



CITY OF GARDEN CITY OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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July 13, 2026

Senator Tammy Nichols
District 10
PO Box 651
Middleton, Idaho 83644
208-917-2409
tnichols@senate.idaho.gov

Representative John Gannon
District 17
1104 Johnson Street
Boise, Idaho 83705
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jgannon@house.idaho.gov

Re: Rat Infestation in the Treasure Valley – Coordinated Regional Response

Dear Senator Nichols and Representative Gannon:

Thank you for your June 24, 2026, letter regarding the rat infestation problem in the Treasure Valley and for your service to the residents of Idaho. Garden City appreciates your leadership on this issue during the most recent legislative session and your continued engagement with local governments to coordinate a regional response.

Garden City shares your concerns regarding the serious public health, safety, and property impacts of this infestation. Our residents have reported increasing complaints about property damage, contamination, and the potential spread of disease. We agree that this problem extends beyond municipal boundaries and requires cooperation among state and local governments to prevent further escalation.

Garden City's Actions to Date

Garden City has taken formal action to request a coordinated countywide response. On July 13, 2026, I sent a letter to the Ada County Board of Commissioners on behalf of the City of Garden City, joining the Cities of Boise and Meridian in urging the County to exercise its statutory authority to address this emergency.

Specifically, Garden City requested that the Ada County Board of Commissioners:

1. **Call a special public hearing** pursuant to Idaho Code § 39-2812 to consider an emergency declaration that rats are a pest of public health and welfare significance within Ada County; and
2. **Explore and implement a special property tax levy** under Idaho Code § 39-2805 to establish a dedicated, sustainable funding source for comprehensive rat mitigation and public health protection.

These requests are grounded in Idaho's existing statutory framework. Under Idaho Code § 39-2812(1), the board of county commissioners of each county, in collaboration with duly recognized local and state officials and after a public hearing called as a special meeting, is granted full power and authority to declare such pests as public health and welfare pests and to initiate activities to hinder the potential spread of disease or adverse economic impact caused by these pests.

Boards of county commissioners are further authorized, in the event of a disaster or emergency declared by such boards, to make direct appropriations for the purpose of controlling public health and welfare pests and to impose an annual property tax assessment pursuant to Idaho Code § 39-2805 for the term of the disaster or emergency or until all expenses incurred during the disaster or emergency have been recovered.

The board of county commissioners must levy upon taxable property within the district a tax at a rate not greater than sufficient to raise the amount necessary for the operation of the district for the ensuing year, provided that such tax shall not exceed one tenth percent of the market value for assessment purposes on all taxable property within the district. This represents a fair and equitable funding mechanism that ensures all Ada County residents contribute to a solution that benefits everyone.

Statutory Authority and Coordination

We understand and appreciate your call for local governments to take responsibility within their areas of jurisdiction. However, Garden City must respectfully clarify the statutory framework governing pest abatement in Idaho.

Under Idaho Code § 39-2812, the Ada County Board of Commissioners has primary statutory authority to declare a pest of public health and welfare significance and to establish an interim abatement district to coordinate regional mitigation efforts. The disaster or emergency declaration of a pest of public health and welfare significance within a county and subsequent pest management activity places the whole county into an interim abatement district for administrative purposes for no more than two years. This interim structure is specifically designed to enable coordinated, countywide responses to pest infestations that cross municipal boundaries.

The rat infestation along the Boise River corridor, irrigation canals, drainage systems, highway district rights-of-way, and state parks involve overlapping jurisdictions and

multiple governmental entities. A patchwork of independent municipal actions cannot effectively address a problem of this geographic scope and biological mobility.

For this reason, Garden City has urged the Ada County Board of Commissioners to exercise its statutory authority to establish a countywide interim abatement district with dedicated funding. This approach ensures consistent prevention measures, improved monitoring, targeted abatement strategies, and collaborative planning across all jurisdictions. It also provides a clear administrative structure and funding mechanism specifically authorized by Idaho law for this purpose.

Garden City's Commitment to Regional Cooperation

Garden City is fully committed to working collaboratively with Ada County, our fellow municipalities, irrigation districts, highway districts, health districts, and state agencies to address this urgent public health threat. We are prepared to:

- Designate a city staff representative to participate in regional coordination meetings and assist in planning and information sharing;
- Support public education and outreach efforts within Garden City to inform residents about prevention and mitigation measures;
- Share data and information regarding reported infestations, problem areas, and environmental conditions within our jurisdiction;
- Collaborate with the Ada County Weed, Pest, and Mosquito Abatement program and any interim abatement district established by the County;
- Take appropriate local action within our municipal authority to reduce rat habitats and address public nuisances related to the infestation; and
- Support a coordinated regional response plan that allocates responsibilities consistent with existing statutory authority and available resources.

Garden City agrees that this is not the time for finger-pointing or jurisdictional disputes. However, effective intergovernmental cooperation requires clear allocation of responsibility consistent with Idaho law. The most legally sound and fiscally sustainable path forward is for the Ada County Board of Commissioners to exercise its statutory authority under Idaho Code § 39-2812 to establish an interim abatement district with dedicated countywide funding under Idaho Code § 39-2805.

Support for Future Legislative Action

Garden City strongly supports your future legislative efforts to involve the Idaho Department of Agriculture and provide additional statewide resources and authority to address this issue. A formal invasive species designation and state-level technical assistance would significantly enhance local mitigation efforts and provide access to expertise and resources that local governments do not independently possess.

We also support legislative efforts to clarify and expand local government authority to address emerging public health threats, ensure adequate funding mechanisms are available, and facilitate collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries. Your leadership in

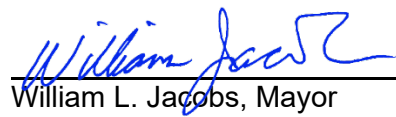
the Legislature is essential to developing a comprehensive statewide framework for addressing current and future pest-related public health emergencies.

Garden City is fully committed to doing our part to protect the health, safety, and property of our residents. We have taken formal action to request that the Ada County Board of Commissioners exercise its statutory authority to declare an emergency and establish a countywide abatement district with dedicated funding. We stand ready to collaborate with the County, our fellow municipalities, and all affected agencies and districts to implement an effective regional response.

We are grateful for your continued leadership on this issue and look forward to working with you to support future legislative solutions that provide additional tools and resources for addressing this serious public health threat.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or if Garden City can provide additional information or assistance.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "William L. Jacobs", is written over a horizontal line.

William L. Jacobs, Mayor