



# CAPITOL REVIEW

## A WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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### A Weekly Legislative Report

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#### CANDIDATE FILING CLOSES

This week, legislative leaders hoped to bring the 2024 session closer to adjournment, at the same time incumbents and challengers filed their paperwork to run for one of Idaho's 105 legislative seats. Both the legislative & political calendar intersected with a flurry of activity and the candidate filing deadline closed on **March 15 at 5 p.m.** The early rumor of an adjournment date of March 22 has long passed and now anywhere from March 29 to April 5 are possibilities.

#### ESTRAY ANIMALS

Open range creates the presumption in Idaho that we are a "fence-out" state, where, unless a property owner is in a herd district, it is the duty of landowners to fence livestock out and off of their land. Herd districts are a legislative exception to the "fence-out" rule. With the creation and implementation of proper herd districts those districts remove open range immunity and create a 'fence in' situation for livestock owners. **H712 directly maintains the status of open range.** Stray animals can be found in open range or herd districts. Each location would have different ramifications and create a different set of circumstances that operators should be watching. However, H712 does create heightened damages for any producers that do not make a reasonable attempt per the notification periods in the legislation to take their animals off the property where those animals may be trespassing or straying. It should be noted that adjacent property owners in certain situations must also maintain a proper and lawful fence before a livestock owner shall be subject to any damages or criminal penalties. Criminal penalties shall only ensue if a livestock owner is shown to be willful and wanton through their actions in not maintaining stray livestock.

#### BRENT OLMSTEAD HONORED

A reception was held for a true friend and advocate of Idaho agriculture this week. We want to thank **Brent**

**Olmstead** for his years of service and more importantly, for his steadfast friendship with farmers, ranchers and all those who advocate on behalf of agriculture.

In Idaho, Brent started a family and began his career as a Lobbyist for IACI in 1994. Brent focused his attention and expertise on issues such as agriculture, natural resources, immigration, environment etc. After 7 years at IACI, where he served as Vice-President, Brent then created a firm, **MPIdaho**. As a consultant, Brent specialized in public policy development and strategic planning for private businesses in agriculture, taxation and immigration. He also created the non-profit organization named the Milk Producers of Idaho, where they worked to operate and enhance the dairy industry in all facets. Brent has also served as a board member for the College of Western Idaho Trustee's, the Idaho Small Business Development Center and has worked heavily with the Idaho Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on immigration reform. After 15 years as president/ owner of MPIdaho, Brent joined the University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, as **assistant dean for government and external relations**. In his current role at the University, Brent has been working on a project called the Idaho Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (CAFE). The new center will focus their research on the critical problems that agribusiness faces and will face in the future.

Brent grew up on a farm south of Twin Falls. He spent his childhood on the farm grazing cattle and cultivating crops with his father (Neil Olmstead). At a young age, Brent also took an interest in politics by helping his uncle, Ralph Olmstead (a former Speaker of the House for the Idaho House of Representatives). Brent attended Utah State University where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics. After graduation, Brent spent some time working for John Deere in SD

and obtaining a micro-MBA from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, before returning to Idaho.

### **ISDA DIRECTOR GOULD CELEBRATION**

The Idaho Dairymen's Association held their annual Legislative Dinner which included the retirement celebration for the **longest serving Director** of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. Celia Gould was **appointed Director of ISDA in January 2007**, the first woman to hold this position since the department was established in 1919. It was a massive job and she provided leadership to six divisions and one bureau dedicated to agriculture, which is the single largest contributor to our state's economy and accounts for **20% of Idaho's gross state product** every year.

Gould came by her knowledge of agriculture the old-fashioned way, she was born into a farming and ranching family. She grew up doing chores, going to the auction with her grandpa, and listening to tense discussions around the kitchen table during tough times. Celia is the third-generation owner/operator of G+ Ranches of Buhl, Idaho, where they produce wheat, corn, hay, Black Angus and Angus-Wagyu cattle. Celia and her husband, Bruce Newcomb, also have a beef operation in the Declo area.

Prior to serving at ISDA, Celia spent **16 years** in the Idaho House of Representatives. She has held leadership positions in agriculture at the local, state and national level and has worked tirelessly for all of us committed to Idaho's working lands, and who provide our industry's essential goods and services. She has also earned the respect of her fellow producers, and her professional colleagues, chosen by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture as Chairman of the Natural Resources & Environment Committee. For **16 years** Idahoans across the state have been able to rely upon Celia to thoughtfully consider the needs of producers and agribusinesses when making decisions and taking positions that affect us. At the state and the national level, she is both a voice and a shield for producers and agribusinesses in our state. Celia is always respectful of Idaho's ag heritage and enthusiastic about its future horizons.

### **MARCH WATER SUPPLY OUTLOOK**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Idaho has released the March Water Supply Outlook Report. All Idaho basins saw improvements in their snowpack last month, though storm tracks continued to favor southern Idaho over northern Idaho in February. Total monthly precipitation during February ranged from 110% of normal monthly precipitation in the Clearwater to 244% in the Little Wood Basin. This winter's trend of above normal snowpack south of the Snake River Plain and drier conditions north of the river's corridor continues. A wet February and early

March have increased snowpacks in much of southern Idaho, where some flood-control operations are planned in coming weeks. Snowpack in the state's northern areas remains below 30-year medians partly because the dominant El Nino weather pattern pushes Pacific storms south.

**El Nino conditions** are expected to weaken this spring and early summer. A move toward La Nina, associated with more rain and snow in northern areas, is expected in late summer and early fall. Above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation are likely from April through June in many areas, and from May through July in the north. Cold, wet conditions in February and early March pushed snowpack in basins north of the Snake River Plain to above normal for the first time this winter. River basins in northern Idaho also improved but would need record high levels of snow to push future percentages significantly higher. Snow-water equivalent as of March 11 was 81% of the 1991-2020 median in the northern panhandle and 70% in Spokane-Coeur d'Alene and Clearwater river basins to the south, according to NRCS. Central Idaho's Salmon basin stood at 87%.

Near-normal and above-normal levels were reported to the south, with the highest totals found on the southern border and in the southeast region. Despite the varying snowpack levels this winter, a lot of the reservoir storage looks good across the state. The exception is Mackay Reservoir, drained late last summer for repairs. Water volume in the Upper Snake reservoir system is about 120% of the long-term median and natural flows are good. March 1 forecasts through July call for 90% of normal streamflow at Jackson Lake, Wyo., and 94% at the Heise gauge near Idaho Falls. Other forecasts are Island Park at 88%, Ririe at 122% and Little Wood at 99%. For information on specific basins, streams, and reservoirs, please view the full report online at [March Water Supply Outlook Report](#).

### **NATIONAL AG DAY – TUESDAY, MARCH 19**

Idaho will join the nation in celebrating **National Ag Day March 19**. It's a day to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by agriculture. Every year, producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities, government agencies, and countless others across America join together to recognize the contributions of agriculture. The ISDA are coordinating a special event in the rotunda of the Capitol for legislators and guests to celebrate this day in Idaho. Numerous events are being held throughout Idaho in recognition of the importance of Agriculture.

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