

# Hammond family loses grazing permits for third time

Permit was reauthorized on Trump's last day in office

By Mateusz Perkowski  
EO Media Group

Roughly a month after their grazing permit was restored, Oregon's Hammond family has again lost access to four federal allotments totaling 26,400 acres.

The U.S. Interior Department has reversed its decision to re-issue the Hammonds' grazing permit after several environmental groups filed a lawsuit challenging the decision, claiming it violated administrative, environmental and land management laws.

The federal government re-authorized the 10-year grazing permit on Jan. 19, the Trump administration's final day in office, after initially announcing the proposal on Dec. 31.

However, the Interior Department now says that interested parties weren't notified of the proposed re-authorization for several days, which means they didn't get the required 15 days to file a protest.

The agency said the rescission isn't a "final determination" in the case and has ordered the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which regulates the allotments, to reconsider the decision.

"On remand, the BLM is encouraged to initiate any additional processes and opportunities for public involvement that it may determine appropriate under applicable law following a careful and considered review of protests," the rescission notice said.

In previously re-issuing the grazing permit, the Interior Department cited the Hammond family's historic use and proximity to the federal property.

Steven Hammond, who operates the ranch, and his father, Dwight, originally lost permission to graze the allotments near Diamond in Harney County in 2014 when the government refused to renew their permit after they were criminally charged with setting fires to rangelands.

The Hammonds were convicted and completed their initial prison terms, then ordered back behind bars after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled they had to serve five-year mandatory minimum sentences for arson.

Their return to prison in early 2016 sparked protests that culminated in a month-long stand-off with federal agents at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge



EOMG file photo

**Hammond Ranches was recently re-authorized to use grazing allotments in Eastern Oregon, but an environmental lawsuit has overturned that decision, at least temporarily.**

that attracted national attention.

The ranchers were released early in 2018 after receiving a full pardon from former President Donald Trump, which prompted the Interior Department to renew their grazing permit the following year due to "changed circumstances."

However, environmental groups convinced a federal judge to reverse that decision in 2019 because the grazing permit was renewed contrary to regulations.

The Interior Department then opened up the grazing allotments to applications from other ranchers but ultimately decided to issue a new permit to the Hammond family.

The Western Watersheds Project, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Wildearth Guardians and Center for Biological Diversity filed another lawsuit seeking to rescind the grazing permit's most recent approval.

The environmental plaintiffs argued the federal government's decision involved "rushed, opaque, and highly unusual public processes" that were "tainted by political influence and are not the product of reasoned, lawful decision-making," the complaint said.

According to the complaint, the federal government approved the grazing permit "without opportunities for public participation required by law" and wrongly determined the Hammonds were more qualified than other applicants.

The decision also didn't comply with land use protections for the sage grouse and with a statute aimed at conserving the "long term ecological integrity" of Steens Mountain in Eastern Oregon, the complaint said.

Steven Hammond and Alan Schroeder, an attorney for the family, were not available for comment as of press time.



Contributed photo

**Successor to the .45-70 Government and in the first officially adopted repeating service rifle, the .30-40 or .30 U.S. Army was adopted in the Krag-Jorgensen bolt-action rifle.**

## SHOOTING THE BREEZE

# The .30-40 Krag

Love it or hate it, the "Old Craig" is a truly unpretentious cartridge — what you see is what you get. Successor to the .45-70 Government and in the first officially adopted repeating service rifle, the .30-40 or .30 U.S. Army was adopted in the Krag-Jorgensen bolt-action rifle.

Its curious Norwegian design came in two versions, a carbine with a 22-inch barrel, for cavalry and officers, and a full-length rifle, featuring a 30-inch barrel for the infantry. Unlike the .45-70, which employed different loads depending upon whether one used a rifle or a carbine, all Krag users employed a 220-grain round nose load utilizing smokeless powder. Sadly, it was born a bit too late, and was obsolete nearly upon arrival. Against the higher velocity bullets fired from the 7mm Mauser in Cuba, Army Ordinance officers were quickly directed to find a replacement.

Although the Krag was replaced as the standard issue rifle and cartridge for our armed forces in 1903 and again in 1906, it saw limited use clear on up to World War Two in the hands of guards and military police. Many when finding out they could buy a surplus Krag rifle for pennies on the dollar of what they would have to spend for a factory sporting rifle were easily sold a .30-40 for their hunting needs. Some even used theirs for match shooting, preferring its lighter recoil to that of the .30-06 or the .300 H&H Magnum.

A fella that I went to school with in Spray killed his first elk with a .30-40 Krag. Today it sees little action compared to the other guns in his collection, but that rifle will always have been his



Dale Valade

very first. My own great-grandfather owned no other centerfire rifles, only his .30-40.

My father reflects fondly of their forays together from his childhood, the old Krag being the instrument of filling Great Grampa's freezer time and again.

Today the Krag barely holds on, appealing mostly to lovers of vintage military rifles or recipients of hand-me-down family hunting rifles. Most of these hand-me-downs were sporterized or given custom stocks, better sights or even drilled and tapped for a side mounted scope. The Krag action itself was not notably strong, especially when compared to Springfield, Enfield or Mauser bolt actions of the day and so, therefore, was and is not a particularly inspiring platform to use for custom work.

What it does do well is provide a low-recoil, sufficiently accurate and powerful hunting rifle. Bullets of at least 180 grains will shoot the best in the longer throats of these military turned sporters. If you don't handload, Remington still loads its traditional 180-grain Core-lokt, which to me is about ideal for an all-around load. Although it seems to be going the way of the Dodo, the .30-40 Krag is a fine rifle cartridge. If you're lucky enough to own one, you probably already knew that.

Are you a fan? Write to us at shootingthebreezbe@gmail.com!

*Dale Valade is a local country gent with a love for the outdoors, handloading, hunting and shooting.*

# OTEC offers incentives to farmers, ranchers to switch to energy-efficient equipment

Blue Mountain Eagle

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative offers incentives for installing energy-efficient heating and cooling systems in homes and businesses and also offers incentives to farmers and ranchers who upgrade irrigation hardware.

The cooperative's Agricultural Energy Efficiency Utility Rebate Program is for energy-efficient improvements to equipment, including irrigation pump motors and other irrigation

implements.

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- Upgrading to a new Low Elevation Precision Application (LEPA) system.

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## Clay pigeon shoot benefits Lawrence family

Blue Mountain Eagle

A clay pigeon shoot benefiting Lonnie and Roger Lawrence of Monument will take place March 20 in Kimberly.

The shoot starts at 11 a.m. at the shooting range at Brad and Julie Smith's residence on the river at mile post 9 on Highway 402.

Concessions will be available. Bring a chair. Leave dogs at home.

For details, call 541-934-2143. To donate, email amanda.albrich@gmail.com or call 541-934-2601.

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