

Committee on Resources

Witness Testimony

Testimony of

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Cowboy

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Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries,

Wildlife, and Oceans

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My name is Terry Schramm. I've been the cowboy on the Blackrock Spread Creek allotment for 16 years. The Walton Ranch and the Moulton Ranch are the permittee. We have been a responsible, legitimate user of the forest allotment for 75 years. As in much of the West, Teton County is 97% federally owned and without this grazing permit we would not have a viable ranching operation as private land is unavailable for pasturing our cattle.

For the past three summers our ranching operation has suffered substantial losses due to grizzly bear predation; fifty-two confirmed bear kills and 66 calves unaccounted for. One hundred ninety-two (192) calves or 9% of our calf crop have been lost in the last three years. Historical losses averaged 2-3%.

We have been paid some compensation but have had to fight for every penny, as all compensation comes from the State of Wyoming and the State doesn't want to get into a protracted compensation program for an animal for which they have few management options.

However, while we have been paid some compensation, it remains hopelessly inadequate as all kills are impossible to find. Nobody is taking into account the hundreds of man-hours it takes to find kills and the dangers of finding and investigating kill sites for compensation (grazing allotment is 137 square miles of mountainous terrain).

Loss of livestock is only part of the problem in dealing with large predators. Weight loss and stress-related illness from continuous harassment are other problems. Too many man-hours spent in livestock management and proper use of natural resources is also a major problem..

A study was implemented on our allotment in 1994. A total of 15 grizzlies, 25 black bears and 2 mountain lions have been trapped and released on our 88,000 acre allotment and I'm under no illusion that all predators have been successfully trapped.

While we have accepted our fate to co-exist with grizzlies, and the fact that 15 different grizzlies have been trapped on our allotment is a testament of our commitment to the recovery of the species, we cannot accept habituated predators on an unconditional basis as they return year after year.

Government regulations have taken away our right to protect our livestock and personal property as well as jeopardizes our future and the future of our children. If problems cannot be solved with the omnivorous bear, what is our future with the carnivorous wolf?

Since most depredations occur at night and considering the huge expanse of terrain and the fact that predators eat their prey, finding and verifying kills for compensation is next to impossible. Also, considering that livestock have an aversion to being eaten alive by large predators it makes livestock and natural resource management almost non-existent (see attachment #1 video).

My job is to nurture livestock, fix fences, pack salt, shoe horses, and to work with the land and wildlife agencies to ensure habitat protection, riparian improvement and resource management not solely chasing dead livestock.

Wyoming agriculture has had a long standing, co-operative relationship with the land and wildlife agencies to bring about many of Wyoming's wildlife success stories but the balance seems to be lost with the restrictive nature of predator protection. The people who have lived with the land for generations feel that the bureaucrats are now working more for the predator than for the people. We now live in fear; a fear of losing our private property rights, our grazing permits and our right to be able to protect our livestock and personal property, all of which our livelihoods depend on.

The government has spent millions promoting the grizzly and wolf to a revered status. There is little wonder that the small rural population of Wyoming receives little empathy from the larger urban population.

The federal government must educate the urban people of the reality and problems of people living with large predators. This is extremely difficult as we have differing value systems, socially, culturally, economically and religiously. While the ranches and farmers see predators as a threat to their economical survival the urbanites view predators as nothing more than aesthetically appealing.

While saving the grizzly and the wolf seems to be an honorable endeavor, it can't be done at the expense of the hard working American citizens of the State of Wyoming who have lived here for generations and have as much right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as everyone else.

Attachments - All of which will be presented at the hearing April 10, 1996. #1 Video - Not all inclusive but representative of the problems that exist. 23 minutes #2 Photographs of predation sites. Again not all inclusive #3 Correspondence with Wyoming Game & Fish in order to get compensation through appeals and arbitration.

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