

## Trump urged to avoid salmon protection rules

By KEITH RIDLER  
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — A group that represents farmers is calling the costs of saving imperiled salmon in the largest river system in the Pacific Northwest unsustainable and is turning to the Trump administration to sidestep endangered species laws.

The Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association wants the government to convene a Cabinet-level committee with the power to allow exemptions to the Endangered Species Act. Known as the “God squad” because its decisions can lead to extinctions of threatened wildlife, it has only gathered three times — the last 25 years ago during a controversy over spotted owl habitat in the Northwest.

The irrigators association is frustrated with court rulings it says favor fish over people, claiming the committee could end years of legal challenges over U.S. dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers and bring stability for irrigators, power generators and other businesses that rely on the water.

Environmental groups call the request a publicity stunt and say it could hurt fishing companies and others that rely on healthy runs of federally protected salmon and steelhead.

The association sees hope in a series of pro-industry environmental decisions by President Donald Trump. His administration has rescinded an Obama-era rule that would shield many small streams and other bodies of water from pollution and development, enacted policies to increase coal mining on federal lands and proposed giving Western states greater flexibility to allow development in habitat of sage grouse, a threatened bird.

Darryll Olsen, association board representative, said the irrigators requested the committee during former President Barack Obama’s tenure but got nowhere.

He said the Trump administration has been encouraging during talks, leading to a formal request last month for a meeting with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

“What we’re asking for is that the secretary give direction to the (Interior) Department to work with us to review the steps for implementing the God squad,” Olsen said.

Zinke can gather the committee, which he would chair and would include other natural resource agencies, such as



Jesse Tinsley / The Spokesman-Review via AP, File

In this Oct. 2016 file photo, a man fishes for salmon in the Snake River above the Lower Granite Dam in Washington state. A group that represents farmers says saving imperiled salmon in the largest river system in the Northwest U.S. is too costly and is turning to the Trump administration. The Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association wants the government to convene a Cabinet-level committee known as the “God Squad” due to its authority to allow exemptions to the Endangered Species Act.

**“It’s a terrible idea that would deliver great harm to the people and businesses of the Pacific Northwest.”**

— Joseph Bogaard,  
Executive director of Save Our Wild Salmon

the Environmental Protection Agency. It also would include representatives from Washington state, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

If five of the federal committee members agree, they could exempt U.S. agencies from Endangered Species Act requirements for one or more of the thirteen species of salmon and steelhead listed since the early 1990s.

The irrigators group, which has 120 members growing food crops in Washington state and Oregon, expects to meet with Zinke soon, Olsen said.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email that the agency could not comment on a committee that had not been formed and that she had no information about Zinke’s meetings.

Joseph Bogaard, executive director of a coalition of conservation, commercial, sport fishing and business groups called Save Our Wild Salmon, blasted the irrigation association’s request.

“It’s a terrible idea that will deliver great harm to the people and businesses of the Pacific Northwest,” said Bogaard, whose coalition relies on the fish to produce millions of dollars of revenue.

A federal judge ruled last year that the government had not done enough to improve salmon runs despite spending

billions of dollars and urged it to consider removing four dams on the lower Snake River.

Todd True, a lawyer with the environmental law firm Earthjustice who represented some plaintiffs in that 2016 ruling, said the God squad request should go nowhere.

“There isn’t any basis to convene the committee because there are reasonable alternatives to save the fish,” he said, pointing to the dam removal option. “Their removal would be a big step forward.”

This year, fish counts at dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers have been well below the 10-year average, which biologists blame on droughts in 2014 and 2015 and warming ocean conditions.

Various results have emerged the three times the God squad has convened. It refused to grant an exemption for a Tennessee dam in the 1970s over a fish called the snail darter. Regarding crane protection in the Midwest, a settlement was reached before the panel offered a decision.

In 1992, it voted to sidestep protections for the northern spotted owl and allow the Interior Department to sell timber on land in Oregon.



Contributed photo

## First fish

Fishing for the first time, 9-year-old Kayden Nunn landed this lunker of an 18-inch rainbow trout recently at a pond on Weston Mountain near Tollgate.



Rich Landers / The Spokesman-Review

A gray wolf that has just swam across a North Idaho stream stands to assess a hiker and his dog that have entered its territory four miles from the nearest road.

## Hiking with dogs in wolf country

By RICH LANDERS  
The Spokesman-Review

I’d planned a July day hike with my dog along a North Idaho stream for a good dose of outdoor exercise and a cool respite from the summer heat.

The bear spray I keep handy on my day pack saved me a lot of grief that day.

Ranger, my Brittany, was having a blast with frequent splashing romps in the stream. But the mood of the trek changed about four miles into the backcountry when I saw a gray wolf crossing to the opposite shore.

I called Ranger, who was 20 yards ahead of me on the trail.

He came immediately to my side so I could attach his leash. Wildlife biologists later told me that quick response to my command could have saved his life.

The wolf certainly wasn’t afraid of me and the dog. It stood on the bank checking us out.

I snapped a few photos and waited for the wolf to run away. Instead, for several minutes it paced, sniffed the air and looked around.

With Ranger at heel and my bear spray in hand, I continued up the trail.

I kept looking back as I walked and sure enough I soon saw the gray wolf following on the trail. A second wolf caught my attention down along the stream. It, too, was heading toward me.

I proceeded to a meadow where I had more open space on both sides of the trail.

With bear spray in one hand, I videoed the gray wolf behind me. It paused and glanced at the second wolf before trotting in my direction. Panning the

camera as it came closer, my video wobbled each time I looked behind me for the second wolf to appear.

When the first wolf stopped 30 yards away, I started to aggressively move toward it, raising my bear-spray hand to look bigger and yelling “Hey!” The wolf instantly shied away, but only a short way before hanging out in the trees, still watching.

I was never afraid for myself as wolf attacks on people are very, very rare. However, experts say wolves are known to be aggressive to dogs entering their territory. Having bear spray enabled me to be confident that I could protect Ranger and myself as we turned around and headed out.

“The dog probably had more to do with the wolves following you than if you had been alone,” said Wayne Wakkinen, regional wildlife manager for Idaho Fish and Game, after hearing my story.

“You may have hiked into a rendezvous area where the pack stashes its mobile pups for a week or two before they all move on to another site. Wolves can be especially territorial toward other canids at that time of summer.”

Dirt bikers I know through Facebook reported seeing seven wolves in the same area the following day.

“If your dog had been off by itself and didn’t respond quickly to your call, the outcome might not have been the same,” Wakkinen said.

But everything went well, making the experience a hike I’ll fondly remember.

Rich Landers is outdoors editor at The Spokesman Review.

By BRUCE BARNES  
For The East Oregonian

Common Name: Northwest Cinquefoil  
Scientific Name: *Potentilla gracilis*, variety *elmeri*

This attractive plant from the rose family is found in scattered locations from Oregon and California, and eastward to Montana to Colorado. I have seen it only at upper elevations near the southwest edge of the Eagle Cap Wilderness. It is very distinctive in appearance, to the extent that from ten feet away one can identify it easily from the other 25 or so species of *Potentilla* in Northeast Oregon.

This plant is currently listed as one of several varieties of the species *gracilis*. However, it was also recently listed as an independent species, *Potentilla pectinisecta*, which in some respects is justified due to its distinctive appearance.

The genus name *Potentilla* comes from the Latin potens, meaning powerful, and -illa referring to the plants of some of the species that in Europe were once believed to



Photo by Bruce Barnes

Northwest Cinquefoil, *Potentilla gracilis* var. *elmeri*

have medicinal qualities. Cinquefoil is derived from English cinque which is five, and foil which sometimes

refers to a leaf. The combined name cinquefoil therefore describes those species with leaves divided

into five leaflets. Elmer was an early 20th Century botanist.

The plant usually stands about two feet tall, with an openly branching arrangement of a few or up to 60 bright yellow flowers at the top. The leaves arise mostly from the base or the lower portion of the flowering stems, with 5-7 leaflets attached in a whorl at the tip of the leaf stem or petiole. The leaflets are tapered to a point at their base, with long linear lobes attached along both sides of the midrib. The long lobes provide an overall lacy appearance to the leaves, which are quickly noticed due to the silvery coating of short white hairs on both sides of the leaves.

*Potentilla gracilis*, and presumably this variety, has had several medicinal uses by Pacific Northwest tribes. These uses include a lotion for burns, a powder for sores, an aid to assist in childbirth, a poultice for injuries, and a root infusion for a variety of ailments.

**Where to find:** Along the Mt. Fanny road from Cove, just past Moss Springs Campground.

## BRIEFLY

### National Geographic launches cruise ship in Alaska

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — A new cruise ship is set for an eight-day expedition exploring Alaska.

On Saturday, Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic launched the Quest — its first ever-new build — from Juneau.

The ship left from Anacortes, Washington, for a shake-out cruise to Alaska, arriving in Juneau on Friday. Its first passengers boarded at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, the *Juneau Empire* reported.

The 100-passenger vessel originally was expected to

debut last Wednesday. But the line scrubbed that cruise, citing problems with a launch attempt. A little over a month ago, the vessel was damaged as it slid from the launch ramp.

### By helicopter and on horseback, Zinke reviews monuments

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Ranchers who want to scale back two national monuments in New Mexico competed for attention with the outdoor recreation industry as U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke conducted a series of private stakeholder meetings linked

to a nationwide review of 27 monuments approved by past presidents.

Zinke skipped a heavily attended public forum about the future of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in southern New Mexico organized largely by monument supporters, amid a series of private meetings with ranchers, electric utility executives, irrigation district officials and some defenders of the monuments.

On Friday, Zinke’s Twitter feed showed him on a mountain hike in the Organ monument with military veterans and members of Sierra Club Outdoors, which promotes outdoor recreation. “I appreciate hearing

all sides,” Zinke tweeted. A private meeting was scheduled Friday with the pro-monument group Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. The secretary’s tightly controlled visit, mostly away from the public’s eye, is stirring concern among business owners who say they depend on the flow of outdoor enthusiasts.

President Donald Trump ordered the review of the national monuments based on the belief that a law created by President Theodore Roosevelt allowing presidents to designate monuments has been improperly used to protect wide expanses of lands.