

Students of all ages find this school a shear delight

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

MOSES LAKE, Wash. — Be patient. That is the key to shearing a sheep, Sara Ulibarri said.

"If you calm down and you're patient, the sheep will respond, and if you're really uptight and nervous, the sheep is also going to be nervous," the high school junior from Pullman, Wash., said. She plans to shear her flock and other sheep during the upcoming summer.

"Each sheep, I try to apply one new thing I've learned from either watching other people or being taught, so I feel like I'm gradually improving," Ulibarri said.

Each volunteer shearer provided tips, she said.

"It definitely depends on the sheep," said Elsa Willsrud of Fairbanks, Alaska, also a high school junior. "Each sheep is totally different. Some, you're like, 'Oh yeah, I get it,' and the next one is all over the place."

Willsrud and her family keep a small flock of Shetland sheep.

Her father, Tom Zimmer, shears sheep. He first attended the school 10 years ago, and accompanied his daughter

to "try to clean up some of my bad habits," during the school's advanced tune-up session, he said.

One of the instructors at the school can shear a sheep in 49 "blows," Zimmer said, while it takes him 60.

"I shear mostly Shetlands, Icelandics — smaller, wiggly little bastards," Zimmer said. "You can always learn more, and that's what I want to keep doing."

At 80, Bill Moomau was the oldest student. The Rochester, Wash., farmer handles sheep for Muslim customers who butcher the animals for their holidays. He wanted to learn how to shear the sheep to make them more presentable, he said.

He has never sheared before.

"When you get old, you should learn new things," he said. "I'm here to learn a new skill to keep my mind working."

The school is offered by Washington State University Extension and the Washington State Sheep Producers, with assistance from Columbia Basin Sheep Producers, Washington Wool Growers Auxiliary and American Sheep Industry.

Jerry Richardson has vol-



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press
Pullman, Wash., high school student Sara Ulibarri shears a sheep during the Washington State Sheep Shearing School April 5 in Moses Lake, Wash.

unteered for the course since it began in 1977.

"When I first started shear-

ing sheep, I didn't know what I was doing — I thought I did," he said. "Every year, I



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press
Sarah Smith, a Washington State University Extension educator, demonstrates a shearing technique as Tom Zimmer of Fairbanks, Alaska, and instructor Martin Dibble look on.

learn something more, and I'm not a youngster."

One of the reasons Richardson keeps coming back is to watch the students progress during the five days.

"Until they shear 3,000 or 4,000 sheep, they don't really get this down pat," he said. "It's a learning process. Every time, you learn."

Students were slated to shear roughly 500 sheep during the week.

WSU Extension educator Sarah Smith provided exercises leading up to the class. She cautioned students that

the course was physically demanding.

"(She warned that) some people have dropped out, so I was concerned," said Moomau, the 80-year-old farmer. "I'm not concerned now. I don't think it has been that difficult. I think almost anyone could learn to shear."

"Yeah, I'm a little sore — not as sore as I expected to be," Ulibarri said.

Has the course changed her mind about shearing?

"No," she said. "It's made me want to do it more, I've really enjoyed it."

Environmentalists urge judge not to dismiss grazing lawsuit

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Environmentalists are urging a federal judge not to throw out a lawsuit they filed 15 years ago alleging that grazing harms the threatened bull trout in Oregon's Malheur National Forest.

Last year, a federal magistrate judge found the Oregon Natural Desert Association and Center for Biological Diversity had failed to prove that livestock grazing along two rivers in the forest is to blame for the protected species' decline.

The plaintiffs have objected to his recommended dismissal of their complaint, which was

originally filed more than 15 years ago.

During oral arguments held April 5 in Portland, the environmental groups asked U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman to instead rule that grazing authorizations along the Malheur and North Fork Malheur rivers violated federal laws.

Fewer than 50 bull trout now inhabit each of the waterways, which together should support about 2,000 of the fish, said Mac Lacy, attorney for the plaintiffs.

The U.S. Forest Service has authorized livestock grazing on seven allotments covering tens of thousands of acres without analyzing the site-specific effects as required by law,

Lacy said.

In recommending the lawsuit's dismissal, the magistrate judge incorrectly found that attainment of "riparian management objectives" for the fish can be measured at the "watershed or landscape scale," the plaintiffs claimed.

The agency cannot decide it has met these objectives based on "habitat indicators" that don't mirror reality while ignoring actual measurements that show stream conditions are worsening, Lacy said.

Grazing must be suspended if it prevents a "near natural rate of recovery" under the National Forest Management Act, while the Forest Service faces a sim-

ilar obligation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, according to the plaintiffs.

"It's not just a non-degradation requirement," Lacy said. "It's an enhancement requirement."

Stephen Odell, attorney for the government, argued that it's up to the Forest Service to decide how best to measure compliance with recovery strategies for the fish.

The agency has relied on the most relevant data collected over thousands of hours, he said. "It's extremely rigorous."

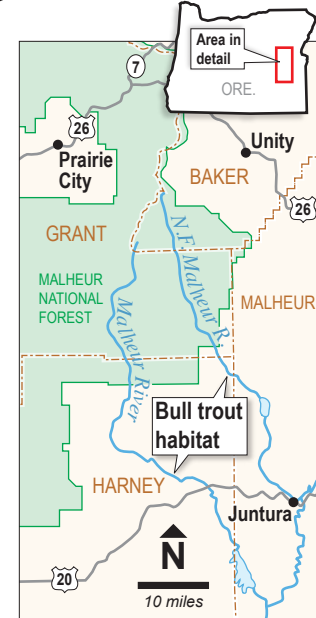
Riparian management objectives are "dream stream" benchmarks that would exist under ideal conditions and are

meant to measure progress, Odell said.

However, the Forest Service doesn't have to attain these standards to comply with its recovery strategies for the bull trout, he said.

Odell also revived an argument against the environmentalist lawsuit that was rejected by the magistrate judge.

The plaintiffs have challenged more than 100 agency decisions regarding grazing, which amounts to an improper attempt to change the Forest Service's entire grazing program, he said. Such "programmatic" revisions are meant to occur during rule-making or in Congress, not in federal court.



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

Idaho wheat acreage increase reflects farmer optimism about higher prices

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Higher prices have encouraged Idaho farmers to increase their 2018 wheat acreage by 6 percent — double the percentage increase nationwide.

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service on March 29 reported Idaho wheat producers are planting 1.24 million acres of wheat for harvest this year, up 6 percent from 2017.

Nationally, the "all-wheat" acreage total is expected to increase by 3 percent, to nearly 47.34 million.

The reason, an Idaho Wheat Commission member said, is the rebound in wheat prices.

NASS said Idaho's winter wheat plantings increased 8 percent to 780,000 acres while the U.S. total matches last year's 32.7 million.

In the "other spring wheat" category, Idaho's estimated 5 percent gain to 440,000 acres lags the country's expected 15 percent increase to nearly 12.63 million. Durum wheat plantings should drop 20 percent in Idaho to 20,000 acres, while the U.S. total in that category fell by 13 percent to

just over 2 million. Lower returns for durum have prompted some farmers to switch to other crops.

Prices have been up in the last six to eight weeks by about 25 cents per bushel, or roughly 5 percent, for soft white wheat, said Ned Moon, operational support manager at Jentsch-Kearl Farms near Rupert. Moon is an Idaho Wheat Commission member whose district includes southwest and part of south-central Idaho.

Farmers can choose to sell at a contracted, pre-determined price or at a market price.

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