

FOREST NEWS



The Newsletter of Forest Service Employees For Environmental Ethics

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Trump, Year One

Inside

DO STATES CONTROL WILDLIFE ON FEDERAL LAND? / STEALING WATER
BUNGLING BUNDY/SAVING BATS FROM A HORRIBLE DISEASE



A Tongass Travesty

At 17 million acres, the Tongass is America's largest national forest. Its 19 wilderness areas and two national monuments draw a million cruise-ship visitors annually, employing more than 7,400 recreation industry workers, and provide habitat that supports another 4,300 fisheries jobs. Together, recreation and fisheries account for over 12,000 jobs, half of southeast Alaska's private sector workforce. With those kinds of numbers, you would think that Alaska's congressional delegation would do everything it could to make tourism, recreation, and fishing strong. And you would be wrong.

In a case of rearview mirror leadership (sic), Alaska's politicians are pushing legislation that threatens tourism and recreation jobs to prop up the Tongass's 321 timber jobs. Talk about sacrificing the many to subsidize the few. Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski is using her powerful positions as a member of the Appropriations Committee and chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to open up the Tongass's wild, old-growth forests to logging. These roadless lands are now protected by federal rules from logging—rules that Murkowski wants to reverse.

The even crazier thing is that almost all of the Tongass's timber is exported to Asia as unprocessed logs. Murkowski wants to spend more taxpayer dollars logging primitive backcountry wilderness so that Chinese millworkers can have jobs. All while degrading fisheries habitat and the scenery on which Alaska's growing tourism economy depends.

Only in Alaska, where rugged individualists live off government welfare (Alaska is second only to Washington, D.C., in percent of its workforce employed by government) could this make any sense. The Tongass is a "national" forest, not a welfare office for a has-been timber industry that can't make a marketable two-by-four without massive government subsidies. Americans deserve better for their flagship national forest.

Sincerely,

Andy Stahl
Executive Director

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Inside

3 | Featured Forest

A landscape of volcanoes on a Northwest forest.

4 | In Depth

The Forest Service was something of an orphan during the first year of the Trump administration. That's not necessarily a bad thing.

7 | Briefly

Challenging a copper mine; Forest Service approves pipeline; supertanker owners win appeal.

8 | Dispatch

A university report debunks the myth that states have the right to manage wildlife on federal land.

10 | Science Notes

Shedding light on a possible cure for a disease that has killed thousands of bats.

11 | Sound Off

Cliven Bundy is a free man. His cows are still roaming the public estate with no permit. How's that again?



Featured Forest

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Gifford Pinchot National Forest

South of Interstate 90, in Washington state, the rugged Cascade Mountains smooth out a bit—just enough to allow an appreciation of the dominance of volcanoes in this part of the world. Mount Rainier presides over the entire stretch of things. Rainier’s kid sibling, Mount Adams, is there, too, bearing a distinct family resemblance. Mount Hood is a frozen white wave across the Columbia River.

And, of course, there is Mount St. Helens, which, before it blew its top in 1980, was one of the most symmetrically pure peaks of all, the “Fuji of the Northwest.” Almost four decades later, its scooped-out slopes are greening again as life returns to the blast zone.

Other national forests and parks in the Northwest get more attention. But the Gifford Pinchot National Forest is remarkably wild—even after decades of aggressive logging leveled so much of the region. Its boundaries include seven wilderness areas and Dark Divide, which joins Adams and St. Helens and constitutes the largest non-wilderness roadless area in the Cascades.

Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service, referred to forestry as “the art of producing from the forest whatever it can yield for the service of man.” A visit to the national forest that bears his name makes clear that spectacular scenery, wildness and solitude are some of the most important products of all.



The Forest Service: Year One

On Dec. 21, Sonny Perdue, the former governor of Georgia and President Trump’s secretary of agriculture, stood next to the American flag and videotaped a three-minute statement that his department would roll out 12 days later as a new year’s message to all employees.

In the “days, weeks and months ahead,” Perdue said, the individual offices and agencies that he oversees—including the Forest Service—would surrender their individual identities and come together under a single banner: “OneUSDA.”

“Too many times, we think of our individual offices, or in our agencies or about mission areas,” he said. “But ... segregating ourselves into those categories fails to recognize just how interconnected we are, how the work of one team complements or informs the work of another.”

Perdue continued in his folksy, aw-shucks style:

“So from today forward, you will hear all of our USDA leadership, from the Office of the Secretary on down, begin to refer to us as OneUSDA. Not as APHIS or as the Forest Service, not as Rural Development or of FAS, not as distinct agencies sitting in the same office, like FSA, RMA, or NRCS. No, instead, we’re

gonna be one team all working toward the same goals: OneUSDA.”

Word spread quickly. Forest Service retirees, in particular, were incensed that the agency they served could lose its singular identity. An article posted on the FSEEE website drew a flurry of condemnations.

“I am a retired FOREST SERVICE employee serving in Region 9 my entire career,” one person wrote. “I don’t see one iota of merit to this proposal by the secretary. All this will do is create confusion for the public by all the agencies affected and demoralize employees who are nothing less than hard working, dedicated and professional.”

Shortly thereafter, an official with the Department of Agriculture’s Office of Communications contacted FSEEE and said the Forest Service would continue to use its current name, Perdue’s comments notwithstanding.

When asked later in January if there is any intention to change the name of the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture Communications Coordinator Mike Illenberg responded via email with a one-word response: “No.”

The “OneUSDA” vs. “Forest Service” kerfuffle is emblematic of a wider dysfunction. More than a year into the Trump administration, the Forest Service appears all but orphaned, lacking the leadership and direction that previous administrations had well in place at this point in their tenures.

Given the abrupt anti-environmental direction agencies under the Department of Interior have taken during the Trump administration, that neglect may be a blessing in disguise. Still, it has created problems for the Forest Service rank-and-file.

One of the major challenges facing the agency is an ongoing hiring freeze that has left national forest supervisors and district rangers scrambling to accomplish core responsibilities. Retirements and resignations have produced a growing number of vacancies; some Forest Service managers interviewed for this article described a “hollowing out” of agency ranks.

The hiring freeze was put in place shortly after Trump took office.

“The head of any executive department or agency may exempt from the hiring freeze any positions that it deems necessary to meet national security or public safety responsibilities,” the order said. “In addition, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) may grant exemptions from this freeze where those exemptions are otherwise necessary.”

Shortly thereafter, the hiring freeze was lifted for seasonal employees, including thousands of wildland firefighter positions. But new hires for positions not directly related to fire or public safety must still be sanctioned by the very top of the department—by Sonny Perdue—according to interviews with Forest Service managers.

Asked about the status of hiring within the agency, Illenberg submitted this written response:

“The Forest Service continues to fill exempted positions necessary for public safety and mission critical work, and seasonal temporary jobs.”

The Trump administration has yet to fill the position of Undersecretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, a political appointee charged with overseeing the Forest Service.

Illenberg said Trump does intend to fill that position. But when asked if Perdue had recommended anyone for the job, Illenberg responded “(t)hat person has yet to be named.”

Asked who is overseeing the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture, Illenberg pointed to the

agency’s associate chief, Dan Jiron. That would seem to indicate that Jiron is both subordinate to Forest Service Chief Tony Tooke, and also his boss’s superior.

Previous administrations have appointed undersecretaries with detailed knowledge of how the Forest Service works, albeit individuals who reflect the political leanings of the presidents they served. Such an arrangement largely relieves the Secretary of Agriculture, a cabinet-level position, from having to manage the day-to-day workings of the Forest Service.

There has been other evidence of neglect within the Trump administration regarding the Forest Service.

The Forestry Research Advisory Council, which formerly met twice a year, has not yet convened during the Trump administration. The council is charged with advising the agriculture department on issues of forest research.

Whether the lack of contact with the council is evidence of intentional neglect or benign indifference is unclear.

In January, 10 of the 12 members of the National Park System Advisory Board resigned. “We understand the complexity of transition,” wrote Tony Knowles, one of the members who resigned and a former Alaska governor, “but our requests to engage have been ignored and the matters on which we wanted to brief the new Department team are clearly not part of its agenda.”

The letter was addressed to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, whose department oversees the national park system.

While no members of the Forestry Research Advisory Council have resigned, their status is unclear. Illenberg said that the Forest Service is conducting an “internal review” of the council’s “charter renewal and new member nominations” and that no meetings will be planned until those processes are complete.

In the days and weeks after Sonny Perdue rolled out his OneUSDA initiative, officials with the Department of Agriculture were adamant that the Forest Service will keep its name and its identity. They said the real goal of OneUSDA is to make sure the various agencies and offices within the agriculture department work together where it makes sense to do so.

Some, however, worry that one purpose of the initiative is to fold the Forest Service’s mission into the broader Department of Agriculture mission of providing food and other goods to consumers. Last

year, in congressional testimony, Perdue called national forests “crops” that “need to be harvested.”

The direction the Forest Service takes in the weeks and months ahead depends in large part on the fate of a bevy of bills being pushed by Republicans that would undercut bedrock environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The bills would allow extensive logging under the guise of making national forests more “resilient” to “catastrophic” wildfires.

Indeed, any attempt to radically change the Forest Service under the Trump administration would likely be frustrated by the fact that the agency is already radically transformed from the agency it was a quarter century ago. Its primary mission is no longer “getting out the cut,” but rather fighting wildfires. Well over half of the agency’s budget now goes to fighting fires.

Still, the Forest Service has been and remains an oddball agency within the Department of Agriculture.

John Bowser spent almost 35 years with the Forest Service before retiring. He landed his first job with the agency, fighting fires, when he was 18. Bowser was among those outraged when he heard Perdue’s message about folding the Forest Service into the OneUSDA program.

As an alternative, Bowser suggested moving the Forest Service into a new cabinet-level department that would include all the land management agencies. But if that ever happens, Bowser said, let the individual agencies keep their names and their identities.

“The Forest Service has always had its autonomy and its own personal identity,” he said. “I’m very proud of the outfit I worked for and I feel good about the job I did.”



Lawsuit Challenges Arizona Copper Mine

A quartet of conservation groups filed a lawsuit challenging the Forest Service's approval of a massive open-pit copper mine in the Santa Rita Mountains of southern Arizona.

The lawsuit alleges the Forest Service violated at least 10 environmental laws in approving the Rosemont Mine earlier this year. They say the mine will degrade sensitive watersheds and will result in a mile-wide pit filled with pollution-laced water.

Coronado National Forest officials say their hands are tied by federal laws, including the General Mining Act of 1872, that require agencies to accommodate mining on public lands.

The mine's opponents contend that the Forest Service has plenty of leeway to deny the mine given that it would violate other laws designed to protect water quality and rare species. The mine would degrade habitat critical for the survival of jaguars, which are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

"The Rosemont mine would permanently destroy endangered species habitat and pollute some of Arizona's most important waterways," said Marc Fink, a senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, in a statement.

Other groups participating in the lawsuit include Save the Scenic Santa Ritas, the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition and the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon chapter.

Toronto-based Hudbay Minerals Inc. wants to build the mine on more than 5,400 acres in the Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson. More than half of that—3,653 acres—would be located in the Coronado National Forest.

The plan approved by the Forest Service calls for Hudbay to dig a pit that would cover 955 acres. After the mine is decommissioned, the pit would fill with water more than 1,000 feet deep. The Forest Service acknowledges that the water would be tainted by pollutants, including cadmium, lead, copper, mercury, selenium, and zinc.

Agency Approves Atlantic Coast Pipeline

The Forest Service has approved a controversial natural gas pipeline that would cut across two national forests in the Appalachian Mountains.

Conservationists vowed to challenge the agency's approval of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which would span more than 600 miles, including 21 miles that would cross the George Washington and Monongahela national forests.

They accused Forest Service officials of flip-flopping on the pipeline proposal.

"For the last two years, the Forest Service has been clear that (pipeline) developers did not provide the agency with enough information to make a decision on this project,"

said Greg Buppert, senior attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center. "Serious questions remain about whether or not the pipeline can be built safely through the steep, unforgiving terrain of the Appalachians, but the agency abruptly changed course and approved the project."

The agency issued its decision in November. The pipeline's developer, Virginia Dominion Energy, said workers will start cutting trees within days and will start building the pipeline this spring.

Tony Tooke, who was southern regional forester at the time, signed a draft decision approving the pipeline last July. A month later, Trump administration officials promoted Tooke to Forest Service chief.

Global Supertanker Wins Protest Against Forest Service

The owners of a 747 passenger jet retrofitted to drop retardant and water on wildfires have won an appeal claiming the Forest Service has no basis for limiting the size of firefighting aircraft.

In a decision last fall, the U.S. Government Accountability Office sided with the Colorado-based Global Supertanker Services, finding the Forest Service had no justification for limiting the maximum tank size of airtankers to 5,000 gallons.

The plane, dubbed the Spirit of John Muir, can carry more than 19,000 gallons of retardant or water.

Last May, the Forest Service issued a request for proposals for airtankers to fight wildfires. The document specified that the agency would only consider aircraft with tanks up to 5,000 gallons. Agency officials said that larger aircraft

are not suited to launch initial attacks on wildfires.

Officials with Global Supertanker Services filed a protest with the Forest Service, which the agency rejected. Company officials then filed a protest with the GAO.

In her 22-page decision, GAO General Counsel Susan A. Poling rejected the Forest Service's arguments for establishing a 5,000-gallon limit on tank sizes.

"(T)he record is completely silent regarding who, if anyone, at the agency made the decision to include the restriction, when the decision was made, and why the decision was made," she wrote.

Last summer, during an active wildfire season, company officials embarked on a public relations campaign to garner a contract with the Forest Service.

California Officials: Nestlé Lacks Authority to Take Water from National Forest

California water regulators say Nestlé Waters North America is extracting millions of gallons of water from the San Bernardino National Forest to sell in bottles without legal authority to do so.

In a report released in late December, the California State Water Resources Control Board's Division of Water Rights found that the company has extracted an average of more than 62 million gallons of water each year since 1947 from facilities it operates at the headwaters of Strawberry Creek in the San Bernardino National Forest.

However, after a 20-month investigation, the Water Board determined that the company may only have a right to extract about 8.5 million gallons each year.

"Nestlé's explanation for its bases of right for its water diversions are not clear despite Division staff's multiple requests for clarification," the Water Board report says. "Nestlé claimed several poorly defined bases of right, but none of these claims are supported by evidence provided or found by Division staff."

The report goes on to say that staff with the Water

Board "recommends that Nestlé immediately cease any unauthorized diversions." They gave Nestlé 60 days to submit an interim compliance plan and 90 days to submit an investigation and monitoring plan.

Nestlé issued a statement, saying "(w)e look forward to cooperating with SWRCB during the review process and to providing the necessary documents to supplement the SWRCB's report, including producing information requested from over a century ago, to the extent that it is available."

Trump Administration to Remove Protections for Lynx

The Trump administration is taking steps to remove Canada lynx from the endangered species list, despite a 2016 analysis by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that found the cats will disappear from much of their range in the contiguous U.S. by the end of the century if they are not protected.

In the last weeks of the Obama administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released an analysis stating that the snow-dwelling felines are vulnerable to climate change and other factors.

"(W)e believe it is very unlikely

that resident lynx populations will persist through the end of this century in all of the geographic units that currently support them," that report concluded.

In January, however, the agency released a revised report stating that lynx are "very likely" to survive in the five slices of habitat where they currently live in the lower 48 states "in the near-term." The agency defined "the near-term" as the next seven years.

In a news release, the Fish and Wildlife Service said the decision "is the result of an extensive review

of the best available scientific information."

Conservationists were quick to dismiss the claim.

"This is a political decision—pure and simple," said Matthew Bishop, an attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center. "This administration is throwing science out the window. The best science tells us that lynx are worse off than they were when originally listed in 2000."

Scientists believe fewer than 2,000 lynx remain in the lower 48 states.

States Control Wildlife on Federal Land, Right? Think Again.

An exhaustive law review article that was commissioned by the Forest Service refutes the widely held belief that states control wildlife within their borders and federal land managers control only the habitat.

The article, titled *Fish and Wildlife Management On Federal Lands: Debunking State Supremacy*, dismisses the notion as “a myth.”

“The myth is not only wrong from a legal standpoint but it leads to fragmented approaches to wildlife conservation, unproductive battles over agency turf, and an abdication of federal responsibility over wildlife,” the article reads.

Last June, a draft of the paper was posted on the website of the University of Montana’s Bolle Center for People and Forests.

Five days after it was posted, John Phipps, director of the Forest Service’s Rocky Mountain Research Station, asked the University of Montana’s Dean of College of Forestry and Conservation, Tom DeLuca, to remove the report. DeLuca declined to do so.

Later that month, Phipps wrote a letter to University of Montana officials saying that the agency was terminating its two-year contract with the Bolle Center and its director, Martin Nie, the paper’s lead author.

A back and forth ensued between Nie and Forest Service officials, with the professor asking agency officials to explain why they were terminating the contract.

On June 27, Phipps wrote to Nie, saying he wasn’t accusing him of failing to carry out his obligations under the contract. “Rather at the time the decision was made to terminate the agreement, the Forest Service simply had not seen the results of any research or content of any draft or

final work product,” Phipps wrote.

Nie answered back: “On what basis would you ask that the article be taken offline if the agency had not yet seen it?”

The last communication Nie says he received from the agency came on August 30, from Forest Service Deputy Chief for Research and Development Carlos Rodriguez-Franco.

“The concerns which led to the termination,” Rodriguez-Franco wrote, “arose when a draft article, with a provocative title challenging state legal authorities, was placed on a public website without prior substantive comment from the Forest Service.”

The paper remains posted on the center’s website, and is included in the latest issue of the journal *Environmental Law*, which is published by the Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Ore.

Nie said he worries that the controversy generated by the Forest Service’s attempt to quash the paper will distract from the article’s main message: That the federal government holds far more legal authority to manage wildlife on federal lands than many assume.

He said he and five coauthors took great pains to thoroughly research the subject when preparing the paper, which is 126 pages long.

“We knew that it would be controversial going into it and that’s why we put together such a stellar research team and took such a long time,” Nie said. “This is not a subjective piece for us. This is what the courts and regulations say.”

The article does not mince words in emphasizing its core conclusion.

Nie and his coauthors write that “federal land management

agencies have an obligation, and not just the discretion, to manage and conserve fish and wildlife on federal lands, contrary to the myth that ‘the states manage wildlife, federal land agencies only manage wildlife habitat.’ We found this mantra repeated throughout our study and it was commonly made by state and federal agencies in multiple cases and contexts. The myth must be debunked, not only because it is legally deficient, but also because federal lands are significant reservoirs of biodiversity and will become even more significant in the future because of the rapid pace of development on non-federal lands.”

Before posting the paper, Nie said, he and his coauthors debated at length about whether to change the title. They ultimately agreed it was an accurate characterization of the paper’s conclusions.

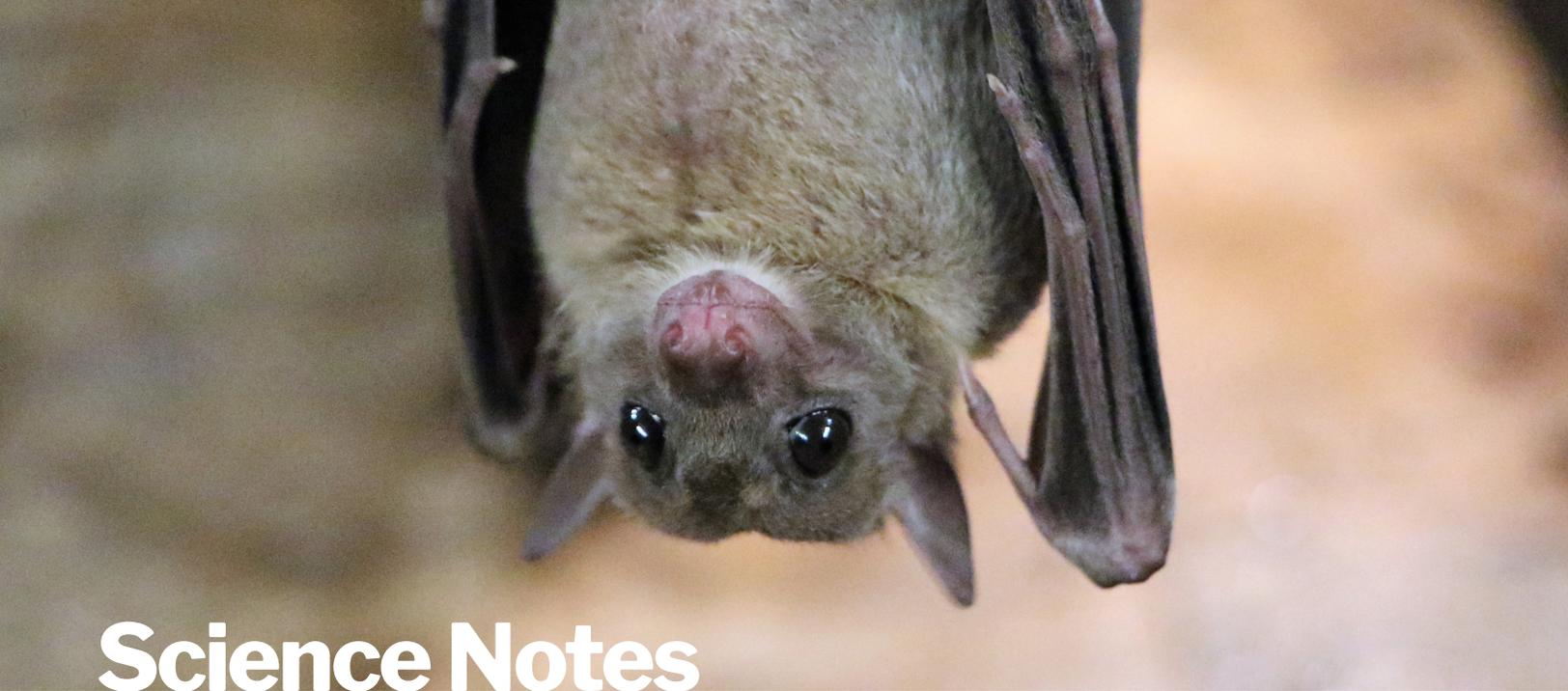
Nie noted that he and other members of the University of Montana faculty have had an “excellent relationship” with the Forest Service over the years. However, he voiced doubt about whether he will have opportunities to collaborate with the agency on future projects.

“I don’t have high hopes,” he said. “We’ll see.”

Officials from the Forest Service’s Rocky Mountain Research Station did not return a call seeking comment.

Nie praised the University of Montana administration, particularly DeLuca, for standing up for his academic freedom of speech.

Controversies over management of game animals and the predators that stalk them have played out repeatedly across the West in recent years.



Science Notes

Hope for Bats

An exotic fungus that is laying waste to bat populations in North America may share a fatal flaw with Dracula—it can't stand light.

Researchers with the Forest Service and the University of New Hampshire found that ultraviolet light kills the pathogen that causes white-nose syndrome—a fatal affliction that has wiped out as many as 90 percent of bats in some locations in the United States.

The fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* is native to Europe and Asia. Bats there, which evolved with the fungus, seem largely unaffected by its presence in caves and mines where they hibernate. In 2006, the fungus was detected in a cave outside of Albany, New York. It has spread rapidly, killing millions of bats in the eastern U.S. and Canada.

Two years ago, the fungus was detected in bats in Washington state. Last year, it jumped to Texas, the state with the greatest diversity of bats. So far, the fungus has been detected in 33 states and is estimated to have killed at least 7 million bats.

The fungus attacks bats in North America while they hibernate, causing them to burn critical reserves of fat. The disease gets its name from the fuzzy white fungal growth that grows on the muzzles and wings of infected bats.

In a paper released in January, the researchers describe the fungus as a “classic example of an introduced pathogen decimating a naïve population.”

The researchers compared the pathogen's genome with other fungi and found that it evolved in extremely dark and cold conditions. Along the way, the fungus apparently lost its ability to repair itself from damage caused by ultraviolet light—a condition that the researchers described as a potential “Achilles heel.”

“It is unusual that (the fungus) appears to be unable to repair damage caused by UV light,” said Jon Palmer, a research botanist with the Forest Service's Northern Research Lab in Madison, Wis., and the study's lead author. “We are very hopeful that the fungus's

extreme vulnerability to UV light can be exploited to manage the disease and save bats.”

The study found that just a few seconds of exposure to UV light was more than 99 percent effective in killing the fungus. With those results in hand, researchers plan to expose hibernating bats to ultraviolet light and compare their survival rates to bats that are not exposed to light.

Scientists have yet to determine how to exploit the fungus's weakness. Options could include bathing caves in ultraviolet light, or illuminating the entrance to caves where bats hibernate.

Biologists warn that, if left unchecked, the fungus could lead to the extinction of some bat species in North America.

“This research has tremendous implications for bats and people,” said Tony Ferguson, director of the Forest Service's Northern Research Station. “Bats play a key role in the health of forests as well as the production of food in the United States.”



Sound Off

Photo: flickr.com/OregonDOT

A Bundy Bungling

Cliven Bundy is a free man. His cattle are free to roam the public estate. More than \$1 million in unpaid grazing fees remains unpaid. The self-styled militia crowd is emboldened. Public land managers are demoralized.

Somebody, please, put a tent over this circus.

A good deal of finger-pointing has ensued in the weeks following U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro's scorching dismissal of the government's case against Bundy in January. And for good reason.

The prosecution's spectacular collapse was witnessed with astonishment by all those who subscribe to the radical notion that the government has legal authority to regulate the grazing of privately owned cattle on public land.

To the Bundys and their supporters, the dismissal—and an Oregon jury's earlier acquittal of sons Ryan and Ammon Bundy for their roles in the 2016 armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge—is vindication of their constitution-in-the-pocket beliefs. The states, according to the Bundy crowd, are the rightful owners of lands managed by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. That's hogwash, of course, both legally and as a matter of common sense.

Make no mistake, though—the end of the Bundy prosecution marks the beginning of a dangerous time for our public lands, and for those charged with enforcing the laws that purport to govern how they are used.

Let's be clear: By grazing his cattle on public lands without a permit, as he has done for a quarter of a century, Cliven Bundy is violating the law. He's shortchanging taxpayers and degrading lands owned by all Americans.

But this, too, is true: The government's handling of the case has been a disaster. The Bureau of Land Management's tactics in attempting to round up the Bundy cattle in 2014 were, to put it mildly, tactless.

In comments to *The Oregonian* newspaper, former BLM Director Robert Abbey criticized the agency for staging what amounted to a military operation, deploying more than 100 law enforcement officers

including rifle-toting agents dressed in camouflage.

"It was a strategy that certainly was a poor one," Abbey told the newspaper. "In hindsight, the agency knew or should have known better."

Likewise, the government lawyers charged with prosecuting the Bundys need a refresher course in basic criminal law. Navarro excoriated them for failing to share evidence with the defense attorneys that could have been helpful to the defendants, which included the elder Bundy, two of his sons and a supporter. She pointed to more than 3,000 pages of records from the BLM and the FBI that prosecutors provided to defense attorneys after an Oct. 1 deadline had passed.

And so the government's case against the scofflaw rancher lies in a smoking heap. And local land managers find themselves back to square one. Cattle owned by a rancher who refuses to accept the authority of the federal government are trespassing on the public estate.

In his comments to *The Oregonian*, Abbey, who also served eight years as the BLM's Nevada state director, offers some advice that makes a lot of sense. The Bundys, Abbey said, "need to face repercussions if they're still breaking the law. It's a new day, and the agency needs to focus on what it controls."

BLM land managers, in other words, should continue to document cattle trespassing on public land, whether they are owned by Cliven Bundy or anyone else. They should require that ranchers obtain and pay for permits. And if a rancher refuses? By all means, those cattle should be removed from the public estate.

Don't expect any help from the top, though. The Interior Department that oversees the BLM, led by Ryan Zinke, has said little about the Bundy matter. Last summer, with the Bundys still facing serious criminal charges, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said that he's "not taking sides or commenting on the case."

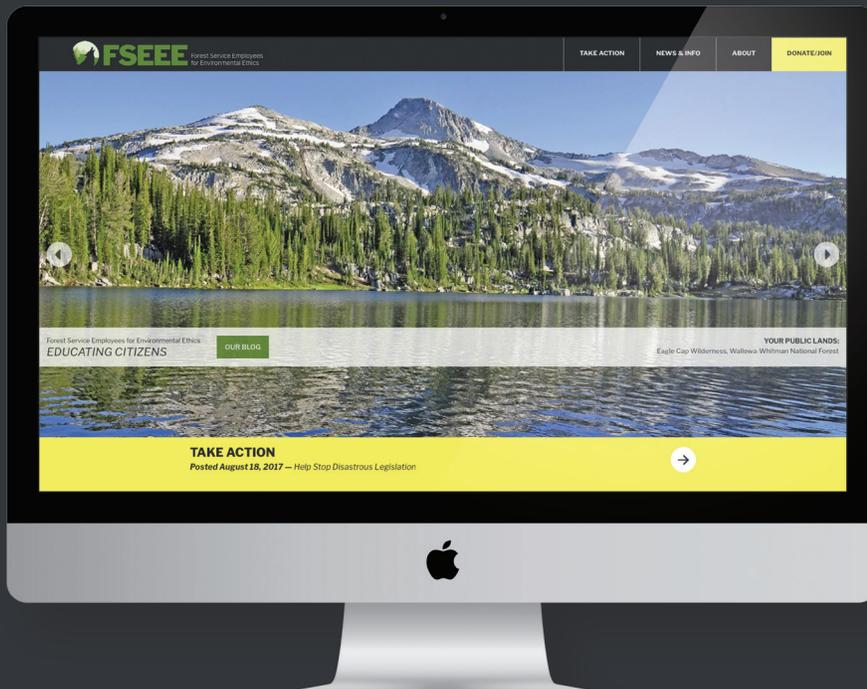
This much is clear: The rule of law must prevail; Bundy's cows must go. If higher-ups in the Trump administration are unwilling to do what's right, BLM managers lower down must take action anyway. That's their job.



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