

Ranch's losses to wolves continue to mount

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

LAURIER, Wash. — Owners of the Diamond M Ranch in northeastern Washington state estimate wolves have cost their operation close to \$200,000 over the last seven to eight years.

The ranch lost half of that total in 2012, said Justin Hedrick, a partner in the ranch with his grandfather, Len McIrvin, and uncle, Bill McIrvin.

The state killed seven wolves in the Wedge Pack in 2012 to stop attacks on the Diamond M's cattle.

Hedrick is also president of the Stevens County Cattlemen's Association. He expects wolf problems to continue to be an issue for northeastern Washington ranchers.

The losses include more than the deaths of cattle to depredation, he said.

"Wherever there's wolves and cattle in the same pastures, there will be problems, no way around it," he said.

On pastures where there are no wolves, about 1 percent of cows fail to get pregnant, Len McIrvin said.

On pastures where wolves harass the cattle, 15 to 20 percent are not getting pregnant, he said.

"It's one of those hidden losses people don't talk about," Len McIrvin said. "The wolves chase these cows and they're so stressed out they keep the bulls away. They just aren't breeding."

The family has declined to accept compensation from the state for their losses.

"Compensation isn't always received as goodwill," said Donny Martorello, wolf policy lead at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. "There are producers out there who would rather not have compensation. They don't raise their livestock to be depredated or losses by wolves or other large carnivores. We completely respect that and understand it."

Martorello said the department would appreciate a call to document direct losses — livestock deaths or injuries.

It's "just so we know that event is occurring," he said.

Martorello said loss estimates can vary depending on the operation, the livestock and timing when the producer goes to market.

"There can be several thousand dollars tied up in a single animal," he said. "That accumulates quickly."

"Hidden" or "indirect" losses are included in the state's compensation, Martorello said.

The state fish and wildlife commission has rules for situations resulting in "greater than normal" losses, including the unknown fate of animals lost on the landscape believed to be killed by wolves and reduced pregnancy rates or weight loss caused by wolves.

An advisory panel of five citizens, including people with livestock and environmental backgrounds and a range expert, reviews claims for indirect losses and makes a recommendation to the department for payment or denial.

An independent livestock assessor works with the department to determine the value of the loss.

If a rancher was found to be eligible for a \$200,000 loss payment, Martorello said he would receive reimbursement — eventually.

The state receives \$50,000 per year for compensation from a \$10 surcharge on personalized license plates.

Whatever is unspent rolls into the next year and carries forward, Martorello said. Under state law, claims that exceed that amount can also roll over into the next year as more money becomes available.

Petition asks DEA to quit treating industrial hemp like pot

By **ERIC MORTENSON**
Capital Press

A Portland attorney and a Southern Oregon environmentalist are asking the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to take industrial hemp off the federal government's list of controlled substances.

The petition, filed June 13, is the latest move by people who believe industrial hemp could be a viable agricultural crop if the federal government didn't classify it as an illegal drug. They have long contended hemp can be used to make food, medicine, clothing, lotions, construction material, oils and other products.

Some states, Oregon among them, allow licensed hemp cultivation but keep it tightly controlled. The petition notes that 30 other countries allow hemp cultivation, including Canada. The petition letter says state econo-



Capital Press file

This file photo shows hemp growing in Oregon's Willamette Valley in 2015. A Portland attorney and a Southern Oregon environmentalist are asking the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to take industrial hemp off the federal government's list of controlled substances.

mies, the environment and national security "would greatly benefit from the re-commercialization of industrial hemp in domestic agriculture and manufacturing."

Industrial hemp is a va-

riety of cannabis, but lacks the THC level that makes pot smokers high.

The petition asks the DEA to declare a cannabis plant is industrial hemp, not marijuana, if its THC level does not

exceed 1 percent. THC is the substance that gives users a buzz.

Industrial hemp is low in THC but has higher levels of Cannabidiol, or CBD, which some advocates say can be used to treat seizures.

West Virginia uses the 1 percent THC content level as its hemp definition, while other states, such as Oregon, say THC in hemp cannot exceed 0.3 percent.

The petitioners maintain that keeping the THC limit so low limits the number of cannabis varieties that can be bred and cultivated for traits that may be desirable in certain uses or products.

In an attempt to steer around controversy, the petitioners' letter to the DEA says they take no position on the legalization or decriminalization of medical or recreational marijuana, or on whether CBD has medical uses.

The petition from Oregon residents is the second to hit the DEA in June. Earlier, the Kentucky Hemp Industries Council filed a petition to remove hemp plants from the Controlled Substances Act.

The chief petitioners are attorney Courtney Moran, of Portland, and Andy Kerr, a figure from Oregon's spotted owl timber wars who now heads an Ashland conservation entity called the Larch Company. Others among the two dozen co-petitioners include the North American Industrial Hemp Council, Oregon state Rep. Floyd Prozanski of Eugene, and Anndrea Hermann, a Canadian cannabis and hemp technologies consultant who also teaches an industrial hemp course in the College of Forestry's Wood Science Engineering Department at Oregon State University.

Washington teen eager to become a farmer

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

EAST WENATCHEE, Wash. — Time's a-wastin' for Ian McGregor.

At 12 years old he was dabbling in corn. Now, at the ripe old age of 15, he's in his second summer of his own field trials.

On three different small plots in East Wenatchee, he's comparing various characteristics such as insect resistance and yields in hybrid field corn from seed producers Kussmaul, DeKalb and Pioneer.

He's anxious to find 20 acres of irrigated row crop ground near Quincy that he can rent next year and put what he's learning to work. After all, he'll be 16 in October, able to drive and can make the 30 miles to Quincy in half an hour. And, his grandpa started farming pears in Wenatchee when he was 14.

Time's a-wastin'. McGregor is busy in the mornings, right now, field sorting doubles out of his dad's cherries in their East Wenatchee orchard. But his heart is in corn and potatoes which he tends in afternoons.

"Grain corn is the biggest crop in the United States and I wanted to find out what it was all about," he says.

It's sort of the same with potatoes. Washington grows a lot, second only to Idaho. He needed to find out what that's all about.

He called the Washington Potato Commission. Chris Voight, executive director, put him in contact with Commissioner Rex Calloway, a



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Augie Kooistra, a Kussmaul seed dealer, and Ian McGregor, 15, are shown in McGregor's Kussmaul corn planting near East Wenatchee, Wash., on June 8.

Quincy grower who showed him his operation and gave him some seed. The Callows took McGregor to the Washington-Oregon Potato Conference in Kennewick in January.

"I got real interested so I started planting them at my mom's house," he says.

That's close to Town Ford and Costco in East Wenatchee. He dug trenches and planted seed by hand.

Residents at an assist-

ed-living facility next door get a kick out of watching McGregor work his potatoes and corn near the heart of town.

"One guy from Ohio recognized my DeKalb sign and gave me some weed control advice," McGregor says.

Some of his biggest help has come from Augie Kooistra, 66, owner of Augie's Ag Sales in Ephrata.

It was early 2015. McGregor was online looking

for corn seed. He contacted Eureka Seeds in Woodland, Calif., which referred him to Kooistra, who sells LG and Kussmaul seeds.

Kooistra gave him a plot bag of 20,000 seeds. This year he gave him plot bags of four LG hybrids and sold him, at a discount, a full, 80,000-seed bag of Kussmaul, enough to plant 2.5 acres of field corn.

"He's a real sharp kid," Kooistra says. "In a letter of thanks to me, he said he would

set the world on fire and plant corn and potatoes from here to the Oregon border.

"Most boys have their heads in their iPhones, while time away and he's already working at being a farmer. It's pretty inspiring."

McGregor says he may attend Washington State University in agronomy. Right now, he's finishing Eastmont Junior High, where his FFA teacher, Jeff DeJarnett, calls him the "corn guru."

Groups petition state to address predatory fish in Delta

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Two farm groups have joined a broad coalition that wants the state Fish and Game Commission to address the problem of non-native, predatory fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

The California Farm Bureau Federation and Western Growers have teamed with water districts and conservation groups to petition the state body, asking that fishing controls for several types of bass be loosened or lifted.

The groups say invasive black bass, striped bass and other predators are feeding on threatened and endangered salmon and smelt, which are native to the Delta region. From the farm groups' perspective, solving the predation problem could lead to the easing of pumping restrictions that have deprived growers of needed surface water in recent years, said Cory Lunde, Western Growers' director of strategic initiatives and communications.

"Obviously our primary interest is seeing that our farmers in the San Joaquin Valley receive adequate supplies of water to water their crops," Lunde said. "We're asking that the government consider other stresses im-



Courtesy of West Coast Advisors

A striped bass emerges from water. Farm groups have joined conservation groups in petitioning California's Fish and Game Commission to address the problem of non-native bass feeding on endangered fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, further imperiling the smaller fish and leading to more pumping restrictions.

pacting the health of smelt and salmon populations and not just resort to turning down the pumps."

Other petitioners include the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta, the California Chamber of Commerce, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the San Joaquin Tributaries Authority, the State Water Contractors and other water agencies and organizations.

Fish and Game Commission officials did not return a call from the Capital Press seeking comment about the petition.

Michael Boccadoro, a spokesman for the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta, said he expects the commission to take up the petition at a future meeting and direct employees to study alternatives.

"This is a process that the

commission has put in place to address these sorts of issues," Boccadoro said. "Ultimately, it's up to the commission."

Predation has been named as a factor in the continued decline of imperiled fish such as winter-run chinook salmon and Delta smelt. Despite the tiny fish's federal listing in 1993, a key index for smelt abundance hit zero last year for the first time

since the survey began in 1959. Surveys for the smelt this year have found fewer than a dozen fish.

The smelt and salmon have been at the center of bitter water fights among farmers, cities, fishing groups and environmentalists for two decades. The discord escalated during the drought, as no federal water was made available to south-of-Delta farms lacking senior water rights in 2014 and 2015.

The petitioners point to efforts that are already in place to protect endangered salmon and steelhead populations in the Columbia River from being preyed on by non-native bass, walleye and catfish. The Washington and Oregon fish and wildlife agencies removed size and bag limits of the predators.

The groups want California to take a similar measure while also implementing a comprehensive monitoring program to learn more about the predation problem and make adjustments as needed.

"They have to," Boccadoro said. "All the other Western states, at the peak of the drought last year, took action to address predation. As native species are in decline, if the state isn't taking all the steps they need to take to protect species, we're going to have issues."