

"We can't grasp the thought that money is entitlement to do something awful. Financial ability does not carry certification that it's a good idea. Oceans and bays and wetlands – what we call nature – belong to all of us, not just to those who can afford a very expensive window to look through at what is left after the builders saw through."

-- Editorial in the *Philadelphia Daily News*, 1988

HOOK 'n BULLET DIGEST March 13, 2013

A collection of news, opinions and debates reported from the hot kitchen of our democratic hunting and angling tradition

The purpose of this 'Digest' is to help hunters and anglers become better informed of news and opinion that is not published in their local media. As you can see from the contents of the Digest a person who only reads their local paper and only watches local TV will never see much of the news and opinion that is actually published in the public forums of other communities across the state and nation. I compile whatever I find on the web and in the press regardless of sentiment and send it on. – Ron Moody –

"Information is the currency of democracy."

--Thomas Jefferson, Third US President and author of the Declaration of Independence

"A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both." -- **James Madison**, Fourth US President and 'Father of the U.S. Constitution'

>>>> FORWARD THE HOOK 'n BULLET DIGEST TO YOUR FRIENDS >>>>

If you see a published article of interest to hunters and anglers email a link/copy including source name and date to couleeking@hotmail.com

{to see stories complete with pictures and graphics open the attached msword doc}

HOOK 'n BULLETINS

Missoulian

MISSOULIAN

March 11, 2013

FWP Commission to discuss commercial harvest of carp, fisheries improvement

- [Missoulian](#)
(1) [Comments](#)

MISSOULA — The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission will meet by videoconference Thursday to consider final action on two fisheries-related items.

The call, set to begin at 8:30 a.m., will be streamed live at FWP headquarters in Helena, 1420 E. Sixth Ave., and at each FWP regional office. Public comment can be offered at each location.

Only two final action items are on the commission's agenda: commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena, near Helena; and consideration of 15 Future Fisheries Improvement projects for the winter funding cycle.

The commercial fishing regulations are proposed again this year for carp harvests on the two lakes.

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program aims to restore rivers, streams and lakes to enhance wild fish habitat. About \$585,000 is available to fund the proposed projects, which were recently approved by the Future Fisheries Citizen Review Panel.

For the full agenda and additional information, visit FWP's website at fwp.mt.gov. Follow the "For Commission Information" link.

FWP ensures its meetings are accessible to individuals with special needs. To request arrangements, call (406) 444-3186.



BILLINGS GAZETTE

March 10, 2013

Trail-sharing expo April 20 in Lewistown

March 09, 2013

A sharing the trails expo will be held at the Livestock Pavilion at the Fergus County Fairgrounds in Lewistown on April 20 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event will provide a forum for dialogue and exchange of information between backcountry trail users, including cyclists, hikers, motorcyclists, cross-country skiers, ATV users and horseback riders.

Included will be discussions of trail etiquette, basic safety, first aid, search-and-rescue fundamentals, weed control, map reading, leave no trace ethics, bear awareness and GPS skills.

A panel discussion at noon will entertain questions and share information and ideas about preserving access to the backcountry and address public land stewardship issues.

At 1:30, those interested in obtaining defensive horsemanship certification are invited to attend a four-hour training session. The designation lasts three years and is free.

For more information, contact Kelly McGill at kmgill@blm.gov or at 406-538-1905



HOOK 'n BULLET

2013 Legislature



BILLINGS GAZETTE

March 08, 2013

Bison advocates plan Tuesday rally in Helena

[\(2\)](#) comments

Bison advocates are planning a rally in the Capitol Rotunda on Tuesday at 11 a.m. to voice opposition to five bills in the Legislature.

So far this session, 10 bills targeting bison and bison management in the state have been introduced in the Legislature. Bison advocates see the measures as an attempt to derail tribal and state-led restoration efforts. Five of the 10 bills remain alive, including: SB143, sponsored by Sen. John Brenden, R-Scobey; SB256, sponsored by Sen. Eric Moore, R-Miles City; SB305, sponsored by Sen. Jim Peterson, R-Buffalo; SB341, sponsored by Sen. Jennifer Fielder, R-Thompson Falls; and HB396, sponsored by Rep. Mike Lang, R-Malta.



BILLINGS GAZETTE

March 12, 2013

Outfitters on opposite side of assistants bill

- By [Brett French](#)

Hunting and fishing outfitter groups are on opposite sides of a bill that would allow outfitters to hire emergency assistants for up to 15 days.

House Bill 187 passed the House unopposed and goes before the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee on Wednesday at 9 a.m. in Helena.

The bill is sponsored by Rep. Kelly Flynn, R-Townsend, who is an outfitter, and has gained the support of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association, Professional Wilderness Outfitters Association and the United Property Owners of Montana.

Flynn said the bill will solve a problem for outfitters when a guide becomes ill or injured or has to respond to a family emergency and can't work for an outfitter. There used to be a provision to allow for the hiring of emergency guides, but that was deemed illegal by the Department of Labor and Industry a few years ago because the emergency guides weren't vetted for past disciplinary actions or prior violations.

Patrick Tabor, president of the wilderness outfitters group and president-elect of MOGA, told the committee that last year he was contacted by 16 outfitters seeking temporary guides.

"So this is a real need for many in the industry," he said during a hearing on the bill in January.

But Robin Cunningham, president of the Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana, said the measure does not go far enough in protecting the public. He said the bill does not require the client to be informed that the guide is only temporary, there is no requirement for first-aid training and no tracking of the amount of time an outfitter assistant is used.

"I'm not opposed to the concept, but the problems are in the details," he told the House committee.

Cunningham offered several amendments to the bill during the committee hearing, none of which were adopted. Tabor said he would rather see any adjustments to the law be made through administrative rule and by the outfitting board if they are necessary.

Flynn said the bill is modeled after a similar one for medical assistants, providing flexibility for outfitters while protecting public health and safety.

Arguing in support of the bill, outfitters said the credibility of their business is on the line, so they would not take chances on an unfit outfitter assistant.

“It all boils down to credibility and integrity in the business,” said Rep. Bill Harris, R-Winnett, who is also an outfitter. “Without them, it’s a tough business and you’re not there very long.”



GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE

March 10, 2013

Legislative Opinion



MARY SHEEHY MOË

Columnist

Emotion has a role in public debate

“Members,” the House Judiciary Committee chairman scolded his colleagues during deliberations on Feb. 22, “Check your emotions at the door. We’re here to use logic.”

Now called Black Friday, it was a day for bill-killing by the House’s “kill committee.” Nothing major. A bill to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. A bill to protect adolescents in treatment centers. A bill abolishing the death penalty. Nothing to get het up about.

The hearing on HB 481, prohibiting discrimination against gays, had been the legislative equivalent of speed-dating. Folks who know the effects of such discrimination on their sense of self, safety, employability, housing, and insurability were shuttled through their testimony like bleating sheep. Short of posting a banner saying “Let’s Get This Over With,” the majority could not have made its disinterest plainer.

On Black Friday, the issue got even shorter shrift. Several committeewomen, their voices quavering, supported the inclusion of their LGBT family members, friends, and neighbors in the protections they themselves enjoy. Ahh, that quaver: too much emotion. The whole bill is unnecessary, the chairman finally huffed. LGBT concerns are already protected by the current statute. (Huh?) Let’s vote. The bill was killed, 12-8. Next: Should outdoor adolescent treatment centers be exempt from state oversight simply because they have a religious affiliation? Kids’ physical and sexual abuse at one such Christian center has been the subject of state and national news for some time. Another center recently “found religion” in a transparent attempt to use the ministry loophole to evade the state standards that apply to nonreligious outdoor centers.

Let's be logical: We require outfitters, massage parlors, and countless other businesses in Montana to be licensed to ensure their clients a modicum of quality and safety oversight. The Department of Public Health and Human Services urged the committee to put the minimal protection of licensure in place for these treatment centers, which have completely unmonitored custody of vulnerable youth.

Arguing for the bill, Rep. Jenny Eck, D-Helena, began to read the statement of a young man who had been raped, choked, and repeatedly abused at one center. Another committee member objected. This testimony is intended to incite emotions, he protested. It should have been presented at the hearing and is out of order now.

The chairman, apparently forgetting that he (1) cut off this testimony at the hearing and (2) routinely encourages additional written testimony after hearings, sustained that objection. Illogically, he then directed Eck just to summarize the testimony. Eck gave up. "Morality requires us to act," she said simply. "We know abuse is happening. We have the power to prevent it." Too emotional. Bill killed, 12-8.

Then the bill to abolish the death penalty. The arguments for abolition have become increasingly compelling in recent years. Using capital punishment costs us 10 times more than a life sentence. It deters nobody from anything. It requires us to tolerate inequities in whom we kill, inequities that tilt toward people of color and poverty, and to shrug off the inevitability of error, not just in technical innocence, but in the gradations of guilt and circumstance that separate a life sentence from a death sentence.

These concerns aren't emotional imaginings. They're cold, hard realities with enormous consequences, not just on the convicted, victims' families and the state's budget, but on all the lawyers, judges, prison workers and executioners who must play out their prescribed roles to operate "the machinery of death." Discussing the death penalty is always both logical and emotional, and it takes time. Because of its moral, religious, legal and fiscal implications, judiciary committees have brought the abolition bill to the floor for a broader review for the past three sessions. Not this year. It was killed on Black Friday by 11 people after "deliberations" lasting 12 whole minutes.

I've been impressed this session by the House Judiciary Committee chairman's sense of fairness. He doesn't let people get beat up. But he's so intent on making sure the trains run on time that too often the cargo is damaged or missing when the cars get to the station. And his dismissal of impassioned argument and stirring testimony as mere "emotion" censors the breadth of considerations required for the truly deliberative process that leads to well-reasoned decisions.

As the proverb says, a mind all logic is a knife all blade. More efficient, in theory. But in practice, it makes the deliberative process — and product — a bloody mess.

Mary Sheehy Moe is a retired dean of Great Falls College MSU and serves on several public boards.

HOOK 'n BULLET **NEWS**



HELENA INDEPENDENT RECORD

March 12, 2013

Bullock appoints three new FWP commissioners to five-member board

- [By EVE BYRON Independent Record](#)

Three out of five Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commissioners at next month's meeting will be new appointees.

Gov. Steve Bullock announced Tuesday that he was reappointing Bob Ream, of Helena, to the commission, and naming Commissioner Dan Vermillion, of Livingston, as chair. New to the commission is Matthew Tourtlotte, of Billings, an attorney who will replace Shane Colton, whose term was up; Lawrence Wetsit, of Wolf Point, the vice president of Community Services at Fort Peck Community College and a former Fort Pecks Tribes chairman, who replaces A.T. Stafne, who resigned; and Chinook rancher Richard Stuker, who replaces Ron Moody, who term also was up.

"Serving on this commission is demanding and its members have to deal with complex and, at times, very contentious issues," Bullock said. "The nominees are exceptional and demonstrate the high value Montanans place on preserving access to our public lands, streams and wildlife, and the opportunities they afford to all of us."

The appointments take affect March 15. The new commission's first meeting will be on April 11 in Helena.

In recent years, the FWP Commission has made decisions on numerous controversial issues. Those include taking over management of gray wolves from the federal government and setting hunting and trapping season; exploring how to handle brucellosis in elk, as well as their population drop in some areas; and controversial land purchases including the Spotted Dog and Milk River Ranch parcels.

Some of those decisions rankled not just landowners and sportsmen and women, but also legislators who have turned their frustration with FWP and the commission into dozens of bills this session trying to curtail their authority and possibly reverse some decisions.

While both Stafne and Colton willingly stepped aside, Moody had re-applied to the commission. However, Tuesday he said he was pleased with Bullock's decision to appoint Stuker.

"I'm not disappointed. It sets me free to go back and help hold up and strengthen the Montana Wildlife Federation," Moody said, adding that he's not seeking an office or board position, but will be active in the organization he's been a member of for 20 years. "I'm not going anywhere. This is just a change of positions from one foxhole to another."

Bullock said he wants the commission to help the FWP department by initiating a public process to develop the 2015 FWP budget and conduct a comprehensive review of property FWP holds and its acquisition policies. The comprehensive review should consider good neighbor policies, operation and maintenance, and management priorities.

In the letter to the commission, Bullock said he also plans to revitalize the Private Lands, Public Wildlife Council.

"It's time we conducted a comprehensive, bottom-up review of hunter access programs, including block management," Bullock said. "I want this group to reassess everything from the program's funding and effectiveness, to landowner incentives and how it can be more responsive to hunters' needs."

The current commission's final meeting is a conference call on Thursday, with a limited agenda including commercial carp seining on Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena; and possibly funding 15 Future Fisheries Program proposals for \$585,490.

The conference call is scheduled to start at 8:30 a.m., and will be video streamed live at FWP Headquarters in Helena, 1420 E. Sixth Ave. and at each FWP regional office. The public will have a chance to offer comments at each location.

Reporter Eve Byron: 447-4076 or eve.byron@helenair.com. Follow Eve on Twitter @IR_EveByron.



Sen. Sharon Stewart-Peregoy, D-Crow Agency, gives a rousing speech to pro-bison advocates during a Tuesday rally at the Capitol.

BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE

Posted: Tuesday, March 12, 2013

Tribes, wildlife advocates rally for bison

LAURA LUNDQUIST, Chronicle Staff Writer

HELENA – Kill the bills, not the buffalo.

That was the message of many Native American leaders who spoke at the Rally for the Future of Montana's Buffalo, held Tuesday in the Capitol rotunda.

During this session, legislators have proposed a dozen bills that would affect bison in varying degrees, from allowing people to shoot them on sight if they stepped outside Yellowstone National Park to allowing wardens to tell hunters the location of bison.

Only five bills remain alive, but Montana's tribal councils said that's still too many.

"All these bills are going to create conflict between the tribes and the rest of Montana," said Ken Ryan of the Fort Peck Assiniboine tribe. "But we're all Montanans and we want peace; we want friendship."

Ryan then sang a solemn Assiniboine song that calls the bison. Then he led a peace-pipe ceremony on a bison hide in the center of the rotunda, sharing with nine leaders from the four reservations and five tribes in attendance.

More than 80 observers, around half of which were Native American, watched the smoke curl through the crowd as Ryan sang, offering the pipe to each leader.

Host Thomas Christian of the Fort Peck said the sacred ceremony was appropriate because bison are spiritually symbolic to First Nations people.

The five speakers who followed Ryan also highlighted the spiritual connection with bison as justification for anger over bills that they perceive as being slightly racist.

Fort Belknap Reservation president Tracy King said he believed the anti-bison bills are unconstitutional because they impinge his religious beliefs by restricting his access to wild bison.

"When I face racism, I know it. It's like a cold wind: You can't see it, but you can feel it," King said. "Don't destroy our culture."

The Fort Belknap reservation has managed a bison herd for years, but wants more Yellowstone bison, which are most closely related to the historic plains bison.

"These bills almost feel anti-Indian. Let's find a better way," said Intertribal Buffalo Council President Ervin Carlson.

After the rally, the tribal elders took their case to Gov. Steve Bullock.

Of the five bills that are still alive, lobbyists expect that two are the most likely to make it to the governor's desk.

Senate Bill 305 changes the definition of "wild buffalo" to an animal that has never been in captivity or owned by a person. It will be heard in the House Agriculture committee on March 21.

Some oppose this definition because it would mean that Yellowstone bison held for even a short time would become livestock.

House Bill 396 would require county commission approval before bison could be transplanted into an area. This would affect the tribes because it could eliminate the possibility for augmentation or initiation of their herds.

Elizabeth Azure of the Fort Belknap Reservation said the Blaine County commissioners usually defend farmers' interests so they probably would block bison transplants.

"It's extremely frustrating," Azure said. "We have two people on the commission who are trying to help, but when election time comes, it's hard to say if they'll still be there."

HB 396 will be heard in the Senate Fish and Game committee next Tuesday.

Wildlife advocates traveled from around the state to attend the rally, including several Bozeman representatives of the Sierra Club, the Gallatin Wildlife Association and the National Resources Defense Council.

Defenders of Wildlife spokesman Jonathan Proctor said they were mainly showing support.

"This affects the tribes more than anyone," Proctor said. "Not many legislators came to watch, but I'm sure they heard it."

Montana Wildlife Federation spokesman Nick Gevock said the 2011 Legislature already hammered out a law to allow Fish, Wildlife & Parks to take a serious look at the potential to have bison on public lands. So bills like HB 396 that would allow other agencies to step in should be tabled, Gevock said.

"The 2013 Legislature should honor that compromise and let it move forward," Gevock said.

Laura Lundquist can be reached at 582-2638 or llundquist@dailychronicle.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@llundquist](https://twitter.com/llundquist).

The New York Times

March 7, 2013

Interior Dept. Nominee Is Questioned on Public Land Use

By **JOHN M. BRODER**

WASHINGTON — [Sally Jewell](#), President Obama's nominee for interior secretary, deflected many of the questions she faced at her confirmation [hearing](#) Thursday but made clear she supports expanded [oil](#) and gas development on public lands and waters, including exploratory drilling off the North Slope of Alaska and seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean.

“Leaning into oil and gas development is an important part of the mission of the Bureau of Land Management and also of the Department of Interior,” Ms. Jewell said, one of the four times she used a phrase popularized by [Sheryl Sandberg](#), the chief operating officer of Facebook and author of “Lean In,” a book on the challenges confronted by women who are executives.

Ms. Jewell, chief executive of Recreational Equipment Inc. in Seattle, also faced questions on [climate change](#), protection of endangered species, energy development on Indian lands and her role as a board member of a national parks advocacy organization.

The questions were generally polite from Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Ms. Jewell's responses were for the most part noncommittal. She referred frequently to the need for balance between exploitation of federal lands for resource extraction and preservation of wilderness.

She also said climate change was real, but dodged questions about whether she supported a carbon tax to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases responsible for the warming planet. “A carbon tax is not something that would come before me, and the president has made it clear he is not pursuing a carbon tax at this point,” Ms. Jewell said.

She said she supported Mr. Obama's so-called all-of-the-above energy strategy, including increased production of oil and gas as well as renewable energy on public lands.

Several Republican senators questioned her about her association with the [National Parks Conservation Association](#), an advocacy organization for employees and visitors at national parks.

Ms. Jewell is vice chairwoman of the board of directors of the group, which frequently sues the department over land-use decisions, parks policy and employee rights. Senator John Barrasso, Republican of Wyoming, said her work at the group was “unsettling” and demanded a pledge that she promise to recuse herself from any legal or regulatory matters involving it.

Ms. Jewell said she was one of 30 board members and had no authority on matters of litigation. She said that if she were confirmed and issues involving the conservation organization arose she would consult with [Interior Department](#) ethics officers before taking any action.

Senator Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee, noted that Ms. Jewell's résumé cites her work as a young woman as a construction worker on the Alaska oil pipeline, as a petroleum engineer in Colorado, as a commercial banker for 19 years and as chief executive of a billion-dollar company.

“My question is this,” Mr. Alexander said. “How'd you get appointed by this administration? You sound more like a nominee of a Republican administration.”

“I thought you were going to ask, ‘Why can’t you hold a job?’ ” Ms. Jewell responded. Many of the committee members asked about home-state issues. Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, the senior Republican on the panel, said she was concerned about a recent Fish and Wildlife Service decision to block the building of a gravel airport access road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in the Aleutian Islands. Ms. Murkowski called the decision an example of federal overreach.

“We need you to affirm that public lands provide not just a playground for recreational enthusiasts,” Ms. Murkowski said, “but also paychecks for countless energy producers, miners, loggers and ranchers.”



BILLINGS GAZETTE

March 8, 2013

Northern Yellowstone elk population continues to drop

• By [Brett French](#)

[\(2\) Comments](#)

Yellowstone National Park’s abundant carnivore population has meant a continued decline in the northern Yellowstone elk herd, according to a Feb. 18 aerial survey by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the National Park Service.

“Yellowstone is as predator rich as it’s been in 100 years,” said Doug Smith, Yellowstone’s wolf biologist, although the park’s wolves number 83 this year, only 20 of which are living in the northern range.

“I think they’re low because there’s fewer elk,” he said.

The elk herd, much of which migrates into Montana in winter, declined from a count of 4,174 last year to 3,915 this year, a 6 percent decline. In recent years, the average decline is 8 percent. Also, more elk as a percentage of the herd – 77 percent – migrated out of the park than at any time in the past.

“In the old days, 30 percent would leave,” Smith said. “It could be there’s just more room out there to go into.”

The northern herd, which is only a portion of the park’s entire elk herd, has declined from a high of more than 19,000 before wolves were reintroduced into the park in 1995. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks also allowed an aggressive hunt for cow elk that migrated out of the park until 2005.

Smith noted that it’s also more difficult to count elk within the park these days because they are in smaller groups often hidden in the trees.

“In the old days, I’d see 300 to 500 elk out in the open,” he said. “That’s due to predation. A smaller herd is harder to find.”

Smith said park studies have shown the existing elk are “leaner and meaner,” with wolves killing fewer elk and shifting more of their attention to bison. Cow elk are getting pregnant at a rate of about 90 percent or higher, yet few calves are living to adulthood. Many are likely being eaten by bears, coyotes, mountain lions and even golden eagles.

FWP counted only 11 calves per 100 cows last year, said Karen Loveless, an FWP biologist based in Livingston.

“That’s really poor,” she said. “As long as we have calf survival that low, I’m still really concerned.”

To maintain the elk population, she said, calf recruitment would have to double to about 20 percent. To increase the herd, the recruitment rate would have to rise to 30 percent. The northern herd has been below that 30 percent rate for more than a decade, she added.

“Our objective for northern range elk wintering in Montana is 3,000 to 5,000,” Loveless said. Wolves have been blamed for much of the decline in the park’s elk numbers. Yet Smith noted that the northern range wolf population hasn’t been this low since 1996. The park’s wolf population peaked in 2003 at 174 animals. At the end of 2011, the number had declined to 98 wolves. Twenty Yellowstone wolves were shot by hunters when they ventured out of the park into Montana and Wyoming this hunting season.

Although Montana hunters would like to see more elk on the landscape, Loveless is busy right now scaring elk off agricultural lands in places like the Paradise Valley north of Yellowstone. The work is part of the state’s plan to keep elk, some of which carry the brucellosis bacteria, from mingling with cattle. The disease can cause an animal to abort.

Loveless said the department will hold a hunt to remove 10 elk in an attempt to disperse one group. On other property, the department is helping to repair fences, fencing haystacks and firing nonlethal cracker shells to scare elk away from cow feeding areas.

Loveless said the herds of elk vary from groups of 100 up to 600 on different ranches. The work will continue until June 15, which is considered the end of the time when bacteria transfer between the species is likely to occur.

BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE

Posted: Sunday, March 10, 2013

Commissioner defends Milk River ranch purchase

LAURA LUNDQUIST, Staff Writer

Rumors about reasons for the state’s purchase of the Milk River Ranch in northeastern Montana are unfounded, the Fish, Wildlife & Parks commissioner said last week in Bozeman.

On Thursday, FWP commissioner Dan Vermillion explained the rationale for buying the Milk River Ranch as a wildlife management area.

The purchase has upset sportsmen and northern ranchers, so Vermillion tried to dispel misinformation for the members of the FWP Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Circumstances surrounding the FWP purchase of almost 3,000 acres of Milk River Ranch prompted rumors, including one that the transaction was fast-tracked by former Gov. Brian Schweitzer as a favor to the landowner.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation purchased an additional 1,500 acres.

Vermillion said buying the ranch was one of Schweitzer's priorities, but not because of cronyism.

Schweitzer wanted part of his legacy to be the addition of several properties to the state's public land, Vermillion said.

But some Montanans complained that all the acquisitions were in western Montana. The Milk River Ranch added land in eastern Montana.

Some sportsmen's groups complained that the state had paid almost \$5 million of Habitat Montana funds without proper notice. LeRoy Mehring said the Skyline Sportsmen in Butte didn't know about the deal until they read about the December land-board decision.

There was proper notice, Vermillion said. The purchase was on the commission's agenda in May, public notices were posted in northern Montana, and an environmental assessment and public comment process was carried out.

Vermillion said the property had been listed with a Malta real estate agent for \$12.5 million.

Ted Thayer, a certified assessor in Bozeman, evaluated the property, and FWP paid \$600 an acre for non-riparian land and \$1,900 an acre for riparian land, Vermillion said.

"The price we paid was based on recreational values," Vermillion said. "That is how land gets valued anymore."

The state land board raised eyebrows when it approved the purchase before the FWP commission, which is unusual.

Vermillion said the commission would have voted first but delayed its December meeting to evaluate the wolf-trapping season.

"In this case, there was a time crunch," Vermillion said. "This sort of thing happens when you're heading toward the end of a gubernatorial term."

The commissioners did not let Schweitzer or the land board's vote influence their decision, Vermillion said.

“I put a lot of time making the determination of whether I thought it made sense for the people of Montana,” Vermillion said.

Vermillion said the property offers many benefits.

FWP is often criticized for focusing on trout fisheries, so the ranch offers 10 miles of riparian access to a warm-water fishery.

The property provides access to around 10,000 acres of public land that was landlocked. It also has unique wildlife, paleontological and educational values.

“It’s a part of Montana that a lot of us would not otherwise get to see,” Vermillion said.

In Havre, some residents opposed the purchase because they believed FWP would use the property to house bison, Vermillion said. In protest, many have pulled their land out of the FWP block management program.

Some of that fear has translated to the Legislature where bills have been proposed against the Habitat Montana budget and the movement of bison.

“It’s just not the case,” Vermillion said.

Laura Lundquist can be reached at 582-2638 or llundquist@dailychronicle.com. Follow her on Twitter at @llundquist.



GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE

March 9, 2013

Regents won't pay \$2 million to 'buy fossils' Decision reversed on rights to Milk River ranch

The Associated Press

HELENA — Montana's university system has reversed its decision to pay \$2 million for the archaeological and paleontological rights to a ranch that two state agencies purchased late last year.

The system didn't have the money to make the purchase and it was difficult to determine how

much the rights are worth at the site in northcentral Montana, Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian told the Board of Regents on Thursday.

Regent Jeffrey Knauss of Bozeman said buying the rights to dig for dinosaur fossils and Indian artifacts would set a precedent.

“We don’t buy fossils and we don’t buy collecting rights to fossils,” Knauss said.

Regent Pat Williams of Missoula suggested the panel was mistakenly passing up world-class resources that will eventually be sold to someone else. He said Notre Dame University is interested.

“The Treasure State will have sold off another treasure when he had a chance to hold it,” Williams said. “I don’t want people to say, when they had a pool of money, they let this treasure go and claimed the lack of money as a reason.”

In November, the regents agreed to pay \$2 million for the rights that brothers Verges and David Aageson retained after selling 3,000 acres to the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Department for \$4.7 million, and an adjacent 1,500 acres to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation for \$1.1 million.

FWP plans to open the 3,000 acres to hunting and fishing, while DNRC is leasing the land back to the Aagesons for farming, with the lease money going to fund schools.

A restraining order to stop the regents from spending the \$2 million was sought by state Sen. Jon Brenden, R-Scobey, and Ruddyard-area rancher Daniel Redding.

The money would have come from a special appropriation by the 2011 Legislature for university research.



BRETT FRENCH/Gazette Staff

The Yellowstone River curves to the southeast below the sandstone rocks of Sheridan Butte in the Terry Badlands, an area managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The agency has just released a draft plan that would guide its management of 2.8 million acres in southeastern Montana for the next couple of decades.



BILLINGS GAZETTE

March 10, 2013

Miles City BLM office unveils management plan

- By [Brett French](#)
[\(2\) Comments](#)

It's an alphabet soup of acronyms plus charts, graphs and densely worded proposals. It's 1,800 pages long.

The document released by the Bureau of Land Management's Miles City Field Office on Friday will help guide management of 2.7 million surface acres and 11 million mineral acres in Eastern Montana, possibly for two decades.

“It’s not for wimps,” said Todd Yeager, Miles City field manager. “They are heavy topics to handle.”

The title of the document -- the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement – may seem almost as long as the eight years it took to develop. Within the plan is the BLM’s recommended alternative for how to manage the area, a guiding document for lands in 17 counties that hasn’t been updated for some areas since 1985.

The document is only a draft, the public will have until June to suggest changes before the plan is finalized.

Here’s a partial breakdown on what can be found in the document under the BLM’s suggested alternative:

Grazing

Probably the largest concern for southeastern Montana landowners is the BLM’s decision to allow grazing on all but about 3,000 acres of its land.

The Miles City Field Office already administers 1,776 grazing allotments comprising 2,736,673 public acres and 546,570 public animal unit months. Cattle are the most common livestock (1,728 allotments), followed by sheep (132), horses (101), bison (3) and burros (1).

Yeager said 98 percent of the area’s grazing allotments meet the standards for rangeland health. The other 2 percent are under review.

Sage grouse

The BLM would allow oil-and-gas development with conditions on the estimated 2.5 million acres of its sage grouse habitat.

“We’ve really broken up how we are proposing to manage sage grouse habitat,” Yeager said.

“We’re looking at delineating habitats into three different classifications and surface disturbance would be managed differently in each area.”

The BLM noted that “expanding energy development in western North America poses a major new challenge for sage-grouse conservation,” including “habitat loss, fragmentation, and deterioration resulting from factors including the spread of invasive species, infrastructure development ... wildfire, conversion of sagebrush habitats to nonnative species or agriculture, and conifer invasion.”

Three areas would be established specifically as sage grouse priority areas: North Garfield (171,000 acres), North Rosebud (173,000 acres) and Carter (448,000 acres). Four areas would be designated sage grouse habitat restoration areas: Decker area (8,300 acres), Cedar Creek (29,000 acres), South Carter (64,000 acres) and a source population area (8,000 acres). Development in these areas would be restricted to maintain sage grouse habitat.

The BLM denied a request by sportsmen’s groups to protect an area next to the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge from oil-and-gas development to protect sage grouse, saying the potential for development in the area was already low.

Protected areas

The BLM would add six new areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC), four that are historic battlefields from the Indian Wars and two that contain dinosaur bones.

The field office already oversees 16 ACECs. One – the Howrey Island ACEC – would be removed. It was initially created to protect a bald eagle nesting area when the bird was listed as an endangered species. It will now be managed as a special recreation management area, places that are more intensively managed for recreation.

Some of the existing ACECs and their size include: Ash Creek Divide (7,921 acres), Bug Creek (3,837 acres), Hell Creek (19,373 acres), and Sand Arroyo (9,052 acres) paleontological ACECs; Big Sheep Mountain (363 acres), Hoe (147 acres), Jordan Bison Kill ACEC (160 acres), Powder River Depot (1,401 acres), Seline (80 acres), cultural ACECs; piping plover (15 acres) and black-footed ferret (11,221 acres) wildlife ACECs; Finger Buttes (1,520 acres) scenic ACEC; and Smoky Butte (80 acres) geological ACEC.

The BLM identified 5,236 acres of the Devil's Creek Common area as having wilderness characteristics.

The entire planning area contains seven wilderness study areas covering more than 97,000 acres. Those study areas will continue to be managed for wilderness characteristics. Motorized use on already established routes can continue as long as the resource is not impaired for wilderness suitability.

A Montana Wilderness Association representative said his group would be making a case for consideration of other BLM areas for wilderness characteristics, including Buck Creek, portions of the Powder River Valley and Wrangler Creek.

Recreation areas

Right now, the Miles City Field Office has three special recreation management areas (SRMAs) totaling 16,500 acres. Under the preferred alternative that would be expanded to 11 SRMAs covering 43,000 acres.

New areas include: Powder River Depot (162 acres), Calypso (71 acres), Lewis and Clark Trail (14,499 acres), Howrey Island (592 acres), Matthews (91 acres), Dean S. Reservoir (162 acres), Pumpkin Creek Ranch (19,435 acres), Glendive Short Pine (2,272 acres), Terry (110 acres), Strawberry Hill (4,248 acres), and Moorhead (13 acres).

Off-highway vehicle use would be open on 2,000 acres; limited on 2.8 million acres; and closed on 2,800 acres. But that's simply a reflection of the creation of new ACECs, said the BLM's Shane Findlay. After the plan is finished, the agency will begin travel management planning for the field office.

To comment

Once it is finalized, the plan can be amended to meet changing conditions.

The draft document can be viewed on the Internet at <http://blm.gov/0ykd>. A limited number of paper copies of the draft are available from BLM's Miles City Field Office, 111 Garryowen Road.

Open houses have been scheduled in May in eight communities at which the public can provide comments. Or comments can be sent by email to: BLM_MT_MCFO_RMP@blm.gov; by fax to: 406-233-3650; by mail to: "MCFO RMP Comments", 111 Garryowen Road, Miles City, MT 59301; or delivered to the Miles City office. The comment period extends to June 5.

For more information, contact planning specialist Mary Bloom at 406-233-2800.

- [Link to draft resource management plan](#)
- **Big area, few people**

The planning area includes Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Treasure, and Wibaux counties as well as portions of Big Horn and Valley counties.

The field office covers an area that contains less than two people per square mile. The planning area population was 87,085 in 2010, less than one-tenth of the population of the state. The population

showed a 6 percent decline since 2000, with all counties losing population except Big Horn, Richland and Fallon counties.



GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE

March 9, 2013

Researchers drawing criticism for lost grizzly

By Matthew Brown

Associated Press

BILLINGS — What happened to bear 726? That's the number researchers assigned to a collared grizzly bear that disappeared from an agricultural research station along the Montana-Idaho border.

Citing the unsolved disappearance, environmentalists Thursday called for renewed efforts to find out if it was illegally killed and studies on whether the federal facility is harming the region's protected bears.

Three weeks after the 392-pound male grizzly was last located, its tracking collar was found roughly a mile away. It had been cut off and deliberately hidden beneath a rock and a log at the bottom of a small stream, investigators determined in a report.

Hunters were ruled out as suspects after being interviewed. But a single rifle cartridge was discovered near where the bear was last located alive Aug. 30. A sheep herder from the U.S. Sheep Research Station, which grazes in the remote forested land, had been stationed in the same area where the cartridge was found at around the same time, according to the report.

However, the report was inconclusive as to who might have killed the bear and whether the rifle cartridge had any connection to the case.

The station's employees were never interviewed, and with no suspect and no carcass, "that's where it dead-ended," said Bill West with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who assisted the investigation.

West manages Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, just north of sheep station property in the Centennial Mountains that is used for summer grazing.

"Who are your most likely candidates? I say hunters, and after that, probably the sheep herders.

And we interviewed all the hunters that came in through our park area,” West said, adding that the bear is presumed dead.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Agricultural Research Service, which runs the station, said no grizzly bear deaths were reported by its workers last year, nor were there any bear sightings. If a bear was killed, it could have been someone else who came on the property, spokeswoman Sandy Miller Hays said.

“We didn’t even see one,” she said. “We don’t have an enormous fence around the (sheep station property), so someone could have come on it.”

John Meyer with the Cottonwood Environmental Law Center called for further efforts from the Fish and Wildlife Service to find out what happened to the bear. His group filed formal notice this week that if the government does not take action to ensure grizzlies are being adequately protected, the law center will ask a federal court to shut down grazing on 16,000 acres at the station.

Meyer contends that the evidence casts suspicion on government employees of the sheep station, although he acknowledged there’s no way to know what happened. His organization obtained information on the missing grizzly through a Freedom of Information Act request.

The bear had been collared by federal researchers just two weeks before it disappeared.

The sheep station was established under an executive order in 1918 for breeding and grazing research. Headquartered in Dubois, Idaho, it controls more than 40,000 acres of grazing land in Montana and Idaho.

In recent years, the station has become a frequent target of wildlife advocates and environmentalists. They argue sheep grazing is disruptive to wildlife including grizzlies and wolves that use portions of the sheep station in the Centennial Mountains to travel to and from the Yellowstone National Park area.

The roughly 600 bears in the Yellowstone region are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Hunting remains illegal, but some are killed by wildlife agents each year because of conflicts, including attacks on livestock.

A 2011 determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said the sheep station’s activities could result in the deaths of some grizzly bears due to conflicts with humans but would not reduce the survival or recovery of the population as a whole.

Meyer said that issue should be revisited given the disappearance of the male grizzly, with the Agricultural Research Service seeking a new round of consultations from wildlife officials over the operation of the sheep station.

HELENA INDEPENDENT RECORD

March 11, 2013

HNF proposes 3 projects for the Big Belts and Elkhorns

- [By EVE BYRON Independent Record](#)

Related Links

- [See the proposed projects](#)

With spring just around the corner, the Townsend Ranger District is gearing up for three projects and seeking public comments on them.

The largest project involves further implantation of an 18-year-old travel plan in the Elkhorn Mountain Range. According to Helena National Forest officials, monitoring has documented travel violations on closed roads and identified user-created routes. One of the problems is that many of the road closures are in places where they're not being naturally reclaimed, so people continue to use them, mainly in the area between Staubach Creek and Johnny's Gulch.

"The open/closed designations that were made as part of the original Elkhorn Mountains Travel Management Plan are the same," said Townsend District Ranger Heather DeGeest. "This proposal is specific to how we implement those decisions."

She noted that they won't reconsider whether a road is open or closed at this point, since those decisions were made in the 1995 decision, and upheld in a supplemental report in 2008.

The plan calls to repair and maintain roads with erosion problems to protect the soil and water resources, while also decommissioning the closed roads so they no longer can be used by except for walking.

The Forest Service may construct barriers or add gates to restrict unauthorized use; those generally would be designed to allow for foot and horse traffic. They're considering constructing places to turn around, or creating parking areas, on some decommissioned routes.

The goal is to enhance big game wildlife habitat while reducing erosion, vegetation loss and sediment flows into streams.

Also in the Elkhorns, DeGeest is looking for comments on the proposed South Fork of Crow Creek and Sitton Mill Water Developments projects. Both are trying to improve riparian conditions along the South Fork of Crow Creek and the upper end of Slim Sam by creating off-site water developments to provide an alternative watering source, which in turn should limit livestock use along the streams.

Generally speaking, the Forest Service proposes diverting a portion of each creek, via a headbox and pipeline to 6-foot-round fiberglass stock tank, which will be places between 200 and 250 feet from the streams.

The Forest Service also would treat weed infestations in the areas.

On the opposite side of the Townsend Ranger District, they're also proposing activities to keep cattle out of the riparian areas, this time in the Deep Creek area.

The Helena forest wants to construct about seven miles of fence in the Hay Creek and Carl Creek areas, as well as extend an existing fence on Cedar Bar, to exclude livestock from the stream

banks. In the Klondike and Sherlock riparian areas, they propose developing a natural spring, then fence off the riparian area to again keep cattle out of the water source.

Some fencing also is under consideration in the Deep Creek and Faulkner riparian areas.

Additional information on the proposals, as well as mitigation measures for those activities, is available on the Helena National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena/.

Comments on the proposals can be sent to or dropped off at the Townsend District Ranger Station at 415 South Front Street, Townsend, MT, 59644. All comments must be postmarked by April 5.

Anyone with questions can also call the Townsend Ranger District office at 266-3425.

Reporter Eve Byron: 447-4076 or eve.byron@helenair.com. Follow Eve on Twitter @IR_EveByron.

HOOK 'n BULLET

ROCKY WEST NEWS



CASPER STAR TRIBUNE

March 11, 2013

Wyoming Game and Fish proposes cutting habitat, education programs and fish stocking

• [By CHRISTINE PETERSON Star-Tribune staff writer](#)
[\(13\) Comments](#)

Cuts in fish stocking

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is proposing more than \$7 million in cuts to the existing budget to make up for upcoming shortfalls. One of the cuts would be more than \$60,000 from the fish stocking program.

In total, the proposal calls for cuts of more than 1 million fish from about 170 Wyoming waters, said Mark Fowden, chief of the fish division.

Money would be saved on feeding, loading and unloading the fish.

Here are some of the larger stocking requests for 2014 that would not be approved.

- 50,000 9-inch rainbow trout in Pathfinder Reservoir.

- 10,000 9-inch rainbow trout in Alcova Reservoir.
- 40,000 9-inch rainbow trout in Seminoe Reservoir.
- 10,000 9-inch rainbow trout in Boysen Reservoir.
- 70,000 8-inch rainbow trout and 300,000 3-inch kokanee in Flaming Gorge Reservoir.
- 12,000 9-inch rainbow trout in Crystal Reservoir near Cheyenne.
- 60,000 4-inch rainbow trout in Lake Hattie Reservoir near Laramie.
- 50,000 7-inch rainbow and cutthroat trout in Lake DeSmet near Sheridan.

More than a million fish may not be stocked in Wyoming waters next year. New habitat projects may not be considered. The annual Hunting and Fishing Heritage Expo may be canceled.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department officials are proposing more than 30 cuts like these for 2014 after the state Legislature opted not to pass license fee increases in January. The Game and Fish Commission will discuss the possible cuts in its meeting March 20 and 21. The proposed cuts are only for 2014. Without more money in future years, officials say program slashes will continue.

“We need to know what the public wants from their Game and Fish,” said John Kennedy, deputy director of Game and Fish. “Based on no additional revenues, just inflation and the cost of doing business, we simply won’t be able to provide the programs and services we have been.”

Most of Game and Fish’s money comes from license fees and federal taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. Only about 6 percent of the budget comes from Wyoming general fund money. The last license fee increase was in 2008.

Some members of the House Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Committee who killed the bill said during the debate that fee increases were causing hunting and fishing to become too expensive for average residents.

The department cut 3 percent from its 2013 budget. The proposals for 2014 include another 10 percent in cuts.

The 2013 budget used about \$70 million, excluding general fund money. The proposed cuts amount to more than \$7 million from the 2014 budget.

Some of the proposals include efficiency cuts such as increasing mileage before buying new vehicles and decreasing overtime.

Another one would save more than \$450,000 by keeping nine open positions vacant.

Belt tightening is good, but some conservation leaders worry about the proposed cuts to habitat and education.

Game and Fish is required by statute to operate feed grounds and pay damage claims. It isn’t required to improve habitat, educate children or buy hunting and fishing easements. As a result, those are the first things to be cut, said Steve Kilpatrick, executive director of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation.

“If you look at the long term, without habitat for wildlife and without education for us humans, what do we really have left in terms of conservation?” Kilpatrick said. “We’re taking some short-term hits that need to be constant for long-term success.”

Ultimately, Game and Fish needs to find a better way to create long-term funding, he said.

The House wildlife committee did approve a study to look into Game and Fish’s finances during the next year or two. In the meantime, Kilpatrick said, wildlife officials will regroup and talk to the public about what they want from Game and Fish.

Other proposed cuts include:

\$350,000 from the land acquisition budget for private land access agreements or easements.
No Game and Fish money for the National Archery in the Schools and National Fishing in the Schools programs.

More than \$1 million from department-wide items such as supplies, equipment, maintenance and improvement to facilities, temporary personnel, travel, printing and contractual services.

More than \$1.3 million in any new habitat and conservation education projects.

More than \$100,000 from the University of Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit.

No longer printing free paper copies of the Private Lands Public Wildlife atlas for hunting and fishing.

Almost \$50,000 on projects for fish habitat improvement projects.

Six of the 12 issues of Wyoming Wildlife magazine.

Reach Open Spaces reporter Christine Peterson at 307-746-3121 or christine.peterson@trib.com. Follow her on Twitter @PetersonOutside.

Join the conversation

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department Commission will discuss more than \$7 million in proposed cuts at its meeting March 20 and 21 in Gillette.

The meeting begins at 8 a.m. both days and will be at Northern Wyoming Community College, 300 W. Sinclair, Technical Education Center Building room 136.

For more information or an agenda, go to wgfd.wyo.gov.



BILLINGS GAZETTE

March 11, 2013

Lawsuit challenging Wyoming wolf plan draws crowd

- Associated Press

[\(5\) Comments](#)

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — The cast of characters is growing in a legal fight pitting environmental groups against the federal government's recent decision to end protections for wolves in Wyoming.

U.S. District Judge Alan Johnson of Cheyenne recently allowed a group known collectively as the "Wyoming Wolf Coalition" to intervene in the lawsuit. That group includes Wyoming county governments and sportsmen groups that support the federal government's decision. The judge hasn't acted yet on a pending request from the National Rifle Association and Safari Club International, a hunting group. They also want to intervene in support of ending wolf protections.

The groups are siding with the state of Wyoming and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in defending the federal decision to turn wolf management over to the state. Wyoming's plan classifies wolves in most of the state as unprotected predators that can be shot on sight.

Jay Jerde, lawyer with the Wyoming Attorney General's Office, said Monday that the state doesn't oppose the groups entering the lawsuit.

Cheyenne lawyer Harriet Hageman represents the Wyoming Wolf Coalition, which also was involved in previous litigation over whether Wyoming's proposed wolf management plan was adequate.

"It's just an effort by these organizations to stay involved, and make sure their voices are heard by Judge Johnson and the court," Hageman said of the coalition's involvement in the current case.

Wyoming is the only state in the northern Rockies facing litigation over wolf delisting. Congress has exempted wolf delisting in Montana and Idaho from legal challenges but didn't extend similar protection to Wyoming.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department reports hunters killed 68 wolves in the state from Oct. 1, when federal management stopped, through Dec. 31. Of those, 42 were killed in a trophy hunting zone bordering Yellowstone National Park while 26 were killed as unprotected predators elsewhere in the state.

The eight environmental groups are in Johnson's court challenging the federal government's decision to end protections for the wolf under the Endangered Species Act. They say Wyoming's plan isn't sufficient to ensure survival of the species.

Wyoming has committed to maintain at least 10 breeding pairs of wolves and at least 100 animals outside of Yellowstone and the Wind River Indian Reservation, in the central part of the state. Wildlife managers say the state had about 300 wolves outside of Yellowstone, where no hunting is allowed, when state management began.

Many Wyoming ranchers and hunters have protested that wolves have been taking too large a toll on livestock and other wildlife since the federal government reintroduced them in Yellowstone in the mid-1990s.

Two similar lawsuits filed by other environmental groups have been consolidated before a federal judge in Washington, DC. Both the state of Wyoming and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are asking to have those cases transferred to federal court in Wyoming, and it's conceivable that all three cases could be wrapped up in one action before Johnson.

The one case currently in Johnson's court was filed by WildEarth Guardians, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, Conservation Congress, Friends of Animals, Friends of the Clearwater, National Wolfwatcher Coalition and Western Watersheds Project.

James Jay Tutchton, lawyer for the coalition, said his clients didn't oppose the intervention by the Wyoming Wolf Coalition, but he is urging Johnson not to allow the National Rifle Association and Safari Club International into the case because he said it would be too many entities.

The Wyoming Wolf Coalition includes a number of pro-hunting groups, including Wyoming Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife. It also includes agricultural groups such as the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. Tutchton said they should be able to make the same arguments that the NRA and Safari Club would make.

Tutchton said his clients want to get a court decision before the next wolf hunting season this fall.

"From my clients' perspective, this wolf hunting season was fairly destructive," Tutchton said. He said a number of wolves that lived within Yellowstone were killed when they left the park's boundaries.



BILLINGS GAZETTE

March 11, 2013

Jackson Hole elk herd populations steady last year

- Associated Press

JACKSON — The latest count of elk in the Jackson area indicates that herd populations have held mostly steady over the last year.

In addition, biologists say the number of calves relative to the number of cows in the Jackson and Fall Creek elk herds also is up. The calf numbers are a key indication of future population growth.

Wyoming Game and Fish biologists counted 11,051 elk in the Jackson Elk Herd.

Biologist Doug Brimeyer said that the final count is closer to the Jackson herd's objective of 11,000 animals than in any other year since the number was set.

To the south of Jackson, the Fall Creek Elk Herd was near its objective of 4,400 animals.

The Salt Lake Tribune

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

March 09, 2013

Utah legislators steering \$300,000 to anti-wolf crusade

- [By Brian Maffly The Salt Lake Tribune](#)
(3) Comments

Although no one is proposing to reintroduce the gray wolf in Utah, lawmakers want to spend \$300,000 for the second consecutive year to lobby federal officials against such a move, arguing that the return of wolves, extirpated almost a century ago, would wipe out big game.

The line item, listed among priority one-time spending requests from the Legislature's natural resources budget committee, has drawn ridicule from conservationists and citizens who say these expenditures are a silly misuse of tax dollars that could be invested in education or other worthy programs.

“Utah is not overrun with wolves, but it is overrun with children in classrooms,” said Marlene Foard, a 33-year Salt Lake City school teacher dismayed that Utah remains at the bottom among states in per-pupil spending. But Don Peay, the influential anti-wolf advocate seeking the money, says the Utah economy could take a massive hit should wolves, protected in Utah under the Endangered Species Act, gain a foothold.

“It’s destroying jobs, private property and rural economies,” Peay, a founder of Big Game Forever, a Salt Lake City-based nonprofit organization, told the Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environmental Quality budget committee, referring to what he claims is unfolding in Idaho since the successful wolf reintroduction in the Yellowstone region. “We want to keep Utah a great place to hunt and fish.”

After hearing a similar pitch from Big Game Forever co-founder Ryan Benson, the Legislature last year appropriated \$300,000 to fund wolf-related lobbying, with virtually no oversight of precisely how the money was used or what it accomplished. Big Game Forever submitted the only bid to do this lobbying on July 28 and won the one-year contract four days later.

That contract through the state Division of Wildlife Resources calls for the nonprofit to “work with state and federal agencies to pursue legal and legislative solutions to achieve [the state’s] legal and management authority over wolves to protect wildlife.” It specified that Benson was to be paid on completion of the work, but Michael Styler, the head of the Department of Natural Resources, DWR’s parent agency, approved an immediate payout.

Styler’s Aug. 6 letter to state purchasing officials four days after the contract was signed cites a provision in the division’s request for proposals that allows payment upon receipt of an invoice. State policy generally prohibits paying contracts upfront, but the state’s administrative rules allow agency heads to request early payment if they are willing to assume the risks, said Kent Beers, the state’s purchasing director.

Styler — who two years ago in a legislative hearing called wolves “the resurrection of the T. rex,” and “the perfect biological weapon” — said Thursday he could not recall his letter requesting upfront payment of the contract.

The wolf-lobby contract does require Big Game Forever to submit a report to DWR summarizing its accomplishments and giving an update on wolf-related legislation — but it is not due until June 30.

Now the Legislature is moving toward appropriating an additional \$300,000.

There are no Washington lobbyists registered for Big Game Forever and have been none since April 1, 2011.

At a Feb. 21 appropriations hearing, Peay gave a vague response when asked about the work his group has accomplished with this money.

“It’s been used to do a very complex, political, legal, grass-roots effort,” he said. The current line item comes at the request of Senate Majority Leader Ralph Okerlund, R-Monroe, who did not respond to an email request for comment.

Opponents say such lobbying is pointless from the viewpoint of Utah taxpayers because it is unlikely robust wolf populations will ever become established in the Beehive State and federal wildlife officials have never proposed reintroducing them there. They also question the propriety of handing public money to a private group to advance a special interest.

The feds agreed two years ago to delist the gray wolf inside a recovery zone covering Montana, Wyoming, Idaho and a piece of northern Utah. A nationwide delisting is expected this year, a

move that would allow Utah and other Western states to “manage” wolves without much federal interference.

The Northern Rockies gray wolf inhabited Utah and Colorado at the time of Mormon settlement and the smaller and distinctive Mexican gray wolf roamed Arizona, according to Kim Crumbo of the Grand Canyon Wildlands Council. The last native wolf in Utah was killed in San Juan County in the early 1930s, but descendants of those reintroduced in Yellowstone are now entering northern Utah.

Peay claims federal authorities are bent on recovering the Mexican wolf, regardless of the toll on agriculture.

“They want to put Mexican wolves in Utah because the Mexicans don’t want them,” he told lawmakers.

But there is not much truth to that, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials.

A preliminary scientific report has identified parts of southern Utah as playing a potential role in the recovery of the Mexican wolf, said Laura Romin, the service’s deputy field supervisor for Utah. A revision of this subspecies’ 1982 recovery plan is under way and no decisions have been made about altering the recovery zone.

The agency has been releasing captive-raised wolves in Arizona’s Blue Range as part of a re-introduction program under way since 1998 and their numbers in the wild have fluctuated between 40 and 60 over the years.

Peay and Benson, whose voicemail boxes are full, could not be reached on Thursday.



ROCKY WEST OPINIONS



The Salt Lake Tribune

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Published Mar 10, 2013

TRIBUNE OPINION

Just cry wolf

Your cash for the asking

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary — H.L. Mencken

One of those imaginary hobgoblins is being trotted about on Capitol Hill by legislators and a sportsmen's group who are pointing at it and sounding the alarm, which goes something like this: Citizens of Utah, the wolf is at the door. But don't be alarmed. We're going to make sure he stays there. We just need to take \$300,000 of your tax money and hand it over to this sportsmen's group. They'll know what to do with it, and you'll all be safe, at least until next year.

This the second year in a row that someone from Big Game Forever, a Utah-based nonprofit hunting advocacy group, has shown up at the Utah Legislature with his hand out, spouting dire, wholly suspect warnings that the federal government is considering reintroducing the gray wolf to the Beehive State.

The group's founder, Don Peay, told the Legislature's natural resources budget committee last week that the money is needed to lobby the feds against such a move. "They want to put Mexican wolves in Utah because the Mexicans don't want them," he told lawmakers. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says such claims are overblown.

But Peay's pitch for public money to fight this four-legged hobgoblin doesn't require much more from him than to cry wolf, just as the organization did last year and was promptly handed \$300,000 with virtually no questions asked. At an appropriations hearing last month, when someone had the temerity to ask Peay what last year's \$300,000 had bought the state, he saw no reason to get specific.

"It's been used to do a very complex, political, legal, grass-roots effort," he said.

That pat on the head must be reassuring to taxpayers, who perhaps were under the impression that their elected representatives are actually doing what they repeatedly tell us they are doing — sweating buckets to scrape together enough tax revenue to keep Utah's public schools at least as underfunded as they were this year.

Well, not quite. Senate Majority Leader Ralph Okerlund, R-Monroe, who asked for this line item gift, apparently believes that the needs of the classroom aren't nearly as pressing as the need to pay a private concern more than a quarter of a million tax dollars to stick its finger into a dike that isn't leaking.

The Salt Lake Tribune

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

March 11, 2013

Record \$310,000 paid to hunt Utah mule deer

• [BY BRETT PRETTYMAN THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE](#)

Idaho hunter Dennis Austad already owns one world hunting record set in Utah by taking the biggest Rocky Mountain bull elk ever recorded by the Boone & Crockett Club during a 2008 outing on Monroe Mountain.

Austad set a different kind of record during the recent Western Hunting & Conservation Expo held in Salt Lake City by bidding \$310,000 for the right to hunt a buck mule deer on Antelope Island this fall.

“That’s a record for all deer hunting permits,” said Miles Moretti, CEO of the Mule Deer Foundation, which auctioned the hunting tag on behalf of the state at the expo. “The last record was \$265,000 for a Utah statewide mule deer hunting tag.”

Ninety percent of the money will go to managers at Antelope Island State Park to be used on habitat and conservation work to benefit mule deer and other species on the island. The remaining 10 percent stays with the Mule Deer Foundation, a Utah-based nonprofit with the mission to restore, improve and protect mule deer and black-tailed deer and their habitat.

In addition to the high-bid conservation tag, the state also provides a hunting permit on the island through a lottery draw for any hunter who enters.

“We are thrilled. It is fantastic that the money comes back to the island,” said Jeremy Shaw, Antelope Island State Park manager.

The money will be used to purchase and eventually plant 10,000 bitterbrush plant seedlings, a favorite food source for mule deer.

Money will also be spent to drill-seed new sagebrush plants on the island.

“Bitterbrush is like ice cream for deer; they love it,” Shaw said.

“Sagebrush is important in hard winters for deer and pronghorn. It helps them get through rough winters.”

Austad, of Ammon, Idaho, also bought the Antelope Island mule deer hunting tag last year, but only spent \$160,000. He obviously enjoyed the experience and the massive non-typical buck he shot in November of 2012, almost doubling his high bid for 2013.

“Denny really enjoys the unique experience of hunting the island,” said Doyle Moss, owner of Mossback Guides and Outfitters and the man who helped Austad take the big buck last fall and the world record typical elk in 2008. “At 22,000 acres it is larger than most of the state’s Cooperative Wildlife Management Units. Denny has said many times he is willing to pay more money because it is used for habitat.”

Moss said Austad has easily spent more than \$1 million on conservation hunting tags in Utah. Many of those tags were bought at the Western Hunting & Conservation Expo.

Officials with the annual show, which is held by the Mule Deer Foundation and Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife, say more than 33,000 people attended the show in late February and more than \$3 million was raised, most of it from the auctioning of hunting tags, to go into wildlife conservation efforts.

Shaw says the money that comes back to Antelope Island has proved beneficial for mule deer and other species on the island.

“We might be carrying a few more deer than we should,” he said. “It is a true testament to what our wildlife biologists have been able to do with the range. The quality has come up and so has the population.”



HOOK ‘n BULLET

OPINIONS, EDITORIALS, DEBATES



GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE

March 9, 2013

MONTANA OPINION

MERLYN HUSO

Guest Opinion

Anniversaries celebrate backcountry

A newlywed man sits down at a barstool and asks the bartender, “How do I remember my wedding anniversary years from now?”

The bartender ponders the question for a while and then answers, “It forget it once ...”

That’s a joke many of us can relate to but the kernel of truth is that anniversaries aren’t meant to be forgotten lightly. They are often the one and only opportunity we have to both reflect on the past and look to the future with clear-eyed optimism.

If I were a betting man I’d say most of you have never heard of two important anniversaries in 2013 that are tied to Montana’s flagship Bob Marshall Wilderness and a proposal to expand our backcountry heritage in the near future.

Sen. Max Baucus recently chose to honor one of these anniversaries when he reintroduced his Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act into Congress exactly 100 years after the creation of Montana’s Sun River Game Preserve.

That wildlife preserve, the state’s first, was set aside through the foresight of Choteau rancher T.O.

Larson and the Montana state Legislature in 1913. T.O and rest of the Legislature were pioneer lawmakers at the time who were sickened by the commercial overhunting that had decimated Montana’s wildlife populations.

They worked together to set aside a piece of land (in what’s now a part of the Bob Marshall Wilderness) to protect native wildlife populations like elk and mule deer. The bill they cobbled together with the help of local sportsmen and ranchers passed the state Senate on a vote of 26-0. It passed the Montana House of Representatives 62-2. It was a very popular idea regardless of what side of the aisle you were sitting on.

Those pioneer lawmakers didn't know it at the time, but they had just set Montana down a path of advancing common-sense, locally tailored, bipartisan solutions for the conservation of our wildlife and the Rocky Mountain Front.

It's an important anniversary to celebrate because today we live 100 years downrange from our ancestors' original aim for the Rocky Mountain Front and we know their aim to be true.

Then, as now, we have the opportunity to advance a grass-roots, sensible course of action to build on this legacy through the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act.

The design of this legislation is homegrown and, as through time back to our territorial years, it is a consistent affirmation of our Montana commitment to land stewardship, fish, wildlife and America's last best and truly wild place.

The other anniversary to recall is the 40th anniversary of my own organization's formation. The Backcountry Horsemen began right here in Montana. Like the Sun River Game Preserve, the Backcountry Horsemen was born out of a need visualized in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Forty years ago, the Forest Service had plans to scrap an important wilderness bridge deep in the backcountry near Big Salmon Lake. At the time, the Forest Service was also proposing to close down some wilderness areas for use by horsemen and outfitters.

That didn't sit well with three fellas from Columbia Falls who, sitting around a campfire one night, decided a group was needed to advocate for the rights of horsemen and to help the Forest Service better steward their backcountry trail system.

Later, four founding members created the philosophy on which the backcountry horsemen would be based. They mustered the manpower and horsepower to rebuild the bridge and to prevent any trail closures.

Those efforts, as well as education in minimal impact stock use, continue today in the 26 states where backcountry horsemen now have a presence.

Just as those who came before us blazed a path that we now immortalize in history, today we have an exceptional moment that if we seize it, future generations will celebrate, too.

In centennial recognition and celebration of Mr. T.O. Larson's original vision for a wildlife rich Rocky Mountain Front, and our own organizations 40year track-record of stewarding the trails of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, we hope the Heritage Act is passed into law in 2013.

Merlyn Huso is a member of the East Slope chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen and is a past national chairman.



Letters To The Editor



HELENA INDEPENDENT RECORD

March 12, 2013

Heritage Act respects private property, public access

- [John Borgreen Great Falls](#)

[\(1\) Comments](#)

A recent letter by Randall Knowles implied there is no access to public lands along the Rocky Mountain Front. Well, anyone who has ever visited the Front knows what a wonderful jumping off point for adventure it actually is. There are many roads up and down the Front that lead to some of the best trailheads in Montana – just look at any map. There is the Benchmark Road, Sun River Road, Teton Canyon, Blackleaf Canyon, Birch Creek, the Dearborn Road, and Elk Creek just to name a few. No, there are not roads to every single spot. We like it that way and so does the wildlife that abounds here.

I take private property rights very seriously. The Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act was crafted to respect private property rights and to provide protection for the legal right to access the Rocky Mountain Front's existing network of public roads and trailheads. Also, the Heritage Act aims to keep the patterns of use much as they are today. So the motorized routes and non-motorized will remain accessible by the public whether you are a mountain biker, motorcyclist, hiker or horseman.

Granted, there are a few private roads that are currently contested over who should have access rights, but that process will work its way out in court and has nothing to do with the Heritage Act or the legislative powers of elected officials.

Missoulian

MISSOULIAN

- [ONLINE-ONLY letter to the editor](#)

March 08, 2013

[\(34\) Comments](#)

Bill to allow landowners to shoot any 'threatening wolf' amounts to license to shoot any

Wolf persecution: Montana legislature has a bill to allow landowners to shoot a “threatening wolf.” I thought ranchers/landowners already had this protection. Now they are asking for the right to shoot a wolf on the next mountain or on their ranch or land? It no doubt means that any wolf seen can be seen as threatening and shot on sight, so it is a bill to treat wolves as varmints across the state and shoot on sight.

It is hard for most bloggers on this site to deal with facts, but wolves usually ignore man’s domestic animals and stocks, killing only 0.0029 percent of cattle – 74 out of 2.5 million in 2011. Even mountain lions usually do the same. Of course most wolf haters have trouble with statistics, facts and science, and will deal only with absolute numbers and anecdotal opinion rather than percentages and probabilities; more folklore.

I had geese, chickens, sheep, horses and often a litter of Dalmatian pups on my place, and I had a resident mountain lion and a pack of coyotes that left me alone. It is another yokel-rancher-wildlife hater myth that predators need to be killed on sight.

So, is this more hysterical nonsense coming out of this right-wing anti-wildlife legislature? This is more among mounting evidence that wolves need to be re-listed in hostile western, if not all, states, especially Montana, Wyoming and Idaho, with state legislature attitudes of treating them like varmints to be shot on sight, extended hunt seasons with an extended trapping season.

**Roger Hewitt,
Great Falls**

Missoulian

MISSOULIAN

March 08, 2013

[\(5\) Comments](#)

Pesticides: Damage to humans and wildlife

Ravalli County had the highest number of bird species observed (84) of any county in Montana, in Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology’s Great Backyard Bird Count in mid-February, with more than 630 bird lists submitted for Montana.

With so much interest in birds, why are we still killing them with poisons? A new study headed by a Canadian toxicologist showed that “lethal pesticides were nearly four times more likely to be associated with population declines than the next most likely contributor, changes in cropped pasture.” Grassland bird species, such as the Vesper sparrow, the ring-necked pheasant, meadowlarks and the horned lark are showing the most rapid decline, declining faster than birds that live in other habitats.

Another new study showed five mental disorders – autism, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder and schizophrenia – share gene-based risks.

An article about the study states, “The Psychiatric Genomics Consortium, a collaboration of researchers in 19 countries, analyzed the genomes of more than 61,000 people, some with one of the five disorders and some without. They found four regions of the genetic code where variation was linked to all five disorders. Of particular interest are disruptions in two specific genes that regulate the flow of calcium in brain cells, key to how neurons signal each other.”

A study of underbite and overbite in grazing animals because of disruption to the flow of calcium into the cells of the affected facial bones was published in 2011. Also noted was strong correlation between the prevalence of autism in children and prevalence of underbite on white-tailed deer fawns, not likely a coincidence, based on the new findings of the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium. Exposure to hormone-disrupting pesticides produces visible epigenetic changes to developing young, including human babies, causing lifelong health issues and mortality.

Judy Hoy, Stevensville

HOOK ‘n BULLET

COMMUNITY, HERITAGE, HISTORY



BILLINGS GAZETTE

March 10, 2013

Out there:

Tiny snow fleas announce spring’s arrival

- [ANDREW McKEAN For The Gazette](#)
[\(1\) Comments](#)

When your 9-year-old daughter asks to go ice fishing, you take her ice fishing.

That imperative was the main reason I found myself on the windblown little pond, gamely trying to keep her interested in what might be happening under the honeycombed ice, instead of what was obviously happening above it — her dog rolling in some putrid find, horses in the distance, geese overhead, her brothers playing hockey with blocks of ice.

Ice fishing is an act of belief under the best of circumstances, but when the winter wind bites harder than the fish, it’s a lost cause to keep even a 9-year-old girl believing that a fish will find the little jig on the end of her line.

I was about to suggest heading in when Iris called my attention to what I thought was windblown dust on the frozen pond. They're little bugs, she pronounced, and we all took a closer look. She was right. They were tiny black critters, a little larger than pepper flakes, wriggling in little pools of open water and skittering along the ice.

Iris had discovered the harbinger of spring in these parts, more reliable than Punxsutawney Phil of Groundhog Day fame. She had spotted a drift of snow fleas, remarkable little arthropods that exist around us all year long, but are most visible in this shoulder season between the end of winter and the arrival of spring.

These animals are properly called springtails, after their main means of locomotion. They sport long tails that they keep tucked under their abdomens with little hooks. When they want to move, they free the hooks and — sprong! — the tails spring them forward. Just like little fleas.

Springtails live in weedy ponds, in the leaf litter of our woodlots, and just about anywhere you find rotting vegetation. We don't see them often because of their minute size and because of their remarkable ability to blend in to nearly any background. But in the late winter, they start to rise to the surfaces of ponds, and we can see them clearly against the bright ice and snow.

"They look like krill, Dad," pronounced Iris. "Think we could get a fish to bite on one?" Belief isn't dead, after all, I thought, and joined Iris back at her hole.



HOOKS 'n BULLETS

In Depth



GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE

March 10, 2013

GREAT FALLS FAMILY'S JOURNEY WITH DISEASE HIGHLIGHTS STRUGGLE WITH CONTROVERSIAL ILLNESS

By David Murray

Tribune Staff Writer

As the snow begins to melt in Montana, adult ticks emerge from hibernation and climb to the tips of low vegetation in search of their first blood meal. Ticks do not fly or jump but wait patiently for a warm body to brush past them. According to the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, they become aroused by the odor and breath of mammals, and transfer easily by stretching their legs toward the host. The consequences can be devastating.

In March 2010, Katy Peterson, now 31, began exhibiting symptoms of an odd illness that defied simple diagnosis.

“I broke out in hives and swollen joints, fatigue and vomiting — a lot of flu-like symptoms,” Katy said from her home in Great Falls. “From there, it just progressively got worse. Other things came up like brain swelling. Sometimes I’m bedridden just because of the weakness, and then you also lose comprehension skills. Sometimes I can’t read, sometimes I can barely balance my checkbook. I don’t drive very often anymore.”

Katy’s illness continued without an accurate diagnosis for two years. Sometimes the symptoms would disappear for a week; sometimes she could barely get out of bed for days at a time. Her doctors were stumped, alternately theorizing she might be suffering from an allergic reaction, hiatal hernia, autoimmune disease or rheumatoid arthritis. She was prescribed steroids, antihistamines and anti-inflammatories. At least one doctor suggested she begin taking antidepressants.

When her illness reached a crisis point early in 2012, her family in Belt sent her to see a specialist in Seattle. Shortly after examining her, Dr. Ralph Golan told Katy she had likely been exposed to Lyme disease and urgently pressed her to seek treatment for the chronic form of the disease.

Today, Lyme disease is one of the most divisive illnesses in American medicine. Virtually no aspect of this tickborne illness is undisputed. Researchers, doctors and patient advocacy groups hotly debate Lyme disease’s prevalence, diagnosis and treatment. Even the existence of chronic Lyme disease is disputed.

Emergence

Lyme disease is a tickborne illness endemic to the northeastern United States and the western Great Lakes region. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 33,000 confirmed or probable cases of Lyme disease were reported in the United States in 2011, though, because of misdiagnosis and underreporting, the actual number could be many times higher.

Early symptoms of the bacterial infection include a large bull's-eye rash, fever, headache and fatigue. Left untreated, it can spread to the joints, heart and nervous system, causing inflammation, meningitis and heart palpitations. In advanced stages, Lyme disease sometimes mimics other chronic illnesses like multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Lou Gehrig's disease. Today, Lyme disease is the most common vector-borne illness in the United States, but it was unknown to scientists just 35 years ago.

According to the National Institutes of Health, researchers noticed that an unusually large number of children in the area surrounding Lyme, Conn., were being diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis in the early 1970s. Their symptoms typically started during summer and often included a skin rash just before the onset of joint inflammation. Many patients recalled having been bitten by a tick.

At the same time, 2,000 miles west at Rocky Mountain Laboratories in Hamilton, Mont., Swiss scientist Dr. Willy Burgdorfer was investigating the transmission of tick-borne illnesses to humans. In 1981, Burgdorfer isolated the bacteria responsible for Lyme disease in deer ticks that had been collected in New York state. For his work, Burgdorfer was nominated for a Nobel Prize in medicine, and the bacteria that causes the disease, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, was named in his honor.

Since then the disease has spread rapidly. Lyme disease has been reported in every state in the country except Hawaii, though the vast majority of cases remain confined to 13 states in the Northeast and Great Lakes regions.

In the past decade, there has been a consistent occurrence of Lyme disease in the western coastal regions of California, Oregon and Washington, and a growing number of patients with Lyme disease are being diagnosed in eastern Canada and British Columbia.

For many years, Montana was one of a handful of states that had no confirmed cases of Lyme disease.

It wasn't until 2006 that the CDC confirmed a case of Lyme disease in the state. Since that time, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) has reported an average of five cases a year of Lyme disease. The DPHHS and the CDC attribute all confirmed cases in Montana to people who traveled outside the area and contracted the illness in a recognized endemic state. "There is virtually no risk of acquiring Lyme disease within the state of Montana," said Elton Mosher, disease specialist with the DPHHS. "We do not currently have the tick that is a competent vector for transmitting Lyme disease to humans. We entertain this kind of concern every year from people, especially in the northwest portion of the state, who swear up and down that they've got Lyme disease — and when we look at it more thoroughly, it's just not supported. We just do not have those ticks in Montana."

But like everything else about Lyme disease, where it can and cannot be contracted is disputed.

“I find it very troubling that any reputable organization could state that something like Lyme disease absolutely does not exist in a certain state,” said Golan, a Lyme disease specialist and the physician who diagnosed Katy. “Lyme disease is carried by a tick and ticks attach to deer, attach to rodents, attach to birds, and these animals don’t know where state borders are.”

Katy and her family may never know with any certainty where she contracted Lyme disease. It is just the first in a whole list of confused and uncertain issues surrounding Lyme disease.

Detection

One of the greatest frustrations for Lyme’s families like the Petersons is the general lack of public knowledge about Lyme disease and the reluctance of physicians to test for it. In a state that is listed as “Lyme disease free” it’s difficult to get medical professionals to seriously consider Lyme disease as an option.

In the first year of Katy’s illness, she and her husband, Jake, learned to expect doubt from most of the people they spoke to about it. Part of the problem was that she often had no clear outward appearance of being sick. The symptoms would come and go. On good days, she’d feel well enough to work hard at the couple’s janitorial business. On bad days, she’d retreat to her sewing room, where she’d spend hours isolating herself from the people around her.

“I think, within our family and friends, there was a lot of doubt — like, ‘Katy, get over it,’” she said.

It didn’t help that doctor after doctor was unable to offer a conclusive answer as to what was ailing her.

“Over the course of this, we’ve went to every doctor we could and have had almost every test performed,” Katy said. I was just a guinea pig. Nobody knew what was going on. We’d go to another doctor, knowing as we were sitting there that you’re not going to get any help from them and you’ve just wasted another \$500. I felt like they weren’t even listening to what I had to say. It was like, ‘We’ve got this young couple who doesn’t got a clue.’ That we were just these hypochondriacs.”

“A lot of the symptoms she had — we’d look on the Internet and they came back as Lyme’s,” Jake Peterson said of his wife’s illness. “We asked every doctor we went to and no doctor would even test us for it. Nobody would even hear it. ‘That’s crazy, there’s no Lyme disease in Montana.’” It’s a common complaint expressed by many families who have struggled with Lyme

disease. According to Golan, the problem is nested in the wide menu of symptoms that can be expressed by Lyme's, and in a medical community that is reluctant to recognize an illness that does not easily fit within accepted models of infectious disease.

“When I went to medical school, if a patient had more than seven symptoms, the professor said they needed to see a psychiatrist,” Golan said. “These people are thought to be nut cases when in fact they’ve got a physical problem affecting many parts of their bodies. What makes it even harder is if the Lyme’s happens to have an effect on their brain and they present psychiatric symptoms, then most doctors are reaching for their prescription pad for some tranquilizer or antidepressant or antianxiety agent.” The turning point came with a quick succession of events that began in early 2012. In January of that year, the Peterson’s youngest son, Liam, then 2, began to exhibit symptoms similar to his mother’s.

“When my son got sick, I knew exactly what was going to happen to him,” Katy said. “He got the swollen joints, the rash. His knee swelled up to the size of a softball. We would be in the hospital with him, and I would tell the nurses, ‘Look at this swollen joint, look at the rash — it’s Lyme’s.’” Still the physicians demurred from ordering Lyme disease tests for either Katy or her son. Then Katy learned she was pregnant. The Petersons feared that the disease would afflict her unborn child, and they sought advice from Echoz Pregnancy Care Center in Great Falls.

“I went in there, and I just leveled with them,” Katy recalled. “I have been sick, my son is sick, I am pregnant and I’m scared.”

Echoz referred the Petersons to Dr. Stacy Kingsland, who agreed to test Katy for Lyme’s. When the test returned, it did not conclude that she was currently infected with Lyme’s, only that she had been exposed to the bacteria at some point.

In an odd respect, Katy could feel fortunate for this type of positive test result. In Montana, for a patient to be confirmed as being infected with Lyme disease requires they pass a four-tiered test.

“No. 1, they have to have the distinctive bull’s-eye rash,” Mosher said. “They have to have a history of a tick bite, they have to have traveled to an area where Lyme disease is endemic, plus they have to have lab confirmation.”

Each one of these elements is somewhat problematic. According to a 2003 study by the CDC, as many as 30 percent of confirmed Lyme disease patients never exhibit any kind of rash at all, and in those patients who do, more than a third of the rashes are atypical and do not develop into the classic bull’s-eye pattern. A significant percentage of Lyme disease patients, like Katy Peterson, do not recall being bitten by a tick, and the questions about where a patient can potentially contract Lyme disease have already been discussed earlier in this story.

“The only easy diagnosis of Lyme’s is in those patients who walk in with a bull’s-eye rash and who may have some of the clinical symptoms that go along with Lyme’s,” Golan said.

Confirmation of Lyme disease relies on laboratory testing, which is itself controversial. The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and the CDC both recommend a two-tiered blood test for Lyme disease. Currently, there is no simple way to grow the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, as would be done when testing for other bacterial diseases like tuberculosis, pneumonia or staph infections. Instead, the first test for Lyme’s disease looks for antibodies the body produces to fight the infection. If that test returns positive, then a second test is performed called the Western blot test, which detects proteins on the bacteria’s surface.

The problem is that in the first weeks after infection, antibody tests are unreliable because the auto-immune system has not yet produced enough antibodies to be detectable. And, if the patient had been taking any antibiotics prior to the time of testing, that may hamper the accuracy of testing. Several studies have found that antibody tests for Lyme disease are correctly positive only about 65 percent of the time, and, without a positive antibody test, many doctors are reluctant to order the Western blot test, which, though more accurate, is expensive and technically difficult to perform.

Treatment

After testing positive for the Lyme’s antibody, Katy was flown to Seattle to be examined by Golan. According to the Petersons, Golan was seriously concerned about Katy’s health and recommended she immediately begin aggressive long-term antibiotic treatment, including having a catheter inserted to deliver medication directly to her heart.

Katy’s pregnancy complicated her treatment options, however, and her Montana physician, Dr. Robin Thomson, recommended Katy receive only a low maintenance dose of antibiotics to inhibit the transmission of Lyme’s to her unborn child. After the baby was born, Katy’s antibiotic treatment could begin in earnest.

The type of treatment both Golan and Thomson have recommended for Katy is not endorsed by either the IDSA or the CDC. In fact, neither of these organizations recognizes chronic Lyme disease as a clinically proven illness, preferring instead to refer to lingering symptoms of fatigue, pain and joint or muscle inflammation as “Post-treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome” (PTLDS).

“Most medical experts believe that the lingering symptoms are the result of residual damage to tissues and the immune system that occurred during infection,” a CDC public statement on Lyme disease says. “Regardless of the cause of PTLDS, studies have not shown that patients who received prolonged courses of antibiotics do better in the long run than patients treated with placebo. Furthermore, long-term antibiotic treatment for Lyme disease has been associated with

serious complications.”

The IDSA’s guidelines for the treatment of Lyme disease (adopted by the CDC) call for oral antibiotics to be taken for 10 to 28 days. But a significant number of independent researchers and Lyme’s disease patient advocacy groups say the IDSA’s treatment guidelines are flawed, and that a one-month regimen of oral antibiotics is insufficient to eliminate a bacteria that is slow-growing, burrows deep into tissues and can change its form and structure in response to antibiotic treatment.

“I believe, and the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society (ILADS) believe that Lyme organisms can be alive and perpetuate problems for years, and one month of treatment doesn’t even begin to address them,” Golan said.

The credibility of IDSA’s Lyme disease guidelines was seriously undermined in 2006 when it was revealed that a number of the doctors who authored these guidelines either cited their own research into Lyme disease to validate them or had connections to the pharmaceutical companies that develop and sell Lyme disease diagnostic tests. In 2008, the Attorney General’s Office for the state of Connecticut announced an antitrust investigation into the IDSA’s process for writing Lyme disease guidelines had found serious flaws.

“The IDSA’s 2006 Lyme disease guideline panel undercut its credibility by allowing individuals with financial interests — in drug companies, Lyme disease diagnostic tests, patients and consulting arrangements with insurance companies — to exclude divergent medical evidence and opinion,” said Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, now a U.S. senator.

In 2010, an independent review panel of nine scientists and physicians unanimously upheld the IDSA’s 2006 treatment guidelines. But the damage already was done. Many researchers and patient advocacy groups continue to believe that the IDSA and CDC are compromised in their standpoint on Lyme’s by a too cozy relationship with pharmaceutical and insurance companies.

During an interview in 2007, Burgdorfer, the discoverer of the Lyme disease bacteria and a scientist emeritus at the National Institutes of Health said, “I am a believer in persistent infections because people suffering with Lyme disease, 10 or 15 or 20 years later, get sick again. Because it appears that this organism has the ability to be sequestered in tissues, and it is possible that it could reappear, bringing back the clinical manifestations it caused in the first place.”

“The controversy in Lyme disease research is a shameful affair,” Burgdorfer went on to say. “And I say that because the whole thing is politically tainted. Money goes to people who have, for the past 30 years, produced the same thing — nothing. There are lots of physicians around who wouldn’t touch a Lyme disease patient. They tell the nurse, ‘You tell the guy to get out of here. I don’t want to see him.’ That is shameful. So this shame includes physicians who don’t

even have the courage to tell a patient, ‘You have Lyme disease, and I don’t know anything about it.’”

Toward wellness

In November 2012, Katy Peterson gave birth to a healthy baby girl named Lily. A few weeks after Lily’s birth, Katy began long-term antibiotic treatment for her chronic Lyme disease. Progress has been slow. She still feels tired a great deal of the time. Sometimes her joints and muscles ache, and Katy still avoids crowds where she can become panicky.

“I just get too confused,” she admitted. “The confusion and the chaos is too much — and then I’m worried about driving back.”

Yet while the symptoms have not gone away, Katy and her family have two things they lacked since their journey through Lyme disease began two years ago — a clear understanding of the illness they face and hope that things will improve in the future.

“From the very beginning, I made a promise that I would not get stuck emotionally my illness, and that we would grow as a family despite my being ill,” Katy said. “I could choose to be miserable, and sometimes I do chose to do that. But when it comes right down to it, the only real choice is to be hopeful.”



HOOK ‘n BULLET

2013 U.S. Congress



KRBD KETCHIKAN

[February 27, 2013](#)

Alaska Senators reintroduce bill to repeal Roadless Rule

by [KRBD Staff](#)

Calling it a “cookie-cutter” approach that is “stifling the Southeast Alaska economy,” Alaska’s two senators are co-sponsoring legislation to repeal the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The Tongass National Forest for a time was exempt from the rule, but a 2011 federal court ruling threw out that exemption.

In a recent news release, Alaska’s Democratic Sen. Mark Begich says that Southeast Alaska needs options to strengthen the region’s economy through resource development. That includes potential mining projects on Prince of Wales Island, and timber sales.

The Roadless Rule prohibits new roads and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas of national forests, including Alaska’s Tongass and Chugach forests. There are limited exceptions to the rule.

Earlier this year, Alaska’s Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski introduced a different bill that would allow roads specifically for the two proposed Prince of Wales mines.

IdahoStatesman.com

IDAHO STATESMAN

Published: February 27, 2013

[3 Comments](#)

Re-Writing the rules for national forests

‘Forest Trust’ proposal would manage USFS lands like state school trust lands.

By ROCKY BARKER — rbarker@idahostatesman.com

Lawmakers in Washington, D.C., and Boise are looking at changing a federal management system that all but ended logging after the forest wars of the 1980s and 1990s.

The desire for new forest plans is driven by wildfires that are growing in intensity and cost, and by lawsuits that lead foresters to add time and pages to environmental reviews to avoid litigation.

In Idaho, the Legislature is studying whether to copy a Utah law that would try to force the federal government to turn over millions of acres of public lands.

In Washington, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation is looking at programs to mirror the forest trusts in 22 states - such as Idaho's state endowments that produce revenue for schools and other beneficiaries - on 135 million acres.

Freed of laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, Idaho brings in 917 times the revenue per acre that the federal government takes in on the state's national forests, Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop, R-Utah, said Tuesday.

"I believe our forests and public lands are long overdue for a paradigm shift," Bishop said.

TESTING THE WATERS

Idaho House Resources and Conservation Committee Chairman Lawrence Denney said Tuesday that he expects the Legislature to pass a resolution this year in support of the Utah legislation, which also is generating interest in Arizona, New Mexico and Wyoming.

But state legislation that would authorize a legal demand that the federal government give up some of its 34.5 million acres of public land in Idaho will go to an interim committee for study between now and the 2014 legislative session, Denney said.

In Washington, D.C., Idaho Gov. Butch Otter pushed the House subcommittee to establish a forest trust pilot project recommended in 1998 by the Idaho Federal Lands Task Force. More than 2 million acres of the state's 20 million acres of national forests would be managed by a trust board to increase revenues and improve management.

Otter told the subcommittee Tuesday that turning the lands over to such a board would make the forests healthier and that more aggressive management would reduce the size and intensity of forest fires. He pointed to the 1.7 million acres of Idaho forests and rangeland that burned last year, costing the state and federal government \$214 million.

"It appears to folks in Idaho the federal government would rather see a valuable resource go up in smoke than be harvested and create some much-needed jobs for rural communities," Otter testified.

COLLABORATION SUCCEEDING

Another proposal from the '98 Federal Lands Task Force was a collaborative model that kept land under federal management but gave the many interest groups involved in the forests more say.

Nez Perce Tribal Chairman Silas Whitman said the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, led by Idaho Sen. Mike Crapo, is built on that model and already is boosting timber harvests, restoring damaged watersheds, creating jobs and identifying areas that should be protected as wilderness. U.S. Rep. Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, who introduced Otter and Whitman at Tuesday's hearing, has offered a bill similar to the governor's proposal. His Self-Sufficient Community Lands Act would create pilot projects to turn over about 1 percent of Idaho's national forests to the state to manage. Labrador said he also is a supporter of Crapo's Clearwater Basin Collaborative, which has brought together timber executives, local officials, preservationists, conservationists, sportsmen, the Nez Perce and representatives of motor-powered recreation.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

The Forest Service has sold contracts to harvest 11.4 million board feet of timber as a result of the Clearwater operation, said Jonathan Oppenheimer of the Idaho Conservation League. The Clearwater-Nez Perce Forest also has increased its annual timber target from 40 million to 60 million board feet - enough to build 600,000 homes.

"If we really wanted to focus on the outcomes, that's exactly what we're doing on collaborative programs around the state," Oppenheimer said.

"We would love to see the Legislature become more involved in efforts around the state that are delivering logs to the mill, creating jobs, restoring watersheds and protecting the special places Idahoans love."

Whitman said he shares Otter's frustration with bureaucracy. But he said the trust proposal would threaten the Nez Perce's treaty rights and relationship with the federal government.

Idaho House Speaker Scott Bedke, R-Oakley, served on the state task force in the late 1990s and said the state has had success with its trusts for public schools.

"We've had an ongoing pilot project for 120 years, and by any biological measure state lands are on par or better than federal lands," Bedke said.

Rocky Barker: 377-6484

The Salt Lake Tribune

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Published Feb 27 2013

[Read All Comments \(86\)](#)

Anti-federal land bill marches through Utah House

Politics » State sovereignty is a battle cry for many Utah lawmakers

By Robert Gehrke | The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah lawmakers want to study the intricacies and economic impact of the state taking over and managing tens of millions of acres of public lands that it has demanded the federal government relinquish.

"Really we need to understand what is there," said Rep. Roger Barrus, R-Centerville. "We'll finally have an understanding of all the complexities and inter-relatedness of all of the public lands in Utah."

The analysis Barrus wants performed in [HB142](#) would cost \$450,000 and, he said, serve to inform the discussion of how the state could manage the land currently in federal control.

Last year, the state [gave Congress a deadline](#) of December 2014 to turn over tens of millions of acres of federal land to the state.

After spending a year studying [the impacts of such a shift](#), it was determined a more detailed analysis was needed. [HB142](#), establishing the study, passed the House on Wednesday with one dissenting vote.

Rep. Brian King, D-Salt Lake City, supported the bill, saying he is confident it would show the folly of the state's effort.

"Having chosen unwisely and chosen to engage in unconstitutional conduct," King said, the state should understand the cost of managing the federal lands. "This will all be seen as a waste and in the meantime our school kids, who need more than anything funding for their public and higher education, will continue to be neglected."

Rep. Mike Noel, R-Kanab, argued that attorneys have made a case that Utah has a right to the federal lands and called it "one of the most important pieces of legislation."

"It really bothers me when people sit down and say we ought to be moderate and we ought to negotiate. That time has long passed," Noel said.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.



HOOK 'n BULLET

