With Montana's improvement to the program since, the mussel expansion that has continued to infest the Midwest, **from Texas to Manitoba east**, has been effectively blocked and minimized due to states understanding the devastating effects of Quagga and Zebra mussels.