

# Amendment defunds grizzly transport, delists wolves

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

The U.S. House Appropriations Committee has passed an Interior Department appropriations bill that includes an amendment by Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., denying funding for transporting grizzly bears into the North Cascade Range.

The bill, approved June 6, provides annual funding for Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Forest Service, Indian Health Service and other agencies. The bill next goes to the House floor.

"I have heard my constituents loud and clear on their opposition to transporting grizzly bears to the North Cascades and the rest of the federal government should take note of local communities' voices as well," Newhouse said.

Meanwhile, Eric Rickerson, Washington state supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said the USFWS and National Park Service will meet this week to discuss comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement of North Cascades grizzly bear plans. Soon thereafter, he said, staff will make a

recommendation to superiors in the agencies.

The agencies will choose between taking no action or one of three action alternatives for relocating grizzlies to the North Cascades, he said. A final EIS will come out at the end of September.

Newhouse's amendment also includes taking the gray wolf off the list of protected species by the end of fiscal year 2019, preserving the North Cascades Smokejumper Base in Winthrop, Wash., research on the disease transmission risk between domestic and bighorn sheep and greater USFS transparency in grazing permit monitoring.

The bill fully funds the 10-year average of Interior and USFS wildland fire-fighting and prevention at \$3.9 billion, an additional \$500 million for USFS fire suppression and \$655 million for hazardous fuels management, which is \$30 million above the fiscal year 2018 level.

The bill provides \$500 million for payment in lieu of taxes — \$35 million more than the budget request — for local governments in 49 states to help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable federal lands within their boundaries.

## Grizzly bear

**Binomial name:** *Ursus arctos horribilis*

**Height:** 3 1/2 feet at the shoulder, 7-8 feet tall standing upright

**Weight:** 300-800 pounds depending on age, sex and season

**Average life span:** 20 -25 years

**Appearance:** Unlike black bears, grizzlies have a concave face, rounded ears, high-humped shoulders and long, curved claws. Their fur ranges in color from light brown to nearly black.

**Diet:** Omnivores, about 80 to 90 percent of their diet consists of green vegetation, wild fruits and berries, nuts, and bulbs or roots of certain plants. A portion of their diet may include insects, fish and small mammals. Grizzlies will sometimes take larger game such as elk or moose calves and have been known to take livestock.

**Behaviors:** A grizzly must eat enough to build up huge stores of fat to sustain it through hibernation. They typically den in November and emerge in April.

**Known for:** Their impressive size and strength. Grizzlies can sprint 50 yards in 3 seconds, faster than a race horse.

**Range:** Today the grizzly bear is found in about 2 percent of its historic range in the lower 48 states; in pockets of Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and Washington. Large populations remain in Alaska and Western Canada.



Source:  
U.S. Fish  
and Wildlife  
Service

Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

# Bears attack Montana researcher, llamas

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

A grizzly bear researcher for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is recovering from serious injuries following a bear attack in Montana, and a rancher says one or more grizzlies killed two llamas 12 days earlier elsewhere in the state.

Amber Kornak, 28, of Libby, Mont., was working alone near a stream in the Cabinet Mountains south of Libby. She was collecting grizzly hair samples from bushes for DNA testing, said Jennifer Strickland, a USFWS spokeswoman.

Kornak, a seasonal employee, was just a couple of weeks into her "dream job" when she was attacked from behind, suffering two skull fractures and severe cuts to her head, neck and back, her friend, Jenna Hemer, wrote in a GoFundMe post soliciting money for her recovery.

Kornak sprayed the bear with repellent and walked two miles to her vehicle and drove



Associated Press File

A bear attacked a researcher in Montana 12 days after a grizzly killed two llamas elsewhere in the state.

for help, Hemer wrote.

She underwent four hours of surgery at Kalispell Regional Medical Center, including removal of bone fragments from her brain and is home facing a long recovery, Hemer wrote.

"She aims to make a full recovery and get back to doing what she's passionate about, working with grizzly bears and other wildlife," Hemer wrote.

Strickland said Kornak was

following USFWS work protocols, and that those protocols are being reviewed.

Officials speculated noise from the stream may have prevented Kornak from hearing the bear approach, the Associated Press reported.

Dillon Tabish, a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks spokesman, said the incident is under investigation and the department will confirm the type of bear. Generally, black

bears are less prone to attack humans than grizzlies.

The incident follows another attack 12 days earlier more than 100 miles southeast of Libby, when one or more grizzlies broke through a fence at mid-day and killed two trained pack llamas worth about \$4,500, the rancher who owned them told Capital Press. Ten other llamas were not injured, he said.

He asked not to be identified for fear of reprisals from environmental extremists.

Since the attack, he's been locking his llamas in his barn at night and is installing electric fences to protect them and his family, he said. Their nearest neighbor is a quarter-mile away.

"We've had grizzlies in our yard occasionally but this was the first kill and it's spooky to have them come in broad daylight," he said. "We don't go too far away from the house without bear spray. I used to carry a Ruger 454, but it gets heavy and I think spray is more effective."

# USDA green lights California's new federal milk marketing system

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

The USDA has put its official stamp of approval on California dairy producers' desire to join the federal milk marketing order system, announcing that producers had embraced the move in a statewide referendum.

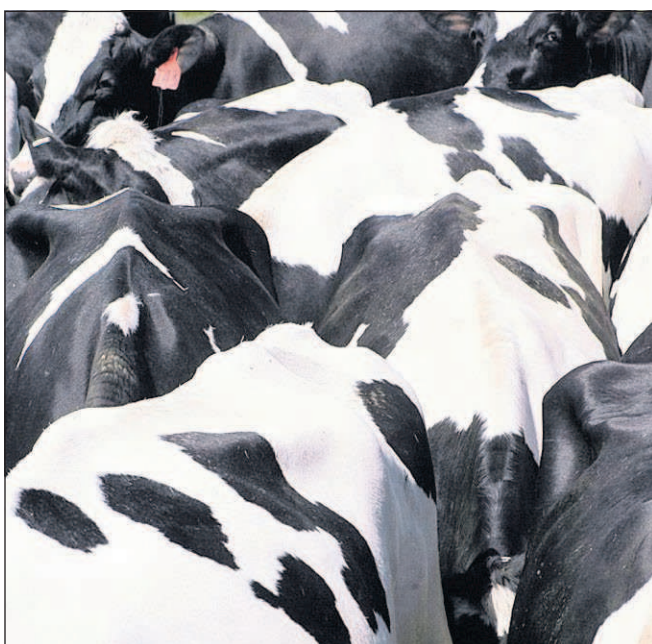
Voting closed on May 5 with the state's three largest dairy cooperatives, representing at least 75 percent of the state's milk production, voting in favor. But the outcome wasn't official until USDA tallied the votes.

The agency did not reveal the breakdown of the vote, but dairy producer groups were confident that the bloc voting by the co-ops would clinch the deal.

The official approval moves California's dairy industry from the state milk pricing system to the federal system, which producers are hoping will increase their milk checks.

"It's good news and many years in the making," Lynne McBride, executive director of California Dairy Campaign, said.

For too many years, California's dairy farmers have received some of the lowest milk prices in the country. Joining the federal system will finally bring prices



Capital Press File

Following a referendum among dairy farmers, the USDA has given its approval of the new federal milk marketing order for California.

in line with those in other milk-producing regions, she said.

"We think it's critical there's a level playing field for California producers, especially given how depressed milk prices have been," she said.

The state system has been failing California producers for many years, and joining the federal system is a critical step to ensuring dairy producers in California are paid an equitable price, she said.

"It's nice to get the of-

ficial confirmation and get moving," Geoff Vanden Heuvel, board member and economic consultant for Milk Producers Council, said.

Producers have been "tremendously unhappy" with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, which continues to regulate milk prices below federal order prices, he said.

The conflict goes back 10 years, with CDFA unwilling to make changes. There was a period when the price for milk used to make cheese

got completely out of line, trailing prices in federal orders by as much as \$3 per hundredweight, he said.

Another issue is the state's inability to regulate interstate commerce, wherein revenue from out-of-state milk used in California's fluid milk markets isn't shared with California producers through the state's mandatory pooling system, he said.

"The bottom line is California dairy farmers got tired of battling the state over the regulatory system," he said.

With CDFA unwilling or unable to put California producers on a level playing field with producers across the country, a federal order was the only shot to do something different, he said.

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Idaho State Capitol

# Idaho draft legislation would help water rights holders after flood-control releases

By BRAD CARLSON  
Capital Press

Idaho's seniority-based rights system of allocating water, and how flood-control releases from reservoirs impact it, is the focus of draft legislation supporters see as a key first step to resolving longstanding conflicts among types of water uses in the growing southwest region.

Irrigation districts, municipal water systems, natural resource managers and others in the greater Boise area want to make sure they continue receiving their rights-backed water allocations amid the increased competition that population growth brings.

The parties have gone to court in recent years, and the Idaho Supreme Court as of early June was slated to hear arguments June 20.

Draft legislation presented to an Idaho Legislature panel June 6 would amend Idaho water law to prioritize, during and following flood-control operations, existing water-rights allocations over any sizable new storage capacity created by building or expanding a reservoir.

The panel, including members of natural resource committees in the Idaho House and Senate, voted unanimously June 6 to ask Gov. Butch Otter to call a special session of the full Legislature. The panel stopped short of endorsing the proposal, which would take effect immediately on passage.

Several lawmakers said the legislation would benefit the entire state, though speakers focused on the Boise area primarily.

The Boise River's three-dam system releases water for flood-control purposes about seven years out of 10. The snowpack runoff that follows, combined with water already in the reservoirs, almost always is enough to satisfy right-holder allocations. But population growth and the prospect of eventually adding significant storage capacity threaten that balance.

Passing the legislation

would be an important "step on the ladder" toward a rights-protecting settlement agreement among various types of water users, said Roger Batt, who heads the Treasure Valley Water Users Association. That's because if it is put into statute, the approach would gain universal acceptance, he said. The association includes irrigation districts, canal and ditch companies.

Will Patterson, a director with Nampa-Meridian Irrigation District, said the proposed legislation would help ensure rights holders get the water they are entitled to after flood-control operations are completed.

"It gives us certainty that the water that is in the reservoirs can be used to irrigate our crops, our lawns and our gardens," he said.

Idaho Rep. Mat Erpelding, D-Boise, said any solution should protect the streamflow maintenance account — which makes sure Boise River flows don't drop below a threshold in low-flow season, benefiting fish and the riparian environment.

House Speaker Scott Bedke, R-Oakley, said the "refill" issue has been more challenging on the Boise River than on the Snake River in part because there is more room for error in the nine-dam Snake system. Snake River water users entered a settlement agreement in 2014.

Concerns among users in the Boise system have included transferring water to another river basin, possible future efforts to recharge the aquifer, and prospective new reservoir storage space jumping ahead of established reservoirs in the fill cycle, he said.

The proposed legislation would benefit the growing state overall, Bedke said.

No reservoir construction or expansion projects are imminent in the Boise River system, though expanding Arrowrock Dam has been discussed over the years. The other reservoirs are Anderson Ranch and Lucky Peak.

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