

Serving Our Members

How your association is doing the job to promote, protect, and preserve the Idaho cattle industry



BY MARTY GILL

ICA President

Hopefully we are finally reaching springtime for many of you after a long and brutal winter in many areas of the state. The winter and early spring periods are very busy for your ICA leadership team and Staff, and I would like to give all of you an update and overview on the many issues we have been working on at the local, state, and national levels. It is these efforts that set the course for the future success of both this association and livestock industry. It is our #1 priority to make wise use of limited member dues dollars in supporting this mission, and you as a due paying producer need to know where, how, and why we are spending your money.

Local Level : Communication with our producers in their home areas is paramount to learning about and understanding issues that affect the success of their operations. To that end Cameron, other ICA executive team members, and I have made it a priority to be at as many local and county cattle association meetings, bull sales, and other livestock related events and seminars across this state as possible – and we are not done yet. These venues have been mostly positive, but also a good avenue to learn about challenges and things that ICA needs to be aware of or act on. This local, grassroots input is the foundation for developing ICA policy at Mid-Year and fall convention meetings that drive this association forward.

State Level – Legislative: We must start with the current legislative session and a brief summary of bills and issues that ICA was watching, working for or against as necessary, and doing as much as possible to support our industry and the people, businesses, and agencies that help support us. The bills and issues consisted of the following:

- Finalization of the prior approved brand inspection fee increase to keep our Brand Board financially sound and capable of operating at the “speed of cattle commerce”.
- Removing the sunset clause from the law on funding for wolf depredation issues and maintaining go forward funding from the State.

- Maintaining protections for landowners under the private property rights and updated trespassing law passed a year ago.
- Keeping an eye on stock water rights, open range, and other related issues
- Development of an Idaho committee charged with reviewing and commenting on federal land management Plans (BLM and Forest Service) within Idaho.
- Discussions with Idaho Dept. of Lands on State Grazing Leases

State Level – Department and Agency: ICA continues to work with ISDA on issues including CAFO inspections of feedlots, growyards, and ranches as well as brucellosis, trichomoniasis testing and other animal health related issues. We enjoy and appreciate our good working relationship with Director Gould, Dr. Barton, the “Range Monitoring Team”, and many other capable people within ISDA.

ICA would also like to extend a warm welcome to both of the following gentlemen in their new roles as state leaders: Mr. Ed Schriever – Idaho Fish and Game and Mr. John Ruhs – Idaho BLM Director. We have met with both of these guys and look forward to a long and positive working relationship between our groups. I think all of us realize that the most effective and positive long-term land management practices will come from on the ground input from our ranchers and farmers, along with support and involvement from the department and agency people. I am hopeful that we share the same vision of proactive and beneficial land and game management practices for the future of Idaho. This will help us address pertinent issues like growing game and wild horse populations along with the damage they cause, wolf depredations, and fuels management (thinning, logging, and grazing – versus burning it up!)

National Level: Our ICA and IPLC team consisting of Cameron, Karen, Dawn, Darcy, Brenda and myself just returned from Washington DC and the national meetings last week. This was a “jam packed” 4 days of meetings with PLC,

NCBA, our congressional delegation, and top-level agency people within both the BLM and USDA. A few of the trip highlights were:

- Understanding that Idaho is very fortunate to have people who understand and appreciate agriculture representing us and have an “open door policy for us” to discuss cattle industry related issues.
- A productive meeting with Brian Steed, BLM Deputy Director while his boss David Bernhardt, a man who ICA supported, was sailing thru Senate confirmation hearings on his way to becoming the next Secretary of the Interior. We are looking forward to working with both Mr. Bernhardt and Mr. Steed in the future, as they understand western land and grazing issues.

Then we divided our ICA/PLC team to cover two more important meetings. Dawn, Cameron and I were able to meet with Mr. Jim Hubbard, USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources, who oversees the US Forest Service – his messages were encouraging as he indicated that Ag. Secretary Perdue, has charged the USFS with producing more timber sales in the future. We also had proactive discussions on using the Good Neighbor Authority and the new Shared Stewardship agreements to move forward with state and county groups on proactive, landscape scale management activities (both logging and grazing) that get projects done on the ground. It was duly noted that Governor Little is a strong proponent of this approach and

Idaho is the first state to sign onto the new Shared Stewardship agreement, but he expects more states to follow. ICA appreciates Governor Little and his efforts to move these concepts forward and will be working with him as much as possible.

Karen, Darcy, and Brenda were able to attend and present ideas and recommendations from ICA/PLC at a very high level, invitation-only grazing regulations reform meeting at the Dept. of Interior. This was a well-coordinated and planned grazing system educational review by all of the PLC member states and Idaho played some key roles. To put this in perspective, the grazing regulations have not had a significant review or updating since the early 1990s – think Babbitt Administration and “Cattle Free by 93 Slogans” if you have any doubt that this needs to happen ASAP! Our “Cowgirl Team” did a great job and reported that this was a productive meeting with more dialogue and recommendations to come.

We also had the chance to have dinner and visit with both Aurelia Skipworth, who we will hope to be re-nominated as Director of US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Dept. of Interior and Tim Williams, Deputy Director External Affairs – Dept. of Interior. Both of these relationships are a result of the Idaho Governor’s Trail Ride, as they have been out here a couple of times and are planning on coming back. These connections and

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