

Appeal seeking Idaho horse herd sterilization is dismissed

By KEITH RIDLER
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — A federal appeals court has dismissed an effort to allow the sterilization of a herd of wild horses in Idaho.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals earlier this month granted a request by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to stop the effort.

Documents filed by BLM seeking the dismissal of its own appeal didn't include a reason.

"This case threatened to set a dangerous precedent for the sterilization of wild horses throughout the West," said Nick Lawton, an attorney representing American Wild Horse Campaign and other groups.

The BLM in 2015 released a plan to sterilize horses in the Saylor Creek Herd Management Area and replenish the herd with wild horses captured elsewhere to maintain a herd of 50 to 200 horses.

The American Wild Horse Campaign, The Cloud Foundation and Return to Freedom sued in 2016, fearing the case could set a precedent. A U.S. District Court in Idaho ruled in September that the herd had to be able to produce healthy foals, and the BLM appealed last month.

Federal officials didn't immediately return calls from The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Lawton said federal agencies sometimes file appeals to extend the time they have to decide whether to mount a challenge. At any rate, he said, "it's all over."

The federal court in the September ruling said the BLM plan violated a requirement that the herd be able to produce healthy foals. The federal judge also ruled that the BLM didn't consider "the significant impacts its decision may have on the free-roaming nature of the herd nor explain why its decision is appropriate despite those impacts."

The BLM says the range can support 50 horses. The herd twice since 2006 has been rounded up and held in the agency's Boise Wild Horse Corrals after wildfires destroyed rangeland forage.

The agency has said the most



Ashley Smith/The Times-News via AP, File

In this 2011 file photo, some of the 30 horses from the Saylor Creek Herd, released by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, storm out of their trailers 15 miles south of Glenns Ferry, Idaho.



Ashley Smith/The Times-News via AP, File

In this 2011 file photo, some of the 30 horses from the Saylor Creek Herd, being released by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, wait to be released from trailers 15 miles south of Glenns Ferry, Idaho.

recent capture involved 195 horses following a wildfire in August 2010. The BLM in September 2011 released 30 of those horses

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— 13 females and 17 males — back onto the range. The agency said a count this spring found the herd had nearly tripled with 71 adults and 12 foals.

Wild horses far exceed U.S. government population goals, and officials say the free-roaming horses that number about 73,000

can face starvation. Captured horses are offered for adoption, but 46,000 are being held at government corrals and pastures costing taxpayers \$50 million annually.

Wild horse advocate groups have questioned federal population goals for wild horses as being on the low side.

Suzanne Roy, executive director of American Wild Horse Campaign, said that sterilizing the Idaho herd could have led to the sterilization of herds in other states. Her group and the others had planned to battle in the appeals court, but that's no longer necessary with the BLM withdrawing its appeal.

"This is a very important decision from our perspective," Roy said. "It affirmed that the BLM has a legal mandate to manage wild, viable herds."

BRIEFLY

In break with tradition, Trump hosts no state dinners

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump couldn't stop talking about the red carpets, military parades and fancy dinners that were lavished upon him during state visits on his recent tour of Asia. "Magnificent," he declared during the trip.

But Trump has yet to reciprocate, making him the first president in almost a century to close his first year in office without welcoming a visiting counterpart to the U.S. with similar trappings.

Trump spoke dismissively of state dinners as a candidate, when he panned President Barack Obama's decision to welcome Chinese President Xi Jinping with a 2015 state visit. Such visits are an important diplomatic tool that includes a showy arrival ceremony and an elaborate dinner at the White House.

Last month it was Xi's turn to literally roll out the red carpet. The Chinese leader poured on the pageantry as he welcomed Trump to Beijing on what was billed as a "state visit, plus." Trump also made state visits to South Korea and Vietnam.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said there is no "singular reason" why Trump hasn't extended a state visit invitation yet, but added that the administration hopes to schedule a visit early in 2018. Sanders gave no hints about which of Trump's foreign counterparts are being considered for the diplomatic honor.

U.S. says it negotiated \$285M cut in United Nations budget

The U.S. government says it has negotiated a significant cut in the United Nations budget.

The U.S. Mission to the United Nations said on Sunday that the U.N.'s 2018-2019 budget would be slashed by over \$285 million.

The mission said reductions would also be made to the U.N.'s management and support functions. The announcement didn't make clear the entire amount of the budget or specify what effect the cut would have on the U.S. contribution.

U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley said that the "inefficiency and overspending" of the organization is well-known, and she would not let "the generosity of the American people be taken advantage of."

She also said that while the mission was pleased with the results of budget negotiations, it would continue to "look at ways to increase the U.N.'s efficiency? while protecting our interests."

Construction halted at church destroyed in Sept. 11 attacks

NEW YORK (AP) — Construction on a Greek Orthodox church to replace one that was crushed in the Sept. 11 attacks has



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, File

In this Nov. 9 file photo, President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping participate in a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China.

been temporarily suspended amid rising costs and questions over how donations have been managed.

The St. Nicholas National Shrine next to the World Trade Center memorial plaza was to replace a tiny church that was obliterated when the trade center's south tower fell in 2001. The new building was designed by renowned architect Santiago Calatrava, who also created the soaring white bird-like mall and transit hub nearby called the Oculus.

But unlike the transit hub, built largely with federal transportation dollars, the church is being funded through donations including from the Greek government, Greek Orthodox church members around the world, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and the Italian city of Bari, whose patron saint is St. Nicholas.

In September, the estimated cost was \$50 million. But according to *The New York Times*, which first reported the work suspension, the cost had jumped to an estimated \$72 million to \$78 million as of earlier this month.

Two firms, PricewaterhouseCoopers and BakerHostetler, had been hired to perform an independent investigation into the construction, according to a Dec. 9 statement posted on the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Amid slide, Harley-Davidson wants to teach more to ride

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Harley-Davidson is placing a renewed emphasis on teaching people to ride as part of its efforts to attract more customers.

The Milwaukee-based company's decision to expand the number of dealerships with a Harley "Riding

Academy" comes as the industry grapples with years of declining sales and an aging customer base.

The program launched in 2000 with about 50 locations and now 245 dealerships in the U.S. offer the three- or four-day course. The company says about a quarter of those launched since 2014.

Harley sold 124,777 new motorcycles through nine months in 2017, down from 135,581 during the same period the previous year, according to the company's most recent earnings report.

The Motorcycle Industry Council says the median age of motorcycle owners increased from 32 to 47 since 1990. About 46 percent of riders are over 50; only about 10 percent are 30-34.

California preps for pot fare, everything from wine to tacos

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The sauvignon blanc boasts brassy, citrus notes, but with one whiff, it's apparent this is no normal Sonoma County wine. It's infused with THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana that provides the high.

Move over, pot brownies. The world's largest legal recreational marijuana market kicks off Monday in California, and the trendsetting state is set to ignite the cannabis culinary scene.

Chefs and investors have been teaming up to offer an eye-boggling array of cannabis-infused food and beverages, weed-pairing supper clubs and other extravagant pot-to-plate events in preparation for legalization come Jan. 1.

Legal pot in states like Oregon, Washington and Colorado and California's longstanding medical marijuana market already spurred a cannabis-foodie

movement with everything from olive oil to heirloom tomato bisques infused with the drug.

Cannabis-laced dinners with celebrity chefs at private parties have flourished across Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego in recent years, but a medical marijuana card was required to attend.

With that requirement gone, the edibles market is expected to boom, though manufacturers face a host of regulations, and doctors fear the products could increase emergency room visits and entice youth. Marijuana industry analysts predict edibles for the recreational marijuana market will top \$100 million in sales in 2018.

Democrat in Virginia race asks court to invalidate tie

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. (AP) — The Democrat in a tied race for a Virginia House seat that could affect which party controls the chamber said Tuesday that she'll ask a court to declare the tie invalid and her the winner.

Shelly Simonds and her lawyers said the court failed to follow state election law by allowing a ballot to be counted a day after last week's recount, among other errors. The campaign said it will ask the same court to reconsider its decision.

In the meantime, state election officials said they postponed their plan to break the tie Wednesday in Richmond by drawing names from a bowl.

James Alcorn, chairman of Virginia's State Board of Elections, said in a series of tweets that name drawing "is an action of last resort."

The race between Simonds and Republican Del. David Yancey is for the 94th House of Delegates District in Newport News. If Simonds were declared the winner, it would split party control of Virginia's House 50-50.

A rare power-sharing agreement would have to be brokered between Democrats and Republicans. If no agreement can be reached, prolonged chaos could ensue.

Tribe plans to open zip lines at west rim of Grand Canyon

More than 1 million people a year visit Grand Canyon West, outside the boundaries of the national park. It's best known for the Skywalk, a horseshoe-shaped glass bridge that juts out 70 feet from the canyon wall and gives visitors a view of the Colorado River 4,000 feet below.

The tribal corporation that runs it recently opened a restaurant in a connected visitor center that had been the subject of a bitter dispute between a late Las Vegas businessman and the tribe.

In January, the corporation plans to open a pair of zip lines that will send guests nearly 1,000 feet above a side canyon. Each zip line will carry four people.