

Trapper who shot, killed wolf avoids poaching charge

Plea entered Feb. 26

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

The Union County District Attorney's Office in northeast Oregon has dismissed poaching charges against a 58-year-old wildlife trapper who shot and killed a juvenile female wolf caught in one of his traps last December.

David Sanders Jr., of Elgin, Ore., appeared Feb. 26 in Union County Circuit Court where the state agreed to dismiss one count of unlawfully killing a "special game status mammal" stemming from the incident. Sanders did plead guilty to one additional count of using unbranded traps, and was sentenced to 24 months

bench probation, 100 hours of community service and a \$7,500 fine.

Sanders will also have his hunting and trapping licenses suspended for 36 months, forfeit his firearm and all trapping-related items seized during the investigation, and pay \$1,000 to the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Sanders declined to comment when contacted by the Capital Press.

According to Oregon State Police, a trooper first discovered the trapping site off Highway 204 west of Elgin on Dec. 10 in the Umatilla National Forest.

The trooper observed and identified Sanders as the individual who set the traps.

Eight days later, the trooper

returned and found a dead wolf that appeared to have been shot not far from the traps. Sanders later admitted he shot the wolf after he found the animal in his trap, though he insisted he was only attempting to trap bobcats, not wolves.

Wolves have been removed from the state endangered species list in Eastern Oregon, though it is still illegal to shoot them except in specific cases, such as if a rancher finds a wolf attacking livestock or in defense of human life.

Sanders was also using unbranded traps, for which he had a previous violation out of Baker County Justice Court in 2016.

Union County District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel said the state did not view the case

as an instance of poaching, but rather illegal trapping. Based on the investigation, she said it was clear that Sanders was not out to illegally hunt wolves, but made a bad choice regarding his trapping activities. Sanders should have called ODFW right away, McDaniel said.

The incident further demonstrates the fact that the problem with wolves is not going away, McDaniel added.

In October 2017, 38-year-old Brian Scott, of Clackamas, Ore., shot and killed a wolf in Union County during an elk hunting trip, which he told authorities was charging at him. No charges were filed in that case.

"We are seeing more and more incidents of wolf predation and human interaction

in Union County," McDaniel said in a statement. "This issue has long been a challenge for local ranchers, and with the number of wolves in the area more visible, people are engaging in recreation and having dangerous and accidental encounters as well."

Rob Klavins, northeast Oregon field coordinator for Oregon Wild, said McDaniel's comments were troubling, and appeared to frame poaching as a wolf problem rather than a human problem.

Klavins, who lives and works in neighboring Wallowa County, also questioned whether the punishment Sanders received was sufficient to act as a deterrent in future cases. He said the state needs to get more serious about tackling

poaching, especially when it comes to wolves, which he said are often persecuted and misunderstood.

"We know poaching is a serious problem in Oregon," Klavins said. "For far too long, poachers have been able to escape justice in Oregon."

While poaching is widely seen as a reprehensible crime, he said the conversation tends to shift in some communities around native carnivores, with the prevailing attitude of "shoot, shovel and shut up."

"It starts there," Klavins said. "We see the problem then continue on through underfunded law enforcement, insufficient penalties and decisions left in the hands of local elected officials who see poaching as a wolf problem."



Roza Irrigation District

Water spills from Roza Irrigation District's new re-regulation reservoir north of Sunnyside, Wash., into the main Roza Canal for the first time on March 15. Many miles upriver, the canal was also being charged at Roza Dam.

New reservoir in use as Roza irrigation water flows

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — The Roza Irrigation District, serving 72,000 acres — mostly farmland — from Selah to Benton City, began filling its 95-mile-long main canal on March 15.

It normally takes more than four days for water to flow from one end of the canal to the other and five to seven days for it to be fully charged, said Scott Revell, RID manager in Sunnyside. Water deliveries began about March 21, he said.

Other irrigation systems throughout Central Washington also are starting their seasons.

But this year water to the lower 40 miles of the Roza Canal is arriving a couple days sooner. For the first time, water was spilled into the canal from the district's new \$31 million, 1,600-acre-foot re-regulation reservoir in Washout Canyon, five miles north of Sunnyside. It's 55 miles downstream from the canal start and diversion from the Yakima River at Roza Dam. Water also flowed into the canal from a smaller re-regulation reservoir 30 miles down canal from Washout Canyon.

The season outlook is good with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation forecasting 100 percent water supply for junior and senior water right holders in the Yakima Basin, Revell said.

A cool and wet spring is likely, but if warm, dry weather takes over it could change the outlook, he said.

Orchardists want water now for frost protection. Wine grapes and hops won't need it for awhile, he said.

More than nine miles of lateral canals were piped this

past winter.

The district used grants from the state and federal government to seal cracks in more than a 1.5 miles of concrete lined sections of the main canal. Over a half-mile of geotech liner was installed in the canal at Terrace Heights. All the work reduces leakage and allows for more efficient water use, Revell said.

Beside 95 miles of main canal, the district system has more than 350 miles of laterals serving 1,700 growers.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is paying 65 percent of the Washout Canyon project and the state Department of Ecology and Roza district are each paying 17.5 percent.

The district uses about 300,000 acre-feet of water annually.

When a grower in the lower part of the district orders water it takes two days for it to arrive from the dam. By then the weather may have changed and the grower may not need as much. Water that isn't used goes into one of several wasteways that take it back to the Yakima River, Revell said.

The new reservoir allows the district to pump such excess water from the canal into the reservoir and hold it for later use in the lower half of the district instead of dumping it into the wasteways. It enables the water master at the dam to fine-tune diversions, saving water and providing more equal shares to everyone in the district, Revell said.

The Washout Canyon reservoir is about half full with water from last season and will be brought up to a near-full operating level within a few days of the start of this season, he said.

Ecology starts inquiry into best farm practices

Farm representatives still hopeful about ultimate outcome

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The state Department of Ecology has begun a long-planned look at the best ways Washington's farmers and ranchers can prevent water pollution.

The review was triggered by criticism from the Environmental Protection Agency that the state's plan to control agricultural runoff was too vague. In response, Ecology has formed a 26-member committee that includes farm groups, environmental organizations, tribes and conservation districts.

Ecology says the committee will look at 12 broad categories — such as storing manure or planting stream buffers — to identify pollution-control measures that are effective, practical and voluntary.

The Farm Bureau's representative on the committee, Evan Sheffels, the group's water-policy expert, said the exercise might benefit farmers by making Ecology more flexible in funding on-farm, pollution-control projects.

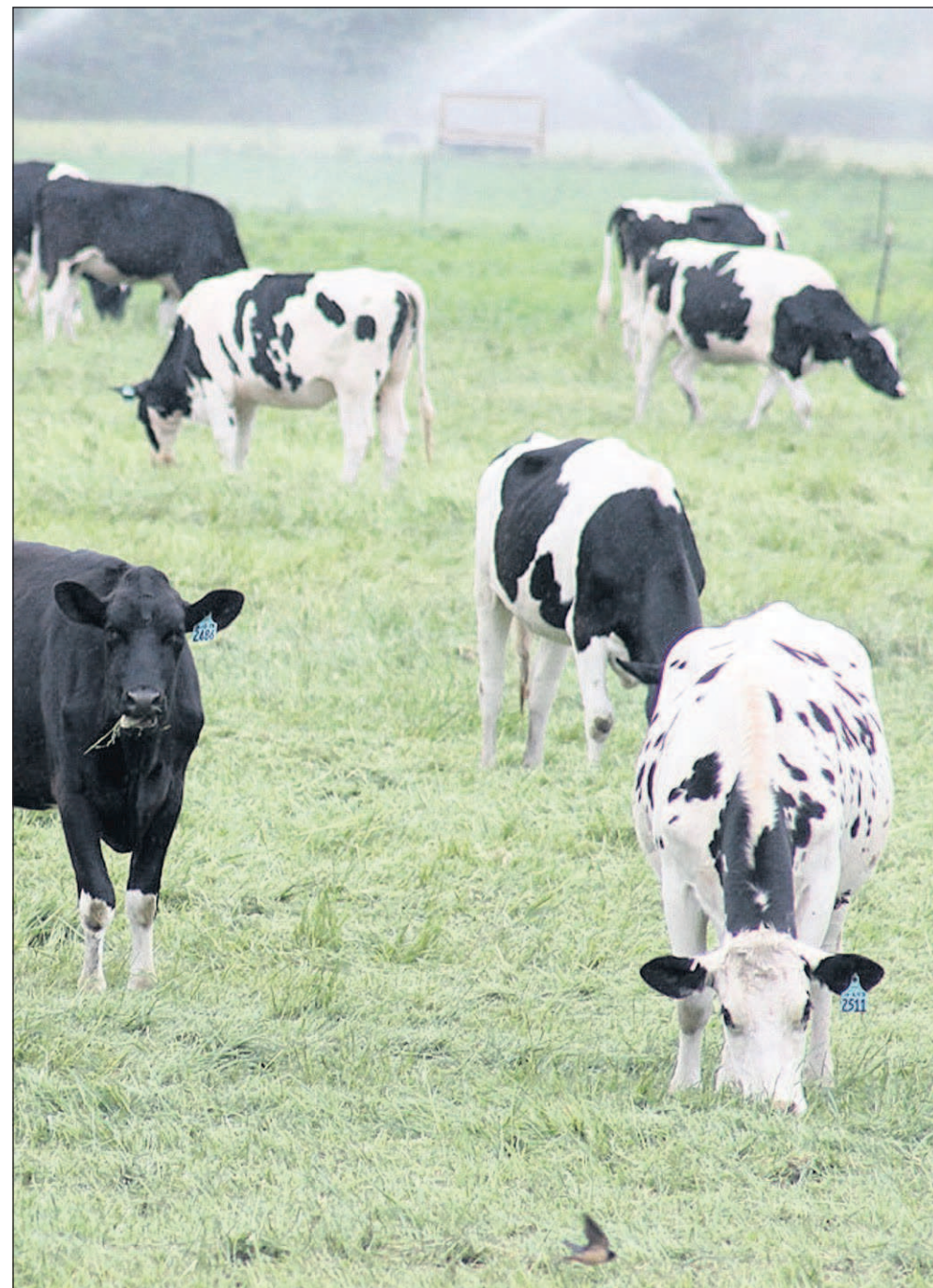
Nevertheless, he said he remains leery that what will start as voluntary guidelines will someday be held up as mandatory measures.

"Am I being paranoid? Maybe," he said. "We're hoping this is about science and what the farm can implement, and it doesn't get political."

The review stems from a plan Ecology presented to the EPA in 2015. The plan makes Ecology eligible to receive federal funds to protect water. While approving the plan, EPA said Ecology should "describe a process for engaging stakeholders" to develop "best-management practices."

Separately, Portland-based Northwest Environmental Advocates in 2016 sued the EPA, alleging it should cut off federal funds until Ecology implements best-management practices. The lawsuit is pending in U.S. District Court for Western Washington.

Ecology has tackled the EPA-assigned task cautiously. It spent more than a year planning how to proceed. A consultant reported that producers were worried the practices that emerged would be



Don Jenkins/Capital Press File

Dairies will be among the focuses of a Washington Department of Ecology committee considering best-management practices for the state's farms and ranches.

onerous, uneconomical and de facto regulations. Environmentalists said they were frustrated by the pace of identifying the practices.

The committee that has emerged from that planning has met twice.

Washington State Dairy Federation policy director Jay Gordon, who's on the committee, credited Ecology with good intentions.

"I am feeling much more comfortable," he said. "I am hopeful and optimistic."

Washington Cattle Feeders Association Executive Director Jack Field, also on the

committee, said he too was sanguine about how the effort was shaping up.

"I think we have a good chance of having a positive outcome out of this process," Field said.

The committee will split into two work groups for meetings over the summer.

One group, largely made up of scientists, will evaluate which pollution-control methods are most effective. A second group, which includes farmers and environmentalists, will consider whether the methods are practical.

Natural Resource Conser-

vation Service standards will figure in the talks, but the work groups will look at other standards, too.

The work groups will begin with two categories: soil stabilization and sediment capture, and tillage and residue management. Reviewing those two topics may take the rest of the year, according to Ecology.

Categories on deck include controlling pollutants from livestock in pastures and when confined, and protecting streams with buffers. Ecology has no timetable for working through the 12 categories.

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