



## **Idaho Council on Industry and the Environment**

*This is a weekly roundup of some of ICIE's activities in and around the Idaho Legislature. Staffing limits mean we can't cover every meeting. If there's an item of interest to you at an upcoming meeting of one of the environment or agriculture committees, let us know and we'll try to cover it. Agendas are available at [www.state.id.us](http://www.state.id.us). Click on "Legislative" and click on "Calendars and agendas." (For copies of previous Saturday Summary reports, go to [www.icie.org](http://www.icie.org))*

### **Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee, February 19, 2008**

A representative of the Idaho Grain Producers Association presented an overview of the issue of crop residue disposal. It has been over a year since the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals handed down a decision that stopped agricultural field burning in Idaho.

It took a combination money and effort to resolve this issue through negotiations between both parties.

Negotiated rulemaking has been ongoing while the group was looking at draft legislation, which will be introduced the week of February 25<sup>th</sup>. The new rules include moving oversight of the field-burning program from the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ). IDEQ has the expertise to run the program, which will cost more because it will be a statewide one with fees assessed on a statewide basis.

Everything must be done by May so that the rule can be submitted to EPA for approval. It is likely that EPA will approve the rule quickly because it is the result of negotiations.

The fee will be somewhere between \$2 and \$4 an acre. Growers will sign up and give the location and number of acres to burn. Burning will be regulated by atmospheric conditions. Decisions to burn will be based on health rather than economic viability as it is now.

NOTE: The House State Affairs voted to print the legislation that goes with the negotiated rulemaking and it has been sent to the House Environment, Energy & Technology Committee.

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## **House Environment, Energy & Technology Committee, February 20, 2008**

Changes have been made to HB 482, which deals with vehicle emissions testing. On Wednesday, Rep. Mark Snodgrass (District 20) introduced the changes that had been recommended at the last presentation of the bill. Registration of the vehicle will trigger the time line on testing so that auto dealers do not have to have emission testing for vehicles they are selling. Inspections cannot be required more frequently than every two years. The fee should not exceed \$20 per vehicle. The program will have an annual review and a five year sunset. It will terminate if it does not produce results.

The committee suggested other changes. The members raised concerns about the impact on farm vehicles and asked if older farm vehicles could be exempt.

As Rep. Snodgrass pointed out, inspection would only happen if an airshed is within 15% of being declared in non-attainment and if automobiles are one of the top two reasons for that. The Treasure Valley is currently the only area that would meet those two requirements.

The sponsors of the bill (Rep. Snodgrass and Sen. Langhorst) agreed to revamp the legislation taking into account the suggestions made at the meeting. It will be re-written and introduced as a new bill.

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## **House Resources & Conservation Committee, February 21, 2008**

The Idaho Water Resources Board (IWRB) presented a progress report on the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer Comprehensive Management Plan to the House Resources and Conservation Committee. This was a study funded by the 2006 legislature with a goal of sustaining the economic viability and social and economic health of the ESPA by adaptively managing a balance between water use and supplies by:

- increasing predictability
- creating alternatives to administrative curtailment
- managing demand
- increasing recharge
- reducing withdrawals.

To this end, the IWRB has held meetings across Eastern Idaho to discuss the model, previous settlement efforts, funding, and quantitative goal analysis.

Initial recommendations from the board include:

Enlarging the Minidoka Dam – scheduled for reconstruction in 2011, the study recommends raising the dam by up to 5 feet to provide additional surface water storage along the Snake River system at a cost of \$1.4 million to complete the necessary studies.

Voluntary Demand Reductions in the ESPA at an estimated cost of \$5 million to buy down select water rights and pursue subordination agreements.

ESPA Recharge – with pilot projects underway, additional funding at an estimated \$1 million to support recharge activities within existing facilities.

The completed plan is slated to be presented to next year's legislature.

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### **Senate Resources & Environment, February 22, 2008**

On Friday, the Senate Resources and Environment Committee heard a presentation on the potential impacts of climate change on hydro generation from John Fazio of the Northwest Power & Conservation Council.

The NWPCC is not engaged in the debate on whether climate change exists, Fazio said, but has a responsibility to understand and assess potential impacts to hydro generation. Most of the information used for forecasting and modeling in this report is from the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group, which provided forecasts of temperature increases and altered river flows across the Northwest. Predictions of temperatures range from 0 to 3 degrees higher on average, which may not have an impact on the volume, but on the timing of the runoff. Projected changes in natural river flows show an earlier peak in summer, lower late summer flows and higher winter flows.

Temperature changes will also affect demand for energy. With higher temperature, demand for electricity will increase in the summer – compounded by the ever increasing number of air conditioners in use across the region each year – and decrease in demand for the winter months.

Because of the Northwest's dependence on hydropower, its carbon footprint relative to the Western US and across the country is markedly lower. On average, about 75% of the power in the Northwest comes from hydro.

The NWPCC's 5<sup>th</sup> Power Plan shows a projected development of renewable resources such as wind energy, and shows that reducing carbon emissions to 1990 levels or lower as advocated by some policy makers cannot be done just by changing the mix of new resources.

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*From the Idaho Council on Industry & the Environment (ICIE), a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to facilitate the use of sound science and facts in shaping public policy on environmental issues..*

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