

**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION**  
*“To improve the quality of life in Idaho through outdoor recreation and resource stewardship”*  
**Quarterly Board Meeting**  
**February 19, 2026**  
**IDPR Headquarters – Summit Room**  
**5657 Warm Springs Avenue**  
**Boise, ID 83716**

**MINUTES**

**Thursday, February 19, 2026; 9:00 AM (MST)**

Boise, ID

MEETING ADJOURNED AT APPROXIMATELY 12:41 P.M., February 19, 2026

**Thursday, February 19, 2026**, Call to Order – At 9:00 A.M., Chairman Roady called the meeting to order and requested a roll call.

- Chairman Roady - Present
- Vice Chairman Cooke – Present
- Board Member Keating – Present
- Board Member Manning – Present
- Board Member Liddiard – Present

Also present during all or portions of the meeting either in person or on Teams were the following individuals:

Susan Buxton, Director  
Troy Elmore, Operations Division Administrator  
Teresa Kraipowich, Executive Management Assistant  
Will Armbruster, Senior Public Information Officer  
Jennifer Quinno-Miller, Human Resources Officer  
Melanie Schuster, Development Bureau Chief  
Seth Hobbs, Reservations & Registrations Program Manager  
Steve Martin, Financial Officer  
Dave Claycomb, Recreation Bureau Chief  
Hailey Husband, Non-Motorized Trails Program Coordinator  
Erik Ryan, Project Manager  
Robert Follett, Deputy Attorney General  
Johannes Giessen, South Region Manager  
Cami Miller, Senior Financial Specialist (online)  
Stephanie Page, Financial Specialist (online)  
Kathy Muir, State & Federal Grant Manager (online)  
Lisa Herriot, Senior Financial Management Analyst, DFM (online)  
Kirsten March, Lake Walcott State Park Manager (online)  
Pamela Huck, Real Estate Manager (online)  
Andrew Salzano, Eagle Island State Park Manager (online)

David White, North Region Manager (online)  
Ryan Buffington, East Region Manager (online)  
Andy Stokes, Bear Lake State Park Manager (online)  
Chris Zajchowski, University of Idaho Assistant Professor (online)  
Trenton Durfee, Castle Rocks State Park Manager (online)  
Austin Zollinger, City of Rocks Assistant Park Manager (online)  
Zach Grogan, Twin Peaks Ranch State Park Manager (online)  
Blake Packer, Land of Yankee Fork State Park Manager (online)  
Keith Jones, Natural Resource Manager (online)  
Phoebe Wallace, Boating Program Supervisor (online)  
Richard Johnson, Guest (online)

### **Welcome and Introductions / Chairman Roady and Director Buxton**

Chairman Roady welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **Additions and Changes to the Agenda**

No additions or changes to the agenda.

### **Consent Agenda – Action Item**

Approval of Minutes

- January 22, 2026

**Ms. Manning moved that the Board approve the January 22, 2026, minutes. Mr. Keating seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **Director’s Update/Legislative Update – Information Only**

Director Buxton highlighted ongoing challenges from reductions to the agency’s General Fund, including a permanent 2% cut (approximately \$212,000) impacting personnel and operations across parks and central services. While leadership is working to strategically manage these reductions, they create continued operational strain. The department is actively engaging with Legislature to identify a more sustainable long-term funding model. Park passport program stickers are dissolved.

### **Twin Peaks Concerns – Ryan Buffington**

Ryan Buffington reported significant progress on construction at Twin Peaks, including parking improvements, road access upgrades, new gravel installation, cabin remodels, fence repairs, and demolition of the arena. Upcoming exhibition events are planned with the Backcountry Horsemen, and the grand opening is scheduled for June 26–27, 2026, in Salmon.

### **Idaho Centennial Trail – Action Item**

Troy Elmore and Hailey Husband presented a proposal to redesignate a portion of the Idaho Centennial Trail to improve user safety. The current route requires a hazardous ford across Big Creek with no bridge access. In coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, IDPR is proposing to reroute the trail to follow Milk Creek Trail #064 and Monumental Creek Trail #005, which provide a safer crossing. The Salmon-Challis National Forest supports the proposed route change.

IDPR staff recommend the Board approve the proposed route change to the Idaho Centennial Trail.

**Mr. Cooke moved to approve the proposed route change to the Idaho Centennial Trail. Mr. Keating seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.**

### **Kootenai Electric Cooperative – Action Item**

Pam Huck reported the completion of construction at a new campground and ranger house at Mowry State Park. In order to provide electrical service for the new facilities, Kootenai Electric has requested a right-of-way easement. Granting this easement does not affect public access to the park, and there is no fiscal impact for granting this right-of-way.

IDPR staff recommend the Board authorize the Director to sign the Right-of Way Easement to Kootenai Electric, for electrical service for the new campground and ranger duplex at Mowry State Park.

**Ms. Manning moved that the Board authorize the Director to sign the Right-of-Way to Kootenai Electric, for electrical service for the new campground and ranger duplex at Mowry State Park. Mr. Keating seconded the motion. The Chairman called for a roll call vote.**

- **Chairman Roady – Yes**
  - **Vice Chairman Cooke – Yes**
  - **Board Member Keating – Yes**
  - **Board Member Manning – Yes**
  - **Board Member Liddiard – Yes**
- Motion carried unanimously.**

### **Welcome Packets USS IDAHO Crew – Action Item**

Director Buxton announced that the USS Idaho (SSN-799) will be commissioned into the U.S. Navy on April 25, 2026, at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut. Following coordination with Richard Colburn of the commissioning committee, IDPR plans to distribute 150 Idaho State Parks welcome packets to crew members during the event.

IDPR staff recommend the Board approve the proposed idea to distribute 150 Idaho State Parks Welcome Packets which would consist of day passes, brochures and stickers. Since weight is an issue with submarines, we wanted some useful items without bulk.

**Mr. Keating moved that the Board approve the proposed idea to distribute 150 Idaho State Parks Welcome Packets which would consist of day passes, brochures and stickers. Mr. Cooke seconded the motion. The Chairman called for a roll call vote.**

- **Chairman Roady – Yes**
- **Vice Chairman Cooke – Yes**
- **Board Member Keating – Yes**
- **Board Member Manning – Yes**
- **Board Member Liddiard – Yes**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

### **Development Update – Information Only**

Melanie Schuster presented an overview of construction and development projects across the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation system, highlighting \$65 million in ARPA funding supporting 51 total projects. Of these, 45 are managed in-house, with approximately 66% already substantially complete to meet required deadlines this year. Projects include a range of improvements and new amenities, with interest in unique features such as treehouses.

### **Budget Update – Information Only**

Steve Martin reported on FY2026 financials, noting a 2.3% (\$97,800) reduction in General Fund appropriations, though approximately \$31,000 was previously unspendable, resulting in an effective reduction of about \$60,000. He also highlighted an increase of \$1,700 per FTE for employee health benefits, adding additional cost pressures to the agency.

### **Workshop to Review Strategic Plan – Information Only**

Melanie Schuster described a plan to measure for reduced backlog and maintenance projects and establish an ongoing maintenance program. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation's development strategy focuses on balancing rapid growth in outdoor recreation demand with long-term stewardship of Idaho's natural and cultural resources. The plan is centered on sustainable expansion, asset management, and enhancing visitor experiences while maintaining fiscal responsibility. A core priority is reinvestment in aging facilities, including campgrounds, utilities, roads, and visitor amenities. The plan promotes resilient infrastructure that supports year-round use and adapts to changing

environmental conditions. IDPR will leverage partnerships with local governments, tribes, federal agencies, and private organizations to expand recreation opportunities, share costs, and strengthen community engagement.

## **Staff Reports**

### **Human Resources**

Jennifer Quinno-Miller reported that recruitment is progressing well, noting that vacancy numbers can fluctuate due to internal promotions creating a domino effect. The improved labor market has resulted in higher-quality applicants, with the department experiencing approximately 11% turnover and 4% vacancy rates.

### **College of Natural Resources**

Chris Zajkowski reported on efforts to have HR staff participate in a career day event at the University of Idaho to support recruitment, and recognized Rebecca for her research and coordination in advancing this opportunity.

### **Communications**

Will Armbruster reported on social media campaigns aimed at increasing park visitation this summer and promoting the opening of Twin Peaks Ranch State Park in June 2026. Efforts are focused on expanding outreach, marketing new and improved facilities, and identifying cost-effective advertising strategies amid budget constraints, while also supporting long-term funding goals for parks and recreation.

The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation is exploring renewed collaboration with the Idaho Department of Commerce to revive a statewide campground guide in a digital format, with strengthened partnerships following leadership transitions. Despite the removal of direct funding for America 250, the department continues to incorporate related themes into programming in coordination with the Idaho State Historical Society.

No other program reports were presented orally during the Board meeting.

**Old/New Business**

None.

**Public Comment**

None.

**No Executive Session**

**ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:41 P.M.

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Chairman Chuck Roady  
Idaho Parks & Recreation Board

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Susan E. Buxton, Director  
Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation