



# Capital Press

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## No proof wolf deaths were caused by humans

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

The lead Oregon State Police investigator said the agency does not have probable cause to believe humans caused the deaths of the Sled Springs wolf pair in August.

Senior Trooper Kreg Coggins also said it's unclear how the wolves died. State police use a standard of 51 percent certainty in determining probable cause, he said, and evidence in the case did not reach that level.

"At this point it's somewhat of a mystery," he said.

State police headquarters announced Oct. 14 that the investigation is suspended. In a news release, the agency said a veterinarian had performed a necropsy on the wolves but was unable to determine the cause of death because the bodies had decomposed.

Coggins said it's not always easy to tell if an animal has been shot or poisoned. Decomposition complicates investigations, and the wolves were found dead during hot August weather, he said.

Coggins declined to speculate on what happened.

The environmental group Oregon Wild has called the deaths "suspicious" because wolves have been killed illegally in Oregon previously and "there is a very vocal minority that enthusiastically encourages it."

ODFW confirmed the Sled Springs Pair killed a calf in June. Coggins, who works out of OSP's Enterprise outpost, downplayed the possibility that the wolves were killed by ranchers or others in retaliation. Cattle have been attacked by wolves many times in Wallowa County, and no one has shot wolves in response, he said.

Oregon law defines probable cause as a "substantial objective basis" for believing a crime has been committed and a person to be arrested is responsible for it.

Northeast Oregon wolves are protected under the state Endangered Species Act and killing them is a crime. But their presence is controversial, especially among cattle and sheep producers who bear the cost and stress of livestock losses and of non-lethal defensive measures.

The investigation began the week of Aug. 24 after a tracking collar worn by the female of the pair, OR-21, emitted a mortality signal. State police and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife searched the area, north of the town of Wallowa, and found the female dead. Coggins said he

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## BREAKING THE ORGANIC BARRIER



## Veterans offer advice on making transition from conventional farming

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

**B**UHL, Idaho — Third-generation farmer Tim Cornie ventured into organics eight years ago on his farm in Buhl, Idaho, but his enthusiasm was no match for the weeds that came with transitioning ground and building better soil health.

He ended up reverting to conventional production on three-fourths of his 500 acres.

But he's trying again, going at it from a biological angle, employing "green manure" (plants grown and plowed back into the soil as fertilizer), cover crops and a customized compost brew to build healthy soil and manage weeds and pests, he said.

His rotation includes alfalfa, field corn, dry beans and barley, and he plans to add sweet corn and hopefully sugar snap peas next year — if a contract comes through.

Organic demand is strong and organic production can be a good deal for small farmers, but it's an expensive learning curve to transition, he said.

"Yields are less, and you farm organically for three years before you get paid for it," he said.

Meanwhile, the weeds are an eyesore, he said.

"You're going to be criticized. People are used to things looking pretty; it's not pretty," he said.

But it's part of building a healthy ecosystem — and if you can manage the weeds, it becomes profitable, he said.

In both attempts, Cornie has found no two years are the same in organic farming, and everything is part of a learning curve, he said.

"If you want a challenge, organic farming is where you want to be."

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Tim Cornie pulls plants from a field of a cover crop to check the soil on his transitional ground in Buhl, Idaho.



New organic grower Matt Townsend prepares to operate a tractor at Sunset Butte Ranch in Buhl, Idaho.

Photos by Carol Ryan Dumas  
Capital Press

## Appeals court puts hold on WOTUS regs

### Judges cite 'whirlwind of confusion'

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

Farm groups hailed a federal court ruling Oct. 9 that at least temporarily blocks the new Waters of the United States rule from taking effect in all 50 states.

"From agriculture's standpoint, it's very favorable," said attorney Toni Meacham, executive director of the Washington Agriculture Legal Foundation.

The Ohio-based 6th U.S.



Capital Press file photo

An appeals court has put a nationwide hold on the Waters of the U.S. regulations that are under court challenge. The rules were written by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Circuit Court of Appeals granted the temporary stay, pending a hearing on claims the new rule represents on unlawful power grab by the

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers.

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