



STATE OF IDAHO

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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NEWS RELEASE

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TAKASUGI ATTENDS KEY MEETINGS TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURE REGULATORY CLIMATE, COMBAT NOXIOUS WEEDS

(BOISE) Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Pat Takasugi attended three key meetings in Washington, D.C., and Bethesda, Maryland, this week intended to improve the regulatory climate for the agriculture industry and combat noxious weeds and invasive species.

Takasugi participated in a meeting on Monday of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Biotechnology Regulatory Service (USDA BRS).

USDA entered into an agreement with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) to train and certify state personnel in biotechnology notification inspections. Last year, APHIS trained state personnel. This year, the agency is overseeing on-the-job certification for state workers. That certification will ultimately lead to states conducting inspections. Two inspectors from Idaho have already attended the training.

Takasugi serves on the NASDA committee that is working with USDA on implementation of state oversight.

The meeting provided BRS Administrator Cindy Smith with feedback on the state-federal partnership, and discussed ways the agreement can continue.

"It is through partnerships with USDA that state departments of agriculture can provide the needed local knowledge input and provide additional resources for needed inspections and regulation," Takasugi said. "Being part of the process also keeps the states informed as to what may be occurring within each state and also to provide a better-coordinated process between state and the federal partners. We expect better service and better oversight for biotech projects, from which our state agriculture can benefit and from which the consumer can enjoy a safe and abundant food supply."

Takasugi also attended meetings of the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Air Quality Task Force. Takasugi serves on the task force consisting of scientists, environmentalists, farmers, academia and citizens. The panel advises U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns on air quality issues.

Johanns and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Steven Johnson thanked the task force for its advice, saying the panel's time commitment continues to

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be valuable. Johnson said cooperation and collaboration are governing principles for his agency.

Said Takasugi, "It is important that both the Secretary of Agriculture and the Administrator of the EPA hear about the successes in Idaho agricultural environmental compliance, and the efforts to balance both compliance and our economic competitiveness. Idaho's agriculture leadership, especially the dairymen and the ranchers, are setting the national course for American agriculture."

On Thursday, Takasugi will be attending the National Invasive Weed Awareness Conference. The conference will go over successes and models that could be used in different regions of the country. Takasugi noted that Idaho's Cooperative Weed Management Area program is considered a model that other states are adopting in order to combat noxious weeds and invasive species. Takasugi also expects to discuss with other states Governor Kempthorne's plan to have an invasive species coordinator, who will monitor and address emerging threats.

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