



OFB cheers Hammonds pardon

Early on Wednesday, July 10, Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) received the good news that **President Trump** had pardoned **Steven and Dwight Hammond**, cattle ranchers who were unfairly sentenced under federal anti-terrorism statutes for fires set to protect their own land.

The two fires accidentally burned a total of 140 acres of public land, for which the Hammonds were fined \$400,000 and served time in prison. Dwight and Steven paid their debt to society for mistakes made. But they were never “terrorists” and should not have been sent back to prison after serving their original sentence due to federal anti-terrorism statutes.

The federal judge who heard the Hammonds’ case, **Michael Hogan**, said in his ruling that a five-year prison sentence is “grossly disproportionate to the severity of [petitioners’] offenses.” He added that it does “not meet any idea I have of justice, proportionately” and “would shock the conscience to me.” Hogan also noted that the 1996 Anti-Terrorism & Effective Death Penalty Act was never meant to apply to ranchers simply trying to protect their land.



OFB advocated for clemency for Steven (second from left) and Dwight (center) Hammond, gathering over 25,000 online and working with officials in Oregon and Washington, D.C.

OFB publicly advocated for the Hammonds, including gathering over 25,000 online signatures, and also supported clemency behind the scenes through officials in Oregon and Washington, D.C.

Said **Congressman Greg Walden**, “As ranchers across eastern Oregon frequently tell me, the Hammonds didn’t deserve a five-year sentence for using fire as a management tool, something the federal government does all the time.”

OFB thanks President Trump, Congressman Walden, and all of those who worked to end the injustice done to the Hammonds by granting them clemency. While nobody can restore what the Hammonds have lost to this prosecutorial overreach and bureaucratic vendetta, we are happy that the Hammod family has been reunited.

OFB will continue to work to get the Hammonds back into their federal grazing permits so the

family can continue its multi-generational ranch in Harney County.

OFB President Barry Bushue said, “Our thoughts and prayers are with Steven and Dwight as they get back to the people and the land they love. We will continue to do whatever we can to ensure that this injustice is never repeated.”

At the 2016 American Farm Bureau Annual Convention in Orlando, the AFBF House of Delegates unanimously adopted

a resolution proposed by OFB asking the AFBF Board to prioritize changing federal terrorism statutes so they can’t be applied to farmers, ranchers, and foresters using accepted practices.

Rep. Walden is trying to make that a legislative reality. He’s encouraging the House Judiciary Committee to act on H.R. 983, which would ensure that farmers and ranchers are not prosecuted as terrorists for using fire for range-management purposes.

Said **American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall**: “President Trump’s pardon of Oregon ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond tells us there is still hope for justice in environmental law enforcement. The Hammonds were thrown into prison for nothing more than burning an invasive species that threatened their ranch — a standard ranching practice that is both lawful and widely accepted. Pardoning them was the right thing to do, and we thank Rep. Greg Walden for advocating so effectively for these men.”

Get the background on the Hammonds case and learn about OFB’s advocacy for these ranchers at oregonfb.org/blm. Help OFB help ag. Join us at oregonfb.org.

Upcoming Events

Visit oregonfb.org for more information.

Aug. 23: Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) FFA Tractor Driving Contest at Oregon State Fair

Aug. 25: Century Farm & Ranch Program award ceremony at Oregon State Fair

Sept. 18: OFB Classic Golf Tourney

Sept. 18-19: Safety & Health in the Cannabis Industry in Bend

Oct. 6: Farm Bureau booth at Oregon’s Bounty event at state capitol

Oct. & Nov.: County Farm Bureau Annual Meetings

Nov. 9-11: YF&R Leadership Conference in Central Oregon

Nov. 30-Dec. 2: YF&R Coyote Hunt in Burns (details coming soon!)

Dec. 4-6: OFB Annual Meeting in Salem

Ditching overregulation & red tape

Besides advocacy in the legislature, Farm Bureau members benefit from OFB’s year-round work on state and federal regulatory issues.

A hot topic these days: Ditch cleaning.

Occasional ditch cleaning is part of the job for farmers, particularly in wetter regions of the state.

About a year ago, when OFB Public Policy Counsel **Mary Anne Cooper** started to receive multiple calls from Farm Bureau members saying they’d been fined by the Dept. of State Lands (DSL) for the practice, OFB sprung into action. Farmers were facing fines between \$1,000 and \$8,000.

There’s an exemption in Oregon law that allows for the cleaning of drainage ditches, but over time, DSL began to interpret what many farmers consider a ditch to be a “channelized stream,” subject to more rules and regulations.

“We’ve really seen enforcement creep up over the last several years,” said Cooper.

While it’s legal to remove up to 50 cubic yards of material without a permit in most ditches around the state — and there’s a general permit for up to 100 cubic yards of material — those exemptions aren’t sufficient to meet the needs of most farms and ranches.

The only other option that exists today is a full individual permit, which requires an extensive, complex application process.

To help make it easier for farmers to stay compliant, OFB convened a workgroup with several stakeholders, including DSL.

“We’re trying to create a general permit with DSL that will hopefully be much easier to fill out, much easier to understand than the existing individual permit, which is currently farmers’ only option for cleaning ditches,” said Cooper.



Effective at representing Farm Bureau members in regulatory matters, OFB is working to help farmers be able to clean ditches without risking large fines or facing overly complicated permitting.

As part of that effort, **John Scharf**, member of Polk County Farm Bureau, volunteered his farm to serve as a demonstration project. So far, Scharf has successfully completed the cumbersome application process for an individual permit — the first one ever. And over the summer and fall, he will invite DSL to his farm to show agents exactly how ditch cleaning works in the real world.

“Thanks to John’s work, we now have a model for other farmers on how to successfully fill out the individual permit if they need to do

work in the short term. The hope is that it’s not quite so daunting a process because there’s a really good example to refer to,” said Cooper.

The ultimate goal is to develop a new general permit for ditch cleaning that’s easy to understand and is workable for farmers — along with taking legislative action to reduce DSL’s jurisdiction over drainage ditches. Farm Bureau is participating in a legislative workgroup, where OFB is advocating for these fixes in the 2019 session.

YF&R members meet U.S. Ag Secretary Perdue

On July 5, members of OFB’s Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee attended a meet-and-greet in Rufus with **U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue** and **Congressman Greg Walden**. Perdue answered questions about the impacts of Chinese tariffs on American agriculture and how the administration was considering ways to support impacted farmers;

the 2018 Farm Bill, which he expects to pass by October; and agriculture’s labor needs, which he hears about wherever he goes.

“I was impressed by how educated Mr. Perdue was about the issues we face here in the Pacific Northwest,” said **Logan Padget**, member of YF&R and Sherman County Farm Bureau. “He knew about the labor issues

we’ve had with the Port of Portland and the importance of Oregon’s export market for soft white wheat and grass straw.”

As thanks for his visit to Oregon, Padget made sure the secretary didn’t leave empty-handed.

“We gave Mr. Perdue a YF&R hat. And we signed another hat for him to give to President Trump,” said Padget. “We’re waiting for that tweet!”



From left are Congressman Greg Walden, YF&R’s Jenny Freeborn (chair) and Logan Padget, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, and YF&R’s Victoria Flowers (vice chair) and Jason Flowers at a meet-and-greet on a farm in Rufus on July 5.