

OUR VIEW

Justice delayed in shooting of Idaho rancher

No matter how you look at it, the case of Jack Yantis is a tragedy.

The 62-year-old rancher from tiny Council, Idaho, was shot and killed in an altercation with sheriff's deputies. His bull had been hit by a car, and he was called to the scene. Within a few minutes of his arrival, Yantis lay dead and one of the deputies had sustained a minor injury.

That was seven months ago. Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden received the

results of the Idaho State Police investigation on mid-March. At that time, Wasden's spokesman assured the public that his office, which is acting as a special prosecutor in the case, would take its time to review the facts.

More than two months later, the attorney general is still reviewing the case, he says. When citizens last week demonstrated on the steps of the Idaho Capitol seeking answers to exactly what was going on, Wasden urged them to be patient until the office thoroughly

reviewed the results of the investigation.

The public has been more than patient; it's the state police, the attorney general and everyone else in this case who have been working in slow motion.

This is not a complicated case. The facts — the few that have been made public — are clear, and there were several witnesses.

The prosecutor — in this case, the attorney general — has had ample time to review the facts, including interviews with 40 people

that the state police provided.

For the sake of justice, what's needed now is action on the part of the attorney general.

The problem is that for seven months the Yantis family and the deputies and their families have been left in the dark.

They all deserve to know what happened the night of Nov. 1, 2015.

As importantly, they need closure and assurance that justice has been served.

We do not seek to hurry the attorney general in this matter.

However, we — and everyone else — do seek answers to the many questions that remain in this tragedy.

"Two hundred days later, the whole family still doesn't have closure," Jordan Valley resident Michael McLaughlin told one of our reporters last week.

"Something's wrong with that."

Indeed.

It's far too late for a timely response from the attorney general.

We'd settle for any response at all.



OUR VIEW

Who knows what Brown thinks about Owyhee Canyonlands

A group of ranchers, local business owners and natural resource users came to Salem last week in an attempt to get legislators to weigh in against the creation of a national monument in Oregon's Malheur County.

While they have the support of Republicans from the state's East side, they didn't get much from Gov. Kate Brown, the person whose voice might carry the most weight.

That's a shame.

Backed by the Oregon Natural Desert Association and the owner of Portland's Keen Footwear, the proposed Owyhee Canyonlands wilderness and conservation area would cover 40 percent of Malheur County — about 2.5 million acres now controlled by the Bureau of Land Management.

Critics say the area is bigger than the Yellowstone, Yosemite or Grand Canyon national park.

Opponents in the region have objected to the proposal, fearing the establishment of a national monument will entail new regulations severely complicating grazing, mining, hunting and recreation on the land while

inviting additional environmental lawsuits.

The people of Malheur County believe they've been good stewards of the public lands in their corner of the state since they began caring for it more than a century ago. It's their home. Beyond it being the right thing to do, their economic self-interest depends that they do so.

Last March, Malheur County residents voted 9-to-1 against the proposal.

No matter.

Supporters hold the edge. State legislators and Congress have no say in the process.

While the administration has previously said it would work collaboratively with Congress, local interests and elected officials in making such designations, because the land in question is already owned by the federal government the Antiquities Act of 1906 requires only that President Obama pick up his pen and proclaim it so.

The administration points out that there is no proposal before the president, and won't say how he would act if one lands on his desk.

It's no easier getting a straight answer in Salem.

We asked Brown's office whether the governor supported the proposal, or stood with the people of Malheur County who are against it.

Here's what her people said she said:

"While this is ultimately a federal decision, I have heard from many Oregonians with strong views about the Owyhee. There's agreement as to the beauty and uniqueness of the Canyonlands and disagreement over whether a monument designation can best ensure those characteristics will be enjoyed for future generations. I have communicated those viewpoints to federal administration officials and will be closely following this issue in the months ahead."

Got that?

Brown — elevated to office and seeking election in her own right in November — has often proven unwilling to make declarative statements on controversial issues.

If the Democrat governor opposed the plan she might help convince Obama to maintain the status quo. If she's for it, the fix is in.

But we aren't likely to know until after the election — about the time we expect the president to sign his proclamation.

There's more to GMO report than story covered

By HANK KEETON
For the Capital Press

Guest comment
Hank Keeton

In the 20 May edition, Capital Press printed an AP news-itorial about GMO and food safety, summarized loosely from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine's executive summary of a report by a special Academy Commission. The 407-page report is accessible online, and has a searchable tool attached: (<https://nas-sites.org/ge-crops/2016/05/17/report/>). An Internet search of the Academy's main website quickly reveals evidence contradictory to the news-itorial (http://search.nationalacademies.org/search?q=GLYPHOSATE&sa.x=0&sa.y=0&site=main_collection&client=def6v3_cluster&proxystylesheet=def6v3_cluster&output=xml_no_dtd).

What is the National Academy? It's a U.S. government-mandated association of researchers. This is the same U.S. government that is aggressively pressuring countries around the world to lower their food-safety and environmental regulations in order to allow GMO crops. This same U.S. government secretly negotiated the global corporate-bill-of-rights, known as TPP and TTIP, which are neither "free" nor largely about "trade."

These agreements empower countries-companies to sue for perceived lost profits against any regulation that negatively impacts them. The decisions are made through unappealable ISDS tribunals, enabling GMO-companies to insert their products into markets without public oversight and control.

Who served on the Commission? Mainly university and industry (Monsanto, Cargill, Novus) researchers. Today, most major university research programs are funded largely by the same U.S. government aggressively lobbying for GMOs, profits, and reduced regulation.

How did the Commission operate? The Commission did not conduct a scientific study; instead they simply conducted a review-study. What did they review? Between September 2014 and March 2016 the Commission invited 80 presentations at 3 public hearings and 15 webinars, and then reviewed 700 comments submitted separately.

Their sources are listed in appendices to the report. The Commission specifically chose all the presenters, and did not design any scientific experiment to validate any proposition.

To its credit, the Commission invited Eric Seralini, the French researcher who published a devastating scientific study of the serious biological consequences of GMOs and glyphosate. They allotted Dr. Seralini 15 minutes via the Internet, and devoted a whole page

to his results. Here is his scientific-study: (<http://enveurope.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s12302-014-0014-5>).

This Commission had a very broad mandate to review, yet included only 25 written comments about human health and food safety. 100 percent of those comments clearly indicate that GMOs and glyphosate have destructive impacts on human, animal and environmental health. (http://nas-sites.org/ge-crops/files/2016/05/Appendix-F_GECrops-Prepub.pdf). Yet the executive summary of the report does not give any indication of this fact.

Chapter 5 of the report focuses on human health. You can search the funding sources and first-author attribution of the materials reviewed by the Commission (<http://nas-sites.org/ge-crops/files/2016/03/Reference-Table-Chapter-5.pdf>).

More than 60 percent of sources come from government and industry. Chapter 5 is crucial for anyone wanting a better understanding of the politics and processes determining what products are marketed as "safe" in this country and around the world.

The Commission essentially defers to existing procedures of government agencies, (in the U.S. the EPA, USDA-APHIS, FDA) whose policies and procedures have been routinely criticized by independent scientists for decades.

This chapter is a great disappointment for anyone seeking new and informative material. The whole 407 pages comprise a scholarly book report, merely referencing previous studies and controversies.

It is incumbent on all farmers and other citizens to become thoroughly informed about these issues. The general affirmative statements of the executive summary are not conclusive, and the Commission admits this.

Let's work together to prevent this report, and its derivatives, from devolving into a fanciful "greenwashing" of significant health and environmental issues facing all of us.

Hank Keeton is proud of his agricultural heritage. Raised on farms, he was president of the largest FFA chapter in California in the 1960s, as well as president of the Southwest region. A published author in the world of physics, he has a graduate degree in philosophy, and is writing two other books. Hank farms 10 acres east of Silverton, Ore., manages three small businesses and is a partner in an ISO-certified testing laboratory for agricultural products.

Readers' views

Be careful how you refer to immigrants

As a longtime reader of the Capital Press, I find it offensive that the paper uses the term "illegals" as in Dan Wheat's article, "Reform needed to increase labor supply, immigrant workers say."

Most news organizations

have ceased using the term that has been found offensive to many. Three years ago, the AP Stylebook, used by many journalists, decided to stop using the term. They insisted the term "illegal immigrant" or the use of "illegal" to describe a person was not correct. Instead, the AP tells its users that "illegal" should describe only an action, such as living in or immigrating to a country illegally.

For an industry that has relied on the illegal use of workers, and for a newspaper that has long called for immigration reform, let's try and be a bit kinder to those who harvest our crops. Let's start by not using terms like "illegals" or "illegal immigrants."

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Letters policy

Write to us: Capital Press welcomes letters to the editor on issues of interest to farmers, ranchers and the agribusiness community.

Letters policy: Please limit letters to 300 words and include your home address and a daytime telephone number with your submission. Longer pieces, 500-750 words, may be considered as guest commentary pieces for use on the opinion pages. Guest commentary submissions should also include a photograph of the author.