



NEW GAME PLAN



Goats clear a pasture of weeds south of Spokane.

Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

How targeted grazing on public lands is changing

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — When Craig Madsen left his job as a range conservationist for USDA to start his own goat grazing business, he recalls some people thought he was crazy.

“It took a while to get people to realize it’s not a dumb idea to use goats to do vegetation work,” said Madsen.

When he started his Spokane-based business, Healing Hooves, in 2000, Madsen

struggled to get work. Twenty-two years later, he’s so inundated with requests he turns many down.

“There’s more demand than supply,” said Madsen.

The past six years, the shepherd has seen increased interest in targeted grazing, especially after goats were credited with helping save the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library from a California wildfire in 2019 by eating firebreaks around the building.

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Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

LEFT: Craig Madsen in a pasture south of Spokane, where 200 of his goats get weeds under control. | **RIGHT:** Stacy Davies, manager of Roaring Springs Ranch. | **BELOW:** The crew at Roaring Springs Ranch herds cattle, with Davies riding center. Roaring Springs Ranch is working with the BLM on a pilot project that experiments with more flexibility surrounding grazing regulations.



Roaring Springs Ranch



Groups file petition to reconsider permit for large chicken farm

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

SCIO, Ore. — Opponents of a commercial chicken farm slated for the Mid-Willamette Valley are asking Oregon regulators to re-evaluate the facility’s permit, and either add new requirements to better protect water quality or revoke their approval altogether.

The state Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Quality issued a Confined Ani-

mal Feeding Operation, or CAFO, permit for J-S Ranch in Scio, Ore., on May 26.

A coalition of groups petitioned the agencies on June 9 to reconsider the operation, citing potential risks to surface and ground water.

J-S Ranch will raise about 3.5 million broiler chickens annually for Foster Farms. Kendra Kimbirauskas, who raises beef, hogs and goats on 70 acres in Scio, said the permit issued “does not adequately protect our water and wells from the inevitable pollution from this mega-poultry operation.”

“Instead, ODA must protect our community, farms and water from this incursion of massive Foster Farms chicken operations,” she said.

Kimbirauskas is an organizer of Farmers Against Foster Farms, which formed last year to protest several proposed poultry CAFOs in Marion and Linn counties, including J-S Ranch.

In addition to Farmers



USDA ARS

Several groups have requested state regulators to review approval of a chicken farm planned for the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

Against Foster Farms, petitioners include Willamette Riverkeeper, Friends of Family Farmers, Humane Voters Oregon, Food & Water Watch, the Center for Food Safety, Animal Legal Defense Fund and Center for Biological Diversity.

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Departures shake up leadership at Washington Farm Bureau

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Washington Farm Bureau’s top leaders for the past decade have left for other jobs in recent weeks as the organization shifts course under its new president, King County farmer Rosella Mosby.

CEO John Stuhlmiller, Chief Financial Officer Enrique “Rick” Gastelum and director of government relations Tom Davis have departed, taking with them a total of 37 years of experience with the Farm Bureau. The organization has yet to hire replacements.

Mosby said Tuesday that all three chose to leave for other positions. The board is interviewing candidates to replace Stuhlmiller, who will have the title administrative vice president, not CEO, she said.

Mosby said she wanted to make changes at the Farm Bureau, but that she and the board are still working on specifics.

“We’re doing a lot of that reflective work right now,” she said. “When I ran for president, I ran with the message that we need to pivot in our approach in how we deal with agricultural issues.”

Stuhlmiller had been CEO since 2013 and was director of government relations for the previous nine years. He is now executive director of the Washington State Water Resources Association, which represents irrigation districts.

Stuhlmiller said Tuesday he worked closely with Grant County farmer Mike LaPlant, who had been state Farm Bureau president for 10 years. Mosby wanted change, he said.

“There was a new direction desired,” said Stuhlmiller, who signed an agreement not to criticize the Farm Bureau. “It’s really unclear to me what that direction is.”

Mosby was elected president in November at the annual convention, defeating Kittitas County farmer Brad Haberman, who had been a state vice president since 2016. LaPlant did not seek re-election.

After two years of COVID, people came to the convention with “pent-up ideas, pent-up emotions,” said Gastelum, who had been CFO since 2013. “There was a groundswell of people who wanted to see changes,” he said.

Gastelum left in May to become the director of WAFLA, which recruits foreign farmworkers for its members. He said the job was a professional advancement and that he would have sought it under any circumstances.

Gastelum said he and Stuhlmiller had been a “one-two punch” for a

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Mosby

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