

Washington

Farm, state settle irrigation dispute

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press



Courtesy of Washington Department of Ecology

A picture taken in 2015 shows a blueberry field at U.S. Golden Eagle Farms in Skagit County, Wash. According to an allegation by the Washington Department of Ecology, the farm exceeded its water right by irrigating too many acres. The farm and Ecology have settled the allegation, with the farm admitting no wrongdoing but agreeing to fund habitat restoration.

Golden Eagle already had agreed last year to do some of the fish habitat restoration to settle a fine issued by the state Department of Natural Resources for illegally cutting down trees on the farm.

Ecology's Northwest regional director Tom Buraker said the agency preferred that the farm do more habitat res-

toration to paying a fine into the general fund. "All the way around, we think it's a good deal," he said. "As far as Ecology is concerned, we're getting \$16,000 worth of habitat restoration out of the penalty." Ecology levied the fine in early 2016, alleging the farm on Cockerham Island had exceeded its water right. At the time, Ecology said the farm was allowed to water 250 acres, but it irrigated 450 acres. Since then, the farm has obtained water rights to irrigate 743 acres of blueberries.

Golden Eagle appealed Ecology's fine to the Pollution Control Hearings Board. The agreement settles the appeal, with the farm admitting no wrongdoing.

Efforts to reach the farm's attorney or an official through the Golden Eagle's parent company, Aquilini Investment Group in Vancouver, British Columbia, were unsuccessful. DNR fined Golden Eagle \$24,000 in 2014 for cutting down trees to clear 7 acres for blueberries. The trees were in an area where the Skagit River could change its course and flow through, according to DNR.

In the settlement with DNR, the company paid an \$8,000 fine and agreed to replant the area and put the logs and limbs in the creek and slough. According to the settlement with Ecology, Golden Eagle now must spend at least \$32,000 on the work.

WDFW keeps close watch on wolf pack

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Washington wildlife managers are watching to see whether the Smackout wolf-pack in Stevens County attacks more cattle before deciding whether to kill more wolves, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife said.

WDFW killed two wolves before pausing July 30. The department has not verified any new depredations since then.

"The department may consider initiating another incremental lethal-removal period directed at the Smackout pack, but only if WDFW finds evidence of a new depredation after the last removal period ended," according to the department's weekly update.

WDFW began targeting the pack July 20 after the fourth depredation in the past 10 months, meeting the threshold for the department to cull a pack. Wildlife managers confirmed a fifth depredation July 22.

Following a new wolf-control policy, WDFW targeted wolves sooner than in previous years, hoping shooting two wolves will deter the rest of the pack. Previously, WDFW waited longer to intervene, but with initial plans to shoot

several wolves. WDFW shot seven wolves in the Profanity Peak pack last year.

WDFW has reported that the five cattle attacked by the Smackout pack since Sept. 21 belonged to three different ranchers.

In the most recent depredation, wolves injured a calf on a private, 40-acre fenced pasture. The calf was bitten in several places by wolves, according to WDFW investigators.

The other four depredations — three in September and one in July — occurred on federal grazing land, according to WDFW.

WDFW has not released further details about the operation, holding back details such as how the wolves were killed and their sexes and ages.

WDFW's withholding of information has upset conservation groups, including some with representatives on the department's Wolf Advisory Group.

The department says it's attempting to tamp down public fury over shooting wolves and shield WDFW officials and ranchers from harassment. The department also has been slow to release information about wolves killed in other ways, such as by being hit by vehicles.

Spokane horse has West Nile virus

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

A horse near Spokane is the first reported victim of West Nile virus in Washington state this year, officials say.

The Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory at Washington State University reported the positive test results for the 10-year-old quarter horse from Four Lakes, Wash., according to the state Department of Agriculture.

The horse was not vaccinated for the disease. It is reported to have coordination problems with its rear legs and muscle tremors, but is improving, according to the department.

West Nile virus is spread by mosquitoes that have fed on infected birds. The disease sickens people, horses, birds and other animals, but does not spread directly from horses to people or other animals.

It's unknown whether the horse was infected at home or while traveling, said Mike Louisell, spokesman for the department.

The disease is fatal to horses in about one-third of the cases in which clinical signs appear. Most horses that are infected do not become ill and show no symptoms. Horses that do become ill can display a loss of coordination and appetite along with confusion,

fever, stiffness and muscle weakness, particularly in their hindquarters.

Last year, WSDA confirmed 27 equine West Nile virus cases. Of those, seven horses died or were euthanized. Benton, Franklin, Grant, Kittitas, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens and Yakima counties all reported cases. Spokane had the most, with eight cases.

More than 30 cases have been reported in some years, Louisell said.

The state recommends vaccinating horses in the spring or obtaining an annual booster shot. Horse owners can reduce mosquito populations and possible breeding areas by removing stagnant water sources and keeping horses inside during insect feeding times, early morning and in the evening. They can also consider equine-approved mosquito repellent, place fans inside barns to maintain air movement and avoid leaving incandescent bulbs on at night, as they attract mosquitoes.

"This is one of those risks that is very well-tracked," he said.

Veterinarians who learn of potential West Nile virus cases in horses or other animals should contact the state veterinarian's office at 360-902-1878.

When your business has a down quarter but your bank keeps focused on the long-term.

That's Watrustology
Wisdom. Vision. Passion. Strength.

Learn more at watrustology.com
Dan McFetridge | 208.750.7942 | NMLS# 1087888
Commercial Banker

Washington Trust Bank
Member FDIC

33-1/#6

Profit From Our Experience

Matching people, science, and technology to the needs of our growers

Wireworm test plot in St. John, Washington

Crop Production Services is the nation's leading supplier of crop inputs and technologies including; Fertilizers, Crop Protection Products, Seed, Custom Application, Nutriscription HD Web Based Precision Ag technology, and an extremely versatile Agromic Testing Program. Our sales staff has decades of experience to offer the best possible advice. Contact your local Crop Production Services Branch for details or visit our website at www.CPSAGU.com

Crop Production Services
www.CPSAGU.com

Almira (509) 639-2461 Athena (541) 566-3533 Baker City (541) 523-6705 Clyde (509) 749-2222 Connell (509) 234-3441 Coulee City (509) 632-5697
Davenport (509) 725-3241 Endicott (509) 657-3452 George (509) 785-3263 Glade (Pasco) (509) 547-9771 Harrington (509) 253-4311
Hermiston (541) 567-2510 LaGrande (541) 963-3735 Mansfield (509) 683-1022 Moses Lake (509) 766-7772 North Powder (541) 898-2357
Okanogan (509) 826-1815 Othello (509) 488-5227 Pendleton (541) 276-1070 or (503) 393-1141 Plymouth (509) 783-4076 Pomeroy (509) 843-3491
Reardan (509) 796-2655 Rosalia (509) 523-6811 St. John (509) 648-3377 Toppenish (509) 865-2045 Walla Walla (509) 525-4920 Waterville (509) 745-8857

33-2/#6