

Associated Press File

The critical habitat of the northern spotted owl, a federally protected species, was reduced by nearly 3.5 million acres.

Biden administration will delay, review rollback of spotted owl protections

By GEORGE PLAVEN Capital Press

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Biden administration will delay a controversial rollback of critical habitat protections for the northern spotted owl in Oregon, Washington and Northern California in order to review the findings, a spokesman for the Interior Department confirmed Monday.

On Jan. 15, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under former Interior Secretary David Bernhardt published a final rule reducing the owl's critical habitat by nearly 3.5 million acres.

The rule was supposed to go into effect on March 16. Instead, the Interior Department spokesman said that date will be pushed back to April 15 pending further review.

"Robust critical habitat protections are essential to ensuring the survival of the northern spotted owl," the spokesman said in an emailed statement. "The Trump administration's arbitrary and sweeping reduction of protected areas was conducted without public input or scientific basis."

The northern spotted owl was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990, triggering protections in Northwest old-growth forests where the birds nest.

Initially, the Fish and

Wildlife Service set aside 6.9 million acres of critical habitat for the spotted owl in 1992. That was lowered to 5.3 million acres in 2008 and increased to 9.5 million acres under a new recovery plan for the species in 2012. A group of plaintiffs led by the American Forest Resource Council challenged the expanded protections in court, and in 2018, the Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to reexamine critical habitat for the spotted owl as part of a settlement.

At first, the feds proposed a 205,000-acre reduction across 15 Western Oregon counties. But then, just days before leaving office in mid-January, the Trump administration approved a reduction of nearly 3.5 million acres — about onethird of the designated critical habitat.

The reduction now spans 21 counties in Oregon, 14 in Washington and 10 in California.

About 1.4 million of those acres are part of the Bureau of Land Management's Oregon and California Revested Lands, also known as the O&C lands, which according to the AFRC were meant to be managed for sustainable timber production.

The previous habitat designation also did not differentiate between what is actually spotted owl habitat versus potential habitat, the group has

'Goat yoga' legislation draws support, skepticism

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI Capital Press

Therapy and exercise classes involving livestock could be permitted in Oregon's exclusive farm use zones under a bill that's drawn skepticism from agriculture and farmland protection groups.

Proponents of "goat yoga" are urging lawmakers to pass Senate Bill 559, which would include livestock in a land use provision under which counties can already allow horse-related "exercise, therapeutic and counseling activities" in EFU zones.

"This is a business and a cultural activity that is about as Oregon as things get," said Sen. Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, the bill's chief sponsor.

Livestock already inhabit EFU zones, so they wouldn't create conflicts in agricultural areas, and the number of visitors involved in such activities is naturally self-limiting, Gelser said. Large crowds of people wouldn't be attending goat yoga classes at all hours of the day and night, for example.

A "glitch" in existing land use law has caused county governments to object to goat yoga in EFU zones because it's not considered "equine therapy," which was permitted in such areas under a bill passed in 2018, she said.

Expanding this provision to include livestock would boost goat yoga, "a great vision that brought people together, helped people engage with livestock and connect with each other," Gelser said.

Lainey Dyer, who began holding goat yoga sessions in 2016, said the idea quickly went "viral" with more than 2,000 people signing up for a waiting list to attend the classes.

However, Dyer said she hasn't been able to host goat yoga at her own farm, first in Linn County and then in Ben-



A bill in Oregon proposes allowing "livestock therapy," such as goat yoga, in exclusive farm use zones.

ton County, because the animals aren't used for producing wool, milk or meat so the sessions aren't considered "raising livestock."

Dyer said she initially began bringing goats to other properties where such events could be held, which proved too expensive, forcing her to change her business model to "logistical and marketing support" for goat yoga classes.

The restriction has reduced revenues, tourism and employment in Oregon farms and decreased opportunities for people suffering from mental health problems or undergoing chemotherapy treatments, said Sean Scorvo, a supporter of SB 559.

County governments have been leery of adopting a broader interpretation of the "equine therapy" provision, fearing people will use it to subvert EFU protections, he said.

"The primary concern is this is a slippery slope," Scorvo said. "It's a lit-

tle scary for them to open Pandora's box."

The Oregon Farm Bureau and the farmland preservation group 1,000 Friends of Oregon draw a distinction between the existing equine therapy provision and the change proposed in SB 559.

Horseback riding is already allowed in EFU zones, so the provision approved in 2018 simply allowed counseling to occur on-site in a way that's "incidental and subordinate" to the agricultural use, according to submitted testimony from the organizations.

"Here, in contrast, the underlying business is yoga," the letter said.

The groups have urged lawmakers against approving the bill because the presence of livestock doesn't render non-farm uses "compatible with neighboring agricultural practices" or the statewide goal of preserving farmland.

Court arguments heard over transmission line

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI Capital Press

Opponents of a 300-mile transmission line in Eastern Oregon claim the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's approval of the route across its property violated federal laws.

The Stop B2H Coalition — which is challenging the high-voltage power line between Boardman, Ore., and the Hemingway substation in Idaho — is asking a federal judge to overturn BLM's permission for the project. cerns about the project taking prime farmland out of production and impeding farm practices.

The agency didn't comply with the National Environmental Policy Act by selecting a preferred route and a variant in 2017 that were different than what it had analyzed in a draft environmental study, according to the coalition.

The newly chosen route is problematic because it's only a half-mile from La Grande, runs across an intact portion of the Oregon Trail, and passes near ecologically sensitive areas, critics say. "The public had no way to anticipate the two new routes

that would run through that area. It deprived residents of La Grande and Union County of the right to weigh in on disproportionately adverse effects," said David Becker, attorney for the coalition, during Feb. 22 oral arguments.

The coalition also argues that BLM didn't properly evaluate the transmission line's "synergistic" effects with livestock grazing, which the group argues will have cumulative impacts on the The agency wasn't required to study burying a section of the power line and it sufficiently evaluated the implications of grazing while examining the route's effects on vegetation, said Krystal-Rose Perez, attorney for the BLM.

"The EIS is not organized in the way plaintiffs want, but it's up to BLM's discretion how to disclose that information," she said.

Similarly, the agency doesn't have to arrive at the conclusions preferred by the opponents, Perez said. "I don't think there's any question NEPA does not mandate particular results." Beth Ginsberg, an attorney for Idaho Power, said that both the Obama and Trump administrations have recognized the transmission line as a critical connection between the electrical grids of the Pacific West and Intermountain West. "The importance of a project like this cannot be overstated," Ginsberg said. "No shortcuts were taken. Every I was dotted, every T was crossed."

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1339 MILLER DR STAYTON, OR 2008 FORD F250 PU VIN = 1FTSW21R88EB80715 Amount due on lien \$7,597.03 % Reputed owner(s) KOBI SMITH KOBI EDWARD SMITH OREGON STATE CU

PUBLIC LIEN SALE U-STORE SELF STORAGE Auction Starts March 2 storageauctions.com Ends Friday, March 12, 2021

1st location ends at 10am 2nd location ends at 11am 1st - 1668 Industrial Way SW Albany, Oregon

Stephen F. Donohue, Y006; Cesar Gutierrez, H107; Allysa Inman, Y001; Marty Johnston, G015; Michelle Kimble, H094; Ryan Long, H080; Grace Moller, G002 Kristie Alice Seits, H024; Jordan Young, J001

2nd - 1501 Hawthorne Ave NE Salem, Oregon

Kristen Blyeth, 2C03; Randall Jordan, 2A77; Joseph Mcafee, RJ02; Kimberly Munz, Y217; Sharon Peiffer, Y213; Artemio Prado, 1C41; F-Son Ruben, 2D45; Surang A Salazar, 1B11; Phyllis Woodard, RD03 s231527-1 argued.

A spokesman for the AFRC declined to comment on the Biden administration's review of the final rule.

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VIN = 1G1FD1RX2H0137613 Amount due on lien \$2,335.00 Reputed owner(s) ADRIEL & ABEL LEAL GM FINANCIAL Among the transmission line's critics, the agriculture industry has raised con-

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2014 TOYOTA RAV 4 UT VIN = 2T3DFREV8EW132466 Amount due on lien \$1,835.00 Reputed owner(s) MINGMING FENG

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OF 2014 HYUNDAI ACCENT 4DR VIN = KMHCT4AE9EU627507 Amount due on lien \$1,575.00 Reputed owner(s) MARIA GUADALUPE SIERRA RAMOS

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OF 2013 CHEV MALIBU 4DR VIN = 1G11D5SR5DF210011 Amount due on lien \$3,095.00 Reputed owner(s) YISSEL LOPEZ PEREZ C/O COPART sage grouse in the region.

The BLM and Idaho Power, the utility company that would construct the project, are defending an inadequate NEPA analysis of the transmission line's effects, Becker said. "They really are trying to piece together and point the court in 25 different directions and say, 'We deserve deference.""

The BLM countered that its preferred route was a permissible "logical outgrowth" of alternatives examined in a draft environmental impact statement, or EIS, and doesn't require a supplemental NEPA study.

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