



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

A band of 2,450 sheep grazes April 12 in the Boise foothills. Recreationists have been alerted about the presence of the sheep, which will be in the area for about 10 days before heading north.

## Band of 2,450 sheep graze their way through Boise foothills

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — A group of curious onlookers watched as 2,450 domestic sheep were unloaded from trucks onto the rolling foothills near Boise on April 12.

Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission officials alerted Boise residents about the arrival of the sheep, which will graze in the area for about 10 days as they make their way north.

IRRC Executive Director Gretchen Hyde said the sheep's owner and the rangeland commission want to ensure people who encounter the band of ewes and lambs don't have their outdoor experience ruined.

Using posted signs and local media, the IRRC offers tips for recreationists, including keeping their dogs on a leash to prevent a clash with sheep dogs.

"The sheep do intersect with quite a few of the recreational trails so we want to make sure that people are



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Wilder, Idaho, rancher Frank Shirts speaks to the media on April 12.

aware of that and have a positive experience with them," Hyde said.

Wilder, Idaho, rancher Frank Shirts, who owns the sheep band, has grazing permits on federal and state land in the area. Several private landowners in the foothills also pay him to have his sheep graze their land.

Shirts said most people are happy to see the sheep and a lot of people in the homes that line the foothills ask him to bring his sheep close to their property to control weeds and

reduce the fire danger.

"Ninety-five percent of people love to see these sheep but there are always that one or two that don't want 'em out here because they don't want (anything) on the land," he said.

He said the media attention, onlookers and the welcome from most homeowners in the area is satisfying.

"It makes you proud," he said. "You know you're doing a good job."

Tim Wilcomb, who owns a home and land in the area, turns up every year to welcome the sheep. He also feeds the shepherders pizza and allows them to re-charge their phones at his home.

"We love it when they come around and, plus, they keep the weeds down," he said.

Hyde said the sheep's annual trek through the foothills area provides an opportunity to showcase the benefits of managed grazing, including weed control, reducing the use of herbicides and reducing fire danger by suppressing fuel loads.

## Oregon, Washington to begin assault on gypsy moths April 16

By ERIC MORTENSON  
and DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

The Washington and Oregon agriculture departments will start aerial assaults on gypsy moths April 16 by spraying over the ports of Tacoma and Vancouver and parts of Portland.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture plans three applications by helicopter in the St. Johns, Forest Park and Hayden Island areas of Portland, about 8,800 acres total. Three Asian gypsy moths and two European gypsy moths were found in the area last summer.

In Washington, the department plans to spray about 10,500 acres in seven places, including the densely populated Seattle neighborhood of Capitol Hill.

Both departments will use the biological insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*, commonly known as Btk. ODA describes it as a natural-occurring bacterium that has been used on gypsy moths in Oregon since 1984 and in Washington since 1981.

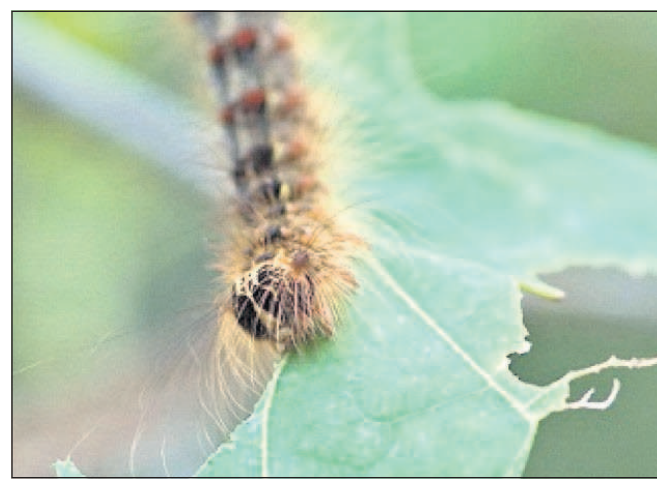
Gypsy moths are notoriously destructive, and the concern is they will damage Northwest forests and crops such as Christmas trees if unchecked.

The insects are established in 20 states in the Northeast and Midwest. Western states have been fighting an aggressive battle for more than 35 years to keep gypsy moths at bay.

Last summer, WSDA trapped 32 European gypsy moths and 10 Asian gypsy moths.

The Asian gypsy moths were particularly concerning. They have a wider appetite and more mobility than their European counterparts and hadn't been detected in Washington since 1999.

To ease concerns, both states have hosted public meetings about the spray plan and mailed notifications to postal



Courtesy of John H. Ghent, USDA Forest Service

A gypsy moth caterpillar feeds on a tree. The Washington and Oregon agriculture departments will start spraying to eradicate gypsy moths on April 16.

customers.

"We really want to make the public aware of what's happening so they aren't alarmed when they see an airplane coming over their neighborhood with Btk," WSDA spokesman Hector Castro said April 11.

WSDA has mailed three rounds of postcards to about 30,000 addresses in Seattle, Tacoma, Kent, Gig Harbor, Nisqually, Lacey and Vancouver.

Each site will be sprayed at least three times, three to 10 days apart, as caterpillars emerge.

The applications will begin about 30 minutes before dawn.

People on the ground may not feel the mist, Castro said. "The goal is for it to end up in the trees," he said.

WSDA tentatively plans to spray 640 acres on Capitol Hill on April 29, though weather

### More information

To receive updated information about when areas will be sprayed, WSDA advised people to go to a website, [agr.wa.gov/gypsymoth](http://agr.wa.gov/gypsymoth), and sign up for email, text or phone call notifications.

Oregon residents may sign up to receive text messages or phone calls to know when spraying will occur by going to <http://tinyurl.com/AGMsignup>. They can also hear pre-recorded information about the status of the project by dialing 211. ODA will also provide information on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ORagriculture>.

could change the schedule.

The Washington Department of Health said people can minimize their exposure by remaining indoors during spraying and 30 minutes afterward.

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Reports reviewed by: Ronald A. Sorensen CA Geophysicist PGP #957 & Suzanne Dudziak Geologist OR.G1273/WA.747 ROP-14-5-1/#24

## Irrigators face tricky negotiations after legal victory

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Irrigators fighting a lawsuit over the threatened Oregon spotted frog have won a key battle but face new challenges in upcoming settlement negotiations.

U.S. District Judge Ann Aiken has filed an official opinion denying a preliminary injunction sought by environmentalists that would have significantly disrupted the operations of three irrigation reservoirs in Central Oregon.

The Central Oregon, North Unit and Tumalo irrigation districts must now strive to protect their interests during settlement talks with environmentalists and the federal government.

Growers are generally out-matched in terms of time and money in such litigation, which doesn't help their position during negotiations, said Karen Budd-Falen, an attorney who represents natural resource industries.

"The farmers are going to be under significant pressure to settle even if they end up with less water," she said. "It really is like David and Goliath, with two Goliaths instead of one."

Aiken's recent ruling was no surprise, since she'd already told the plaintiffs — WaterWatch of Oregon and the Center for Biological Diversity — they'd failed to prove such an injunction was necessary during a court hearing in March.

However, the environmentalists then asked the judge not to issue a written ruling, which would have prevented the opinion from being cited in future legal proceedings.

Aiken has now denied that request and issued a decision stating their proposed injunction would "create certain hardship for farmers and ranchers" while its benefits to the spotted frog would be "questionable."

The environmentalists argue that the Crane Prairie, Wickiup and Crescent Lake dams have reversed the natural flow patterns of streams to the detriment of the frog in violation of

### At a glance

## Oregon spotted frog

**Binomial name:** *Rana pretiosa*

**Appearance:** Medium-size frog ranging from 1.75 to 4 inches long. Body color varies with age. Adults appear brown to reddish brown with black spots with ragged edges.

**Range:** British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and California

Courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Habitat:** Found in or near perennial bodies of water that include zones of shallow water and vegetation.

**Status:** Threatened

**Reasons for decline:** Habitat loss, competition from non-native species, predation



Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

the Endangered Species Act.

Their injunction motion sought an order requiring the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to alter reservoir operations to promote higher flows in winter and lower flows in summer.

The government and irrigation districts argued the species had adapted to the system over the past 70 years, so the injunc-

tion proposal could hurt the frogs as well as farmers.

In her written opinion, Aiken said she would defer to federal biologists rather than "pick and choose among expert opinions," particularly since the stream flow options demanded by the environmentalists wouldn't clearly help the frogs.

**SAGE Fact #129**

*At the Tidewater Terminal in Boardman, cranes annually move more than 21,000 containers between barges and trucks.*

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## Stay Clear Of Overhead Power Lines

As you prepare for irrigation season, Idaho Power reminds you to look up and look around before moving irrigation pipe or using equipment that may come in contact with overhead power lines.

For the safety of your employees and to minimize pump system interruptions, we also recommend having your electrical system inspected and serviced by a licensed electrician.

Practicing safe behavior on the job saves lives.



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