

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Economic leadership conference meets Nov. 17-18 in Boise**

BOISE, IDAHO – More than 110 state and provincial legislators and business leaders from the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada will convene at the Economic Leadership Forum, Nov. 17-18 in Boise, to discuss regional economic issues, support international trade and build cross-border cooperation.

Lt. Gov. Brad Little will open the conference at the Boise Convention Centre East in Boise. The forum is open to the public. It is presented by the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER), a public/private non-profit chartered by five states, three provinces, and two territories in 1991. The mission of PNWER is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region; identify and promote "models of success;" and serve as a conduit to exchange information.

Delegates will address pressing issues to Idaho and the region, including the immediate threat of quagga and zebra mussels, oil train safety and the use of drones to inspect railroads, Idaho's leading practices in transportation planning, in forestry and cybersecurity, will be among the topics, and delegates will discuss regional solutions through PNWER's active policy working groups.

"I appreciate PNWER's focus on collaboration across borders because many of the challenges we face don't stop at the state, the provincial or even our national boundaries," Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter said. "PNWER members are taking full advantage of the opportunity that our shared circumstances offers. While recognizing our sovereignty and individual priorities, there is great value in taking a truly regional approach to certain public policy issues."

The meeting's Invasive Species session, taking place 9:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Thursday, will confront the critical issue of invasive quagga and zebra mussels. Tests recently revealed a possible infestation of the mussels in the Tiber and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs in Montana - the first time invasive mussels have been found in a Pacific Northwest waterway. The session will feature an update on the situation as well as comments from invasive species administrators and experts from Idaho, Alberta, Washington, Oregon, British Columbia and Saskatchewan to give updates on their prevention efforts and begin planning a coordinated response. A PNWER economic impact assessment estimated the cost of an invasion in Western Canada and the Pacific Northwest U.S. to be as much as \$500 million annually. The economic impact study and more information on the mussel threat is available at <http://bit.ly/2fWxnli>.

A moderated panel taking place 8 - 9:15 a.m. Friday will feature state legislators - including Sen. Chuck Winder, Idaho; Sen. Maralyn Chase, Washington; and Rep. Mike Cuffe of Montana - discussing the result of state elections and their impact on the region's political landscape.

For more information, visit [www.pnwer.org/2016wintermeeting](http://www.pnwer.org/2016wintermeeting). The meeting is free and open to accredited media. Download a [media accreditation form](#) and return it to mark.stayton@pnwer.org or bring it to the PNWER Registration Desk at Boise Centre East, Room 440.