

Environmentalists plan to file lawsuit over Idaho's new wolf law

By KEITH RIDLER
Associated Press

BOISE — Environmental groups have notified Idaho Gov. Brad Little and other state officials of their intent to file a lawsuit over an expanded wolf-killing law they believe will result in the illegal killing of federally protected grizzly bear and lynx.

The Center for Biological Diversity, Western Watersheds Project and others on Monday gave a required 60-day notice of their intent to sue if Idaho officials don't prohibit all hunting, trapping and snaring in grizzly bear and lynx habitat.

For lynx, the conditions could cover most of Idaho except for the southwestern portion of the state. For grizzly bears, the areas would include portions of northern, central and eastern Idaho. Wolves are found in roughly the northern two-thirds of the state.

In May, the Republican governor signed into law a measure lawmakers said could lead to killing 90% of the state's 1,500 wolves through expanded trapping and hunting. It took effect July 1. Lawmakers who sponsored the measure, backed by hunters and the state's ranching sector but heavily criticized by environmental advocates, said numerous times that the state is allowed to cut the number of wolves down to 150 before federal authorities would take over management of the species. They said reducing the wolf population would reduce attacks on livestock and boost deer and elk herds.

"Lynx, grizzly bears, and gray wolves all inhabit similar habitat types and geographic ranges in Idaho, and wolf hunting and trapping therefore frequently occur in areas in which lynx and grizzlies are also present," the groups said in their letter. "Moreover, because snare and other authorized means of hunting and trapping are imprecise tools, they pose a substantial risk to non-target species, including lynx and grizzly bears."

A primary change in the new law allows the state to hire private contractors to kill wolves and provides more money for state

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.



Alan Kanaga/Capital Press

officials to hire the contractors.

The law also expands the way wolves can be hunted and killed.

The state Department of Fish and Game reported in February that the wolf population has held at about 1,500 the past two years. The numbers were derived by using remote cameras and other methods.

Idaho Cattle Association Executive Vice President Cameron Mulrony told Capital Press the new law provides needed additional tools to control wolves, and "will get the ball rolling."

The statute could be amended and administrative rules revised, both with legislative approval, later if necessary, he said.

Washington state sets new rule for farm work in wildfire smoke

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Washington farmworkers must be provided with smoke-filtering masks when air quality reaches the threshold that federal regulators consider "unhealthy" for the public, the state Department of Labor and Industries says.

The emergency rule went into effect July 16, though L&I investigators won't begin enforcing it until July 23, department spokeswoman Dina Lorraine said.

L&I pulled back from an earlier proposal to enforce a mask rule at an air-quality level the Environmental Protection Agency considers acceptable, except for people unusually sensitive to smoke.

Instead, L&I adopted the standard used by California, the only other state that regulates farmworkers laboring in wildfire smoke. The department will revisit the threshold as it writes a rule for next wildfire season, Lorraine said.

Gov. Jay Inslee ordered L&I to write a rule last fall as smoke clouded skies and air quality deteriorated from "unhealthy" to "very unhealthy" to "hazardous" on the EPA scale in places across the state.

L&I has yet to propose a permanent rule. The emergency rule will be in place for the rest of the fire season.

The rule's main provisions kick in when the federal air-quality index reaches 151 for particulate matter, the equivalent of 173 on a separate state air-quality index.

At 151, the color-coded EPA index turns red. Some members of the public may



Capital Press File

A farmworker wears a bandana as protection against wildfire smoke in a Washington orchard. The state Department of Labor and Industries set an emergency rule July 16 for working in smoke.

have ill effects, while sensitive groups may have serious illnesses, according to the EPA.

At that point, farmworkers must move indoors or away from the smoke, or be given federally approved KN95 masks, according to the rule.

For this wildfire season, KN95 masks are acceptable. Wearing the employer-provided mask is up to the worker.

Employers must train workers about the rule, though that requirement won't be enforced until Aug. 2 because training materials must still be translated into Spanish, Lorraine said.

L&I last month floated triggering the mask rule when the federal air-quality index reaches 69, or 101 on the state scale. The rule would have been roughly twice as strict as California's.

At 69, the air could be hazardous for the young, the elderly and people with respiratory or other health problems, but is acceptable for most people, according to the EPA.

Farms groups said L&I was overstepping its jurisdiction by proposing a standard for working adults based on public health warnings for sensitive groups.

Washington State Tree Fruit Association President Jon DeVaney said he was pleased L&I followed California's rule. "It makes sense to follow that standard," he said.

Growers already were preparing for wildfire smoke, but now have a new set of regulations to learn, DeVaney said. "Rolling out rules when people are at their busiest is a distraction," he said.

United Farm Workers organizer Elizabeth Strater said L&I should have stuck with the lower threshold. Farmworkers inhale dust and chemicals, and smoke adds to the occupational risks, she said.

"These folks aren't just going to and from their car," Strater said. "I think the jump to 151 is probably arbitrary. We know there are risks at lower levels than that."

Cattle group: CAFO legislation misguided

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., reintroduced a bill July 15 to clamp a moratorium on new and expanding large confined animal feeding operations and phase out the largest CAFOs by 2040.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., introduced a companion bill in the House.

The action would pertain to beef and dairy cattle, swine, poultry and horses.

The lawmakers said the legislation would "create a level playing field for independent family farmers and transform the broken system built by multinational meatpacking companies."

"Large multinational meatpackers, because of their buying power and size, are putting our food system at risk and harming everyone along the supply chain," Booker said in a press release.

Booker also called for an immediate transition to a more sustainable and humane system.

"An important first step is ending our reliance on huge factory farms and investing in a system that focuses on resilient and

regenerative production," he said.

National Cattlemen's Beef Association called the legislation misguided and in stark contrast to USDA's plan to accomplish fair, transparent and competitive markets laid out last week by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

USDA's path offers practical, long-term progress for cattle producers, said Ethan Lane, NCBA vice president of government affairs.

In contrast, the legislation introduced by Booker and Khanna "is the kind of broad, jumbled mess you get when you're more focused on Twitter and talking points than the sound legislating rural Americans need," he said.

He pointed out that 95% of cattle raised in the U.S. visit a feedyard, and feeding operations are not antithetical to small, family-owned farms and ranches.

"They're part and parcel of the same symbiotic supply chain that produces the most nutritious, sustainable beef in the world," he said.

The legislation would also strengthen the Packers and Stockyards Act to protect family farmers and

ranchers. It would restore mandatory country-of-origin labeling requirements for beef and pork and prohibit USDA from labeling foreign, imported meat as "Product of USA."

Strengthening the Packers and Stockyards Act and clarifying labeling are also part of USDA's efforts, as is expanding processing capacity and opportunities with a focus on small and mid-sized packers.

NCBA has long been on the forefront of issues such as labeling, competitive and transparent markets and a more resilient supply chain, Lane said.

"While it is positive to see some of those key producer concerns receiving attention from two new members of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees, we're also frustrated to see them buried in such a sprawling misguided package," he said.

The legislation by Booker and Khanna would also hold corporate integrators responsible for pollution and other harm caused by CAFOs and provide a voluntary buyout for farmers who want to transition out of operating a CAFO.

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