

MINUTES
Idaho Resource Conservation & Development Association
Business Meeting
March 7, 2007, Boise, Idaho

Present:

Mick Atkinson, Bear River RC&D, Franklin Co., Preston, ID
Pat Beale, Southwest Idaho RC&D, Boise, ID
Bob Bolte, Wood River RC&D, Gooding, ID
Tom Blasi, Southwest Idaho RC&D, Nampa, ID
Paul Calverley, Southwest Idaho RC&D, Meridian
Debbie Dane, Mid-Snake RC&D, Twin Falls, ID
Charles E. Doty, Clearwater RC&D, Kamiah, ID
Scott Ferguson, USDA-NRCS, Bear River RC&D, Logan, UT
Kim Golden, USDA-NRCS, Panhandle Lakes RC&D, Coeur d'Alene, ID
Clyde Hanson, Clearwater RC&D, Grangeville, ID
Dick Hodge, Clearwater RC&D, Moscow, ID
Morris Huffman, West Central Highlands RC&D, Emmett, ID
Polly Huggins, USDA-NRCS, Wood River RC&D, Gooding, ID
Dave Johnson, Panhandle Lakes RC&D, Coeur d'Alene, ID
Paula Jones, USDA-NRCS, Three Rivers RC&D, Pocatello, ID
Joe Leichtnam, Western RC&D Assn., Rapid City, SD
Russ Manwaring, USDA-NRCS, West Central Highlands RC&D, Emmett, ID
Bill Moore, USDA-NRCS, Southwest Idaho RC&D, Meridian, ID
Dallan Nalder, Bear River RC&D, Malad, ID
Arin Nesbitt, USDA-NRCS, West Central Highlands RC&D/Southwest Idaho RC&D, Emmett/Meridian, ID
Dave Radford, High Country RC&D, Bonneville County, Idaho Falls, ID
Kent Rudeen, Three Rivers RC&D, American Falls, ID
Dan Pierce, USDA-NRCS, Clearwater RC&D, Moscow, ID
Lyle Points, West Central Highlands RC&D, Donnelly, ID
Paula Prather, USDA-NRCS, Clearwater RC&D, Moscow, ID
Steve Smart, USDA-NRCS, High Country RC&D, Rexburg, ID
Julie Thomas, USDA-FS, Mid-Snake RC&D, Twin Falls, ID
John Traughber, Butte County, Arco, ID
Bob Tribelhorn, USDA-NRCS
Joe Twitchell, Southwest Idaho RC&D, Meridian, ID
Ron Wittman, Clearwater RC&D, Lewiston, ID
Linda Zimmer, West Central Highlands RC&D, Horseshoe Bend, ID

President Ken Roberts called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Western RC&D Association (WRCDA) Conference in Colorado Springs

Ken Roberts reported this was one of the better conferences in the past few years. Idaho was the only state that—because of budget constraints—sent no coordinators. On the plus side, though, Idaho's contingent of council members was larger than any other state's. Members who attended the conference (Morris Huffman, Ron Wittman, Clyde Hanson, Kent Rudeen, Paul Calverley, Joe Twitchell, Dave Radford, Dave Johnson, Ken Roberts) reported on the highlights of the workshops they attended.

- The variety of training sessions and success stories made the conference very useful. The Energy Department's presentation (regarding their experimental facility), the workshop on landfill opportunities as sources for alternative energy, and the workshop on energy production from waste were among the outstanding alternative energy issue workshops. (Many grants are available from the Energy Department, according to Ken Roberts.) The presentation regarding the economics of shifting water rights because of aquifer draw downs was very informative.

- Dave Radford reported on a farm rescue program (sponsored partly by John Deere) that helped 27 disabled farmers get their crops in the ground. This generated a lot of media interest and would be a good Idaho project.
- Ken Roberts commented on energy in the U.S., explaining that the country is on two grids—one for the east and one for the west. These grids can't be connected, and the western grid is so outdated that it has to be rebuilt. This accounts in part for why we can't make much use of wind power.
- Dave Johnson announced that the next WRCDA meeting will be in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and he urged everyone to attend.
- Ken Roberts announced that Nevada has dropped out of WRCDA and joined Pacific Rim. Another state is thinking of joining WRCDA. The 2011 WRCDA meeting will be held in Idaho. Dave Radford suggested the meeting be held in Idaho Falls because of its proximity to Yellowstone National Park.
- Clyde Hanson announced he intends to run for second vice-president of WRCDA and would appreciate IRCDA's support.

Non-Profit Management Training

Joe Leichtnam (WRCDA) said Utah is putting on a non-profit management training seminar twice in Park City (May 14-16 and May 17-19). There is money to pay the registration for one representative from every council. After the daily seminar sessions, the trainers will work one-on-one with attendees. Ken Roberts and Paula Jones explained that Utah's State Conservationist decided not to include RC&D program assistant positions in the RC&D program budget, and some of these cost savings are funding workshops like this seminar. Julie Thomas suggested inviting the trainers to do in Idaho what South Dakota had them do.

NARC&DC Leadership Forum, Feb.26-28

Joe Twitchell reported the forum was particularly good this year because USDA Secretary Mike Johanns spoke. He talked about marketing, carbon sequestration, biomass, and how the RC&D Program should work by providing assistance using outside funding sources (e.g., innovation grants (e.g., EQIP), landscape programs, economic development). Secretary Johanns is a strong supporter of Rural Development. He talked about rural hospital care and how the RC&D Program might benefit communities by getting funding for rural medical facilities. He talked also about low-interest rates and the use of switchgrass for biomass. Joe quoted Johanns as saying, "It is not sustainable reasoning to continue each year to fight for money for RC&D." Johanns said that RC&D is a duplicative program that USDA doesn't really need. The budget cuts this year are \$19 million and probably will be \$14 million next year, according to Johanns. After the NARC&DC meeting, Joe talked with Johanns for about four hours about where he's getting his information about the RC&D Program's being duplicative of other programs. Joe thinks it might be OMB that is providing the misinformation. He strongly believes that IRCDA should work with other state RC&D associations and with NARC&DC to reverse the budget cuts. Joe praised the Mid-Snake RC&D for its support of the NARC&DC and passed along praise from the NARC&DC for the work of the High Country Council.

While he was in D.C. Joe talked with members of the national organization for county commissioners. He met also with Idaho's congressional delegation's staff members and had a very good visit with Rep. Mike Simpson, during which they discussed the Funders Fair (conducted annually by Wood River RC&D Council) and the 2008 Farm Bill. Joe met with NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster, who is very supportive of the RC&D Program. Everyone's prediction is that these difficult times for the RC&D Program are going to get even more difficult. General consensus is that the administration is ultimately going to win, but maybe not this year. Wrapping up, Joe said Pearly Reed has taken the place of Nels Warner as the liaison for contacts in Washington, D.C.

Secretary's Report

Kent Rudeen thanked Lorraine Simonson, Wood River RC&D Area, for taking minutes of the last meeting and asked if there were any corrections or changes. Clyde Hanson moved that the minutes be accepted; Morris Huffman seconded. The motion passed by voice vote. Kent then followed up on the action item from the October 12, 2006, meeting, regarding repair of the IRCDA display. Clyde Hanson moved that the IRCDA get repair parts for the original display and fix it; Dave Radford seconded. The motion passed by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report

Dave Radford reported that membership dues and meeting registrations are still coming in. The leadership training in Nashville was \$280. The IRCDA pays for all of president Ken Roberts's registration and travel costs, which are relatively low since he requests reimbursement for actual costs instead of per diem. If IRCDA wants to take on a project, probably there will always be at least \$3,000 and perhaps as much as \$5,000. Dave Johnson moved that the treasurer's report be accepted; Debbie Dane seconded. The motion passed by voice vote.

Dave Radford stressed the importance of distinguishing between what Congress says and what the president says. He thinks the onus is on each council to make the RC&D case. While he was in Washington, D.C., Dave talked with senators Crapo and Craig, both of whom are familiar with the RC&D Program. Other members of IRCDA were to meet with Mike Simpson and Bill Sali. In our current wartime economy, Dave reported, the RC&D Program's \$36 million is pocketchange, but if RC&D councils do their job and make a positive difference in their communities Congress will support the program. We must make sure our projects are community driven, he stressed.

Comments by Joe Leichtnam, President, Western RC&D Association (WRCDA)

Joe Leichtnam is committed to traveling to and supporting the western states. As president, he has Nels Werner and Robert Perry, NM, 2nd Vice President, WRCDA, as representatives on NARC&DC. Regarding the budget cuts, he stressed the urgency of getting letters to congressional delegations by Friday, March 9. This came out of the NARC&DC Leadership Forum. The NARC&DC website provides suggested language for these letters. The letters should ask for funding at the \$56 million level, which is up from the current level because of the need to absorb cost-of-living increase, and should be sent to Rosa DeLauro (Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Administration and Related Agencies). Also, send "Dear Colleague" letters to all congressional members and ask that they support the funding level requested or, at least, sign the "Dear Colleague" letter. In addition, every council should make sure that its area plan is up to date, complete, and on file with the national office. One focus used to be the Circle of Diamonds Program, but now it's out-of-date area plans that hold things up. Joe wants each council to make sure Bob Tribelhorn and Rich Sims have its area plan so that everything is in place when Congress inquires. Bob Tribelhorn interjected that he has asked coordinators, regardless of the status of their council's plan, to get the plan to Terry D'Addio's office. He has emphasized to coordinators how much the plans are needed in the national office. Joe Twitchell said Sharon Ruggi announced that only 180 of 375 plans are on file. They want not only the five-year plan but also the annual plan. They want these signed by the state conservationist and filed annually. Dave Radford said there are quite a few applications for new RC&D areas, but for the time being all efforts will be focused on taking care of the 375 that currently exist. Joe Leichtnam agreed, saying there have been no new RC&D area in the past four years even though 32 applications are on file.

Joe thanked the Idaho councils for paying their dues and supporting both WRCDA and NARC&DC. IRCDA is fully paid with both organizations. In exchange for IRCDA's financial

support, the organization supports the councils by conducting training and doing whatever they can to help. He recommended that, if IRCDA wants training at the fall meeting, to get on the trainers' schedule soon. He reiterated that IRCDA will be hosting the 2011 WRCDA conference and will need to round up sponsors, reserve a place to hold the meeting, make travel arrangements, develop contracts, and line up speakers. If there's any information WRCDA can provide (e.g., past registrations), IRCDA should contact the WRCDA officers for facts, figures, contract language, etc. Also, a guide book for planning a conference is available.

The monthly WRCDA teleconference call is held on the second Monday of every month. If a council's president can't be on the call, Joe encouraged the vice president or some other representative to be on deck. It's important to have a representative on the teleconference. Joe commended IRCDA for keeping its information on the WRCDA website up to date. It's important always to provide WRCDA with links or addresses for any print or email information the IRCDA distributes.

Ending his formal comments, Joe said he got involved with RC&D through recycling and solid waste. He sees this as a huge issue as more people want to live in rural areas. If he can work with IRCDA on issues relating to land fills, bale fills, and the real estate conundrum, he'll be glad to do so. Reaching him by phone is the best way to get in touch with him (cell phone number is 605-390-2812). Email isn't a good way to reach him.

As a token of IRCDA's appreciation for all Joe Leichtnam does for RC&D councils, Ken Roberts presented him with an IRCDA cap. Regarding planning conferences such as this spring 2007 IRCDA meeting and the upcoming 2011 WRCDA conference, Paul Calverley praised Arin Nesbitt as an expert planner. Joe Leichtnam added his praise and thanks to Arin and also to Kathy Dingman for her website maintenance. He reported that Reed Gardner received an award, and a press release about this will be on the website soon. Joe urged the IRCDA to acknowledge and thank Reed and Mary Seccombe (Butte, MT) for leading the efforts that resulted in the formation of the national RC&D program.

Idaho Rural Partnership (IRP)

Debbie Dane represents IRCDA on IRP, which is one of four councils the governor has for (1) economy, (2) travel, (3) workforce, and (4) science and technology. IRP meets four times a year and is comprised of various agencies and non-governmental entities. IRP meetings rotate around the state and are open to the public. Debbie distributed the IRP annual report, which lists the IRP partners. A couple of years ago, IRP realized that NRCS wasn't represented. They brought this to the attention of co-chairs Trent Clark and Roger Madsen, which resulted in Rich Sims's appointment to the IRP council. IRP is the coordinating point for access to different federal, state, private, and local resources that assist communities. Their most important service to areas is community reviews, during which every facet of a community is examined and recommendations are made about how to build on strengths and work on weak points. Last year reviews were conducted in Malad and Stanley. IRP also conducts one-day training sessions and a one-year intensive program, Leadership Idaho Agriculture, which is equivalent to getting a master's degree in Idaho studies. In many communities there's a void because no one with leadership skills is groomed to step into leadership positions when vacancies occur. IRP helps fill that void by providing training. The cost is \$75 and scholarships are available. Sometimes businesses offer scholarships for their own employees. Debbie urged IRCDA members to encourage their community leaders to participate in this IRP training. Morris Huffman has attended many one-day IRP training programs and always has found them to be very worthwhile. He thinks every council should send at least two people to take advantage of this training.

Debbie thinks the best thing IRP does as a partner is focus on Idaho communities. Right now House Bill 56 funds IRP's executive director. The bill is patterned after the national Rural Partnership Bill. In the House some parts came under critical scrutiny, which undoubtedly means some amendments will be coming. Ultimately, though, the bill will pass. In spite of IRP's trying to stay apolitical, it can't avoid politics entirely. For example, the Senate must confirm the appointment of IRP's executive director and private sector partners, and the confirmation process requires that candidates declare their political affiliation. Debbie met with Sen. Clinton Stennett about this politization of IRP, stressing that political affiliation shouldn't matter. What should matter, she believes, is that IRP stays focused on Idaho communities. Dave Radford explained that requiring candidates to declare their party affiliation is a means for achieving balanced representation, thereby assuring that the minority view is represented on IRP. Dave said this is good public policy and prevents one party from ending up in control of every board. Debbie maintained that IRP is an advisory board, not a policy-making board, and that advisors should be apolitical since they are not policy makers.

Awards:

Ken Roberts asked each council to nominate someone for each WRCDA award category. He wants the nominations by November 15. He said he doesn't need nominations to come in on the official nomination form. Instead, he wants just an informal description of the highlights of the nominee's qualifications. IRCDA will vote based on these descriptions and will then "spruce up" the winner's nomination before sending it to WRCDA. At the WRCDA meeting in Colorado Springs, five states submitted nominations but none were from Idaho.

Joe Twitchell would like to have the IRCDA awards presentations occur at the fall meeting and then be forwarded to WRCDA. WRCDA forwards their winners to NARC&DC. He thanked Ken Roberts for co-chairing the awards committee with him, saying that Ken helped get language adopted that makes it the president's responsibility to be on the awards committee. The committee will be making a binder available so everyone knows the qualifications criteria and what the judging is based on.

To show IRCDA's appreciation to Kent Rudeen for the fantastic job he did as president, Ken Roberts presented Kent with a jacket.

Nomination Committee:

Kent Rudeen asked for nominations. Dave Johnson volunteered to serve as vice president; Dave Radford volunteered to continue serving as treasurer. Rusty Parker respectfully declined to run for re-election. Ken Roberts announced officially that the nominees were Dave Johnson for vice president and Dave Radford for treasurer, and then the nominations were closed. Clyde Hanson moved that the secretary be instructed to cast a favorable ballot for the candidates; Morris Huffman seconded. The motion passed by voice vote.

Ken Roberts presented Bob Tribelhorn with an IRCDA cap as a token of appreciation for Bob's support of IRCDA.

Fall Meeting (Idaho Falls) Agenda and Arrangements:

Dave Radford said the Idaho Falls Holiday Inn Express (\$89/night) could accommodate the meeting, which will be on September 25-26. He will put together some possibilities for side trips. Ken Roberts wants side trips to occur either before or after the meeting, making them an optional activity for attendees. He reminded everyone that the fall 2008 meeting will be hosted by the Clearwater RC&D Council.

Marketing Plan:

Morris Huffman, Debbie Dane, and Dave Radford volunteered to write a draft marketing plan for the IRCDA and present it at the Idaho Falls meeting. Morris wants to know from each council what they think IRCDA should be focusing on at the state level (as opposed to the council level). Dave Radford suggested they create a list of all the things the Idaho councils have in common and then focus the marketing plan on as many as six of those common items. Morris will notify all councils what the deadline for submitting contributions to the plan is. Bob Tribelhorn reminded everyone that the IRCDA board member manual has some relevant information in it, and Paula Jones suggested looking at the document that provides information about contacting legislators.

Congressional Staff Letters from IRCDA and Councils:

Ken Roberts and Joe Leichtnam explained that each council and every council member should mail letters that urge their legislators to continue support for the RC&D Program. Ken and Joe hope that at least one commissioner from each county will write letters, too. The WRCD website says the letters should be faxed to NARC&DC and to the Idaho congressional delegation. Ken will send a letter for the IRCDA. Bob Tribelhorn reminded everyone that NRCS equipment and personnel can not be used in any way to help with these letters.

Proposed Letter to Governor Otter:

Joe Twitchell volunteered to thank Gov. Otter for his past support of the RC&D Program and to ask him to write a letter to Idaho's congressional representatives in support of continuing the program. The governor's representative advised Joe to send information about the program, about what the councils do, and what the previous Idaho governors have done in the past to support the RC&D Program (especially Gov. Kempthorne, who included the RC&D Program in the state fire plan). Joe passed around copies of his draft letter, which emphasizes FEMA plans for the counties. Dave Radford suggested he also emphasize weed management and biocontrol programs. Steve Smart asked that the letter include descriptions of the projects in the High Country, Three Rivers, and Mid-Snake regions. Dave Radford said he, too, talked with the governor's representative (Ann) about the governor's emphasis on milfoil and weeds in his State of the State Address.

Dave Radford proposed that the IRCDA Executive Committee talk with Gov. Otter. Ken Roberts concurred and directed Dave Radford to set up a combination governor-staff meeting. Dan Pierce and Chuck Doty explained that Bonnie Butler, one of the governor's representatives, will be a very helpful contact to IRCDA because until Otter became governor Bonnie was his representative in Lewiston. She frequently attended Clearwater RC&D Council meetings and was always very supportive of the RC&D Program. Russ Manwaring said it is important to help educate the governor as quickly as possible. The Three Rivers and West Central Highlands councils had to have the governor's endorsement for their watershed grants.

National RC&D Recognition Week-Council Involvement:

Ken Roberts asked if councils have been involved with this in the past at either the state or council level. Joe Leichtnam said it will be celebrated this year in the fall. Dan Pierce said that information from NARC&DC encouraged councils to contact the media, and NARC&DC provided introductory paragraphs as a start for council-tailored press releases. Clearwater RC&D Council has done this in the past. Ken would like to see IRCDA and RC&D councils advertise themselves more. He thinks this might be a good way to get councils to get information into newspapers, and that would help publicize the RC&D Program. He proposed making this a state project and said IRCDA will remind every council in the state to get their press releases into the paper.

IRCDA Officer Term Limits:

Ken Roberts was asked to bring up this discussion topic. He explained that many states and RC&D councils have a limit of two terms for officers, and many others have had the same officers for a very long time. Kent Rudeen said IRCDA had term limits originally but did away with them. Based on discussion, Ken Roberts concluded that, for the present, IRCDA won't change its policy about term limits.

Topics for Fall 2007 Meeting:

Ken Roberts asked members to let him know what topics they want to discuss at the fall 2007 meeting. Suggestions included:

- Energy audits (possible speaker: Gerald Willis)
- Board management, leadership, and leadership development (possible speaker: Nedda Simon)
- Soil conservation (possible speaker: Kyle Hawley, IASCD)
- Idaho Association of Cities and the Idaho Association of Counties (possible speaker for legislation issues: Dan Chadwick)
- Commerce and Labor
- One-day or half-day training (possible speakers: Donna Hunter)
- Follow up and support for the marketing plan
- Four-hour IRP training session (possible speaker: Dale Dixon, Exec. Dir., IRP). Ken Roberts said each council would have to pick up part of this cost. Ken Roberts asked for a show of hands for how many would come to a four-hour training session (many hands raised); one person indicated he would not come. Ken Roberts directed Debbie Dane to look into the feasibility of a half-day program, to find out what the charge would be, and to consult with Morris Huffman about the best topic for this training session.

Displaying the Organization:

Dastina Johnson (Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-NRCS) led this discussion about how to build a more effective traveling display. After the marketing plan has been finalized, the display will be revised to tie in with the plan. The consensus was for the revised display's design to accomplish the following objectives:

- Communicate the RC&D mission
- Highlight successful projects
- Focus on local-level projects
- Provide a broad view of issues and projects addressed by RC&D councils
- Be relevant for several years without requiring frequent revision
- Feature water quality, community development, wildlife, weed management, and natural resources
- Show why RC&D involvement in projects is beneficial to Idaho
- Showcase the value of partnerships

Ken Roberts said the display will be kept in a central location and IRCDA will ship it to individual council members, who will take it to where it will be set up.

Adjournment:

Ken Roberts adjourned the meeting at 11:58 a.m.