



Courtesy of Rob Amberg
Farm advocate Benny Bunting, of North Carolina, discusses how farm advocates helped other farmers during the agricultural crisis of the early 1980s in Farm Aid's new documentary, "Homeplace Under Fire." The National Farmers Union hopes to renew the push for farm advocates, believing farmers are facing a new crisis.

NFU leads new push for farm advocates

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

Convinced U.S. agriculture is in the midst of a crisis, the National Farmers Union is planning a recruiting drive to establish new farm advocates trained to help struggling farmers cope with stress and keep their businesses afloat.

The concept dates back to the farming crisis of the early 1980s, when farmers throughout the country started a grassroots movement to aid their overwhelmed peers. Advocates educated other farmers about their legal rights, helped them keep their land in the face of foreclosure and sought to address such issues as suicide in rural America.

"We're getting a lot of calls from our members telling us that they are going through a tough time, or that folks they know are going through a tough time," said NFU spokesman Andrew Jerome, adding the crisis is most acute in the major grain-producing states. "We think the crisis is here and that things are due to get worse."

NFU has also created a Farm Crisis Center website — farmcrisis.nfu.org — linking to resources to help farmers, such as Farm Aid, Farmers Legal Action Group, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and debt mediation resources. NFU is accepting testimonials on the site about farmers' struggles to share with lawmakers, and has distributed fact sheets to its roughly 200,000 farming family members to help them make the case to Congress that agriculture needs additional federal support, Jerome said.

According to statistics cited on the Crisis Center site, U.S. farmers and ranchers have lost half of their net farm income since 2013, and net farm income is forecast to decline by 8.7 percent this year, marking the fourth consecutive year of declines.

A Kansas City Federal Reserve report shows a 40

percent decrease in farm lending from a year ago, and farm debt is forecast to increase by 5.2 percent in 2017, while the value of farm assets is expected to decrease by 1.1 percent.

Jerome said some of the organizations that aided in the original farm advocate movement have been invited to a meeting with NFU to discuss details on training a new crop of advocates.

Northwest Farmers Union President Kent Wright, a rancher from St. John, Wash., believes producers within his region haven't struggled as much as those in the Great Plains due to the diversification of their production. But he plans to discuss the new crisis programs with members — noting some who specialize in specific commodities, such as wheat, are hurting. Wright said his region has been pushing for the formation of new farmer cooperatives to find strength in numbers.

"Our beginning farmers and ranchers, they're weathering their first storms," Wright said.

NFU's push coincides with the May 18 debut of Farm Aid's documentary about the original farm advocate movement, called "Homeplace Under Fire." Farm Aid spokeswoman Jennifer Fahy said her organization wanted to preserve the stories of aging advocates who have continued to help their colleagues. One advocate in the film said the support was often as simple as hearing of a struggling neighbor and going to have a cup of coffee with him.

"We've been lamenting there are not new people coming into this field to support farmers," Fahy said.

Fahy said Farm Aid noticed a 27 percent increase in calls to its hotline during the first three months of 2017, including a 37 percent increase in calls from farmers concerned about bankruptcy and a 50 percent increase in calls from farmers with concerns about Farm Service Agency loans.

Second round of Oregon wolf plan review happens in Portland

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Public review of the contentious way Oregon manages gray wolves continues May 19 with a hearing in Portland.

Not surprisingly, a draft plan from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has been criticized by livestock producers and wildlife activists alike. The ODFW Commission will hear testimony and eventually will adopt a five-year management plan. No date for adoption has been set. A first hearing April 21 in Klamath Falls saw 40 people testify.

Department biologists say the draft management plan builds on what they've learned over the years. Oregon had no documented wolves when the first plan was adopted in 2005; the state now has a minimum of 112 wolves, including 11 packs and eight breeding pairs.



Courtesy ODFW

Snake River pack captured by a remote trail camera Feb. 1 in Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. The ODFW Commission will hear testimony and eventually will adopt a five-year wolf management plan. No date for adoption has been set. A first hearing April 21 in Klamath Falls saw 40 people testify.

Russ Morgan, ODFW wolf program leader, has described wolves' population growth and geographic spread as a biological success story.

Livestock producers and other rural residents question that thinking, while urban environmentalists generally favor the return of wolves to the state's landscape.

The management plan is where those differences get argued.

Oregon Farm Bureau and Oregon Cattlemen's Association said the draft plan makes it harder for ranchers to protect their animals because it increases the number of confirmed attacks required before allowing

lethal control of wolves. The draft plan requires three confirmed depredations or one confirmed and four "probable" attacks within a 12-month period. The previous standard was two confirmed depredations or one confirmed and three attempted attacks, with no time period set.

The groups also believe ODFW should continue collaring wolves, and should set a population cap for wolves in Oregon.

Groups such as Oregon Wild and Cascadia Wildlands find fault with the plan as well.

They believe Oregon took wolves off the state endangered species list prematurely. They oppose a population cap and plan provisions that might allow killing wolves if deer and elk populations drop due to wolves, saying that proper habitat is a greater factor in ungulate populations.

Beehive privacy? 9th Circuit debates 'ag gag' law

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Analysis

Debates over Idaho's so-called "ag gag" law, which criminalized secret audiovisual recordings of farm operations, often center on the livestock industry.

It was an undercover video of cattle abuse at an Idaho dairy, after all, that inspired state lawmakers to pass the statute in 2014.

During oral arguments on May 12 about the law's constitutionality before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Seattle, Judge Mary Margaret McKeown approached the matter from an angle that didn't involve dairy cows.

"It could apply to beekeeping too, right? So does a beehive have a privacy interest?" McKeown asked Idaho's deputy attorney general, Carl Withroe.

Withroe acknowledged that beehives would be covered by the statute but said they probably lack the right to personal privacy.

However, the farmer does have the right to control who enters his property and to exclude those who want to record its operations without permission, he said.

The judge seemed to think that argument was beside the point.

"But that's trespass, not privacy, that you're talking about," she said, later adding that "corporations don't have a privacy interest."

McKeown's observation that "it keeps coming down to trespass" could be problematic for Idaho's defense of the law, which was struck down nearly two years ago by a federal judge who found it violated free speech rights.

Trespass is already prohibited by Idaho law in the legitimate interest of protecting private property, while other statutes aim to protect people from defamation, theft and fraud, according to the Ani-



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press File
Dairy cows rest at Si-Ellen Family Dairy in Jerome, Idaho. Judges from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals are weighing the constitutionality of an Idaho law criminalizing secret recordings of farms.

mal Legal Defense Fund.

ALDF claims the real goal of the "ag gag" law, on the other hand, is the illegitimate purpose of suppressing speech that casts a negative light on the farm industry.

As for privacy rights, the law's opponents argue that farms are effectively "industrial facilities" that don't have the same expectations of privacy as people.

Idaho's lawyers counter that the law simply requires people to obtain a farmer's permission to enter his property and film operations without misrepresenting who they are.

The statute regulates the ability to use a tool, such as a camera, on private property, rather than restricting "expressive conduct," according to Idaho.

"There is no First Amendment right to make those recordings in the first place," said Withroe.

Since the law simply restricts the ability to record on private property, without distinguishing between favorable and unfavorable coverage, the regulation is impartial regard-

ing content and thus doesn't violate free speech rights, he said.

Judge Carlos Bea seemed skeptical of this argument, noting that people who violate the statute must pay the farmer double the amount of losses caused by the crime in restitution — a requirement that's unlikely to be triggered by a positive portrayal.

"It isn't viewpoint-neutral. It's directed to the operations only, and only to pejorative reports of the operations," Bea said.

Though Idaho's legal theory was subject to much of the tough questioning by the three 9th Circuit judges, they also pushed back against some arguments by ALDF's attorney, Justin Marceau.

Specifically, the judges inquired about provisions of the

law that prohibit using misrepresentation to gain access to records, obtain employment or economically harm the farm.

At one point, Judge Richard Tallman wondered whether ALDF could live with a narrower injunction against the Idaho law than the current order entirely blocking its enforcement.

"The misrepresentation is basically for the purpose of surreptitiously obtaining the record. It doesn't have anything to do with speech about the production facility's operation, does it?"

Marceau responded that such misrepresentation is within the scope of free speech protections provided by the First Amendment, similar to misleading political statements.



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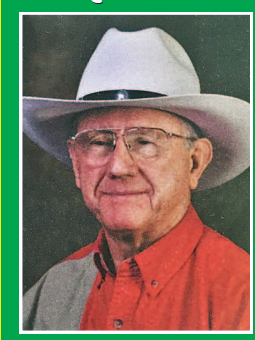
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Capital Press customers warned of phishing scheme

The Capital Press has received reports of customers receiving fraudulent emails with past-due invoices attached purporting to have been sent by the paper.

The fraudulent emails come from Stephanie Georgary with an email address of sraften@capitalpress.com. There is no such person working at the Capital Press and the email address is not valid.

The emails appear to be part of a phishing scheme designed to glean information from the computers of targeted customers, Joe Beach, editor and publisher of the Capital Press, said. Customers receiving these emails should delete them, and should not click on the attached invoice.

The Capital Press does send invoices by email, but only to customers who have requested electronic delivery.

If any advertiser or subscriber has a question about any email they receive allegedly coming from the Capital Press, Beach said, they should call the paper at 1-800-882-6789.





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