



**Board Report:  
February 4, 2025  
Susan Buxton, Director**

**Deferred Maintenance and Capitol Projects**

After the IDPR Board meeting on October 28, 2025, in Coeur d’Alene, the Director’s office has been focused on encumbering the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for IDPR and approved Idaho Outdoor Recreation Fund Advisory Council (ORFAC) projects. The funds were required to be encumbered as of December 31, 2024, and have their corresponding projects completed by December 31, 2026 (US Treasury regulations). The total amount of ARPA funds appropriated to IDPR from the Idaho Legislature and signed into law by Governor Little over the last 3 fiscal years was \$65 million dollars. The amount of state surplus funds appropriated to address deferred maintenance and capital projects appropriated was \$100M. IDPR’s development and fiscal teams have done amazing work getting projects bid and under contract and to address the accounting requirements. Please know that none of the monies include funds for personnel or operating expenses. I am beyond proud of our employees’ work, including what is needed our properties in order to have the public still enjoy our beautiful places, and address the construction.

The deferred maintenance and capital needs have been accumulating for many decades so these investments in outdoor recreation represent needs that have built up over 100 years for Idaho state parks and recreation facilities.

**New Reservation and Registration System**

During the same timeframe, the Reservation and Registration crew, and the parks staff, have been working with Brandt to install and launch the new system. This occurred on January 6, 2025, the same day as Governor Brad Little’s State of the State address. The launch was successful and was able to accommodate over 24,000 reservations. Seth Hobbs’ report does a great job describing the process and the efforts. No effort was without some glitches but the IDPR and Brandt teams were able to keep the system up, make system changes to address unforeseen glitches while the system operated.

**Legislative Tour and Forestry Day**

In November, 2024, we met with Legislators in Coeur d’Alene, Lewiston, Idaho Falls and Nampa with other agencies (IDFG, IDL, DEQ, PERSI, Tax) to provide information about the agencies, discuss proposed budget requests, discuss regional issues, describe the challenges and successes of the agencies and hear what issues the Legislators hear from their constituents. Scheduling was more difficult this year but the conversations were invaluable. It is always worthwhile to meet Legislators

in or near their districts so the local issues can be identified. It also provides opportunity for our board members to meet with us and the legislators in their areas.

Similarly, Vice-Chair Chuck Roady was a presenter at Forestry Day in January. There was a luncheon and we had a great opportunity to meet legislators, other natural resource agency representatives and stakeholders to discuss the issues facing the State and nation. Chuck and I were able to meet with Mike Boren, the newly appointed Undersecretary of Agriculture and Tom Schultz, the new Chief of Staff and discuss their new roles with USDA. Mike has previously served on the IDPR Board and Tom was the former Director of IDL. I look forward to working with them.

### **Meetings Attended**

I have attended many meetings but want to recount a few:

ORFAC met to recommend projects to use \$5M of ARPA funds on October 25, 2024 and forwarded their recommendations to Governor Little. This Board made the final decision on those projects on December 12, 2024. The deadline of January 17, 2025, was set for submission of qualifying encumbrances to be received by the successful applicants. Since then, the projects are being reviewed as to whether they met the requirements of ARPA. We will set a special meeting with the Board to go over the final allocations of ARPA.

I was able to attend the North and South Region meetings, and the HQ meeting which had most of the employees in those groups in attendance. We discuss budgets, HR issues, operations and specific issues to the properties and employees in those areas. I find those and the Managers Meeting (held last week), to be the best way for me to see what our employees, the parks and recreation programs and the communities they serve need. It is also abundantly clear that we have amazing and caring people that work for IDPR. I am always inspired by each of them and their expertise.

I meet with user groups, other state, local and federal agencies, the Governor's office, non-profits and many more. I am always excited to tell IDPR's story. Just last week, I was able to meet with a local Kiwanis Club along with the Deputy Director of Health and Welfare to talk about our Foster Kids in the State Parks program and the events we have planned in the parks for foster families. The energy the public has for programs like these that combine state agencies and service groups is uplifting. I believe we will be able to get more donations for this program.



My third year as a Regent and Instructor for the national State Parks Leadership ended the first week of January 2025. The best part was that IDPR had 3 students graduate the program: Abigail Rossman (Harriman/Ashton-Tetonia Trail), Blake Packer (Land of Yankee Fork) and Ryan Buffington (East Region Manager). We have four first year students too: Joe Fihe (LOYF), Kirsten March (Walcott), Zack Grogen (Cascade) and John Seely (Dworshak). Spending a large part of a week

getting to know these outstanding leaders was priceless. The development that SPLS offers for networking, leadership and skills training alongside parks employees across the nation is wonderful.

Keith Jones at Round Lake



Group at Old Mission



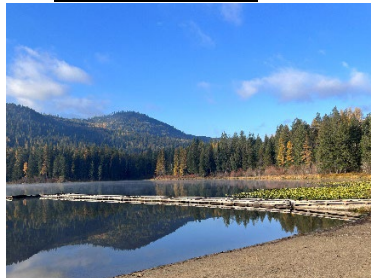
### IDPR Board at Old Mission 2024

After the Board meeting in October 2024, Brian Beckley, Chuck Rody, me, Adam Zaragoza, Joanna Hiller, Keith Jones and Mary McGraw were able to tour the new shop at Round Lake and look at the proposed IDL timber sale area near the park and the tree house sites we are building. It was great to have Keith, Chuck and Mary together to look at the condition of the timber and the sites. I learned a lot from those three who all have forestry backgrounds. Our continued program to address timber on IDPR lands will help maintain our natural resources for the future and address some “ugly” trees that need removal.

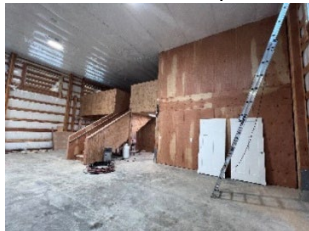
Round Lake State Park



Round Lake State Park



Visited the new shop in Smelterville when we toured the Old Mission



### **Conclusion**

I continue to marvel that I have the best job. This report is meant to be a snapshot of a few months of activity. There are many other meetings, negotiations, problem solving, wonderful collaborations and alliances that IDPR has and is building upon. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve this Board and the State of Idaho.