

Idaho board drops wolf-killing proposals submitted by trapper without ranchers' knowledge

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Nearly two months ago, John Faulkner and members of the Peavey

family, which owns Flat Top Ranch in the Wood River Valley, learned that an application with their names attached for state dollars to kill wolves would move ahead. But they never knew about the application and had no interest in the program.

The proposal was brought to Idaho's Wolf Depredation Control Board by a predator control company without the ranchers' knowledge. Last week, the board announced it will not move forward with the application or two others it received from Predator Control Corp. owner Trevor Walch.

In late October, the board approved the scope of five rancher proposals submitted as part of a new program to disburse funds to agriculture producers for lethal [wolf](#) control. Walch's three proposals, which were nearly identical, bore the typed signatures of the ranchers and detailed plans to contract with Walch's company for ground trapping and aerial hunting of wolves.

Walch did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Jim Fredericks, director of Idaho Fish and Game and co-chair of the wolf board, told the Idaho Statesman by email that the board later turned down Walch's proposals because they "were submitted on behalf of producers without adequate coordination and communication with those producers."

Fredericks said the owners of the ranches named in Walch's other proposals—former Republican state Sen. Jeff Siddoway and the Hunzeker family, who both operate in eastern Idaho, didn't explicitly tell the board they had no knowledge of the proposals.

"Our understanding based on conversations with the other producers is that they'd both had some communication with Mr. Walch about predator control in the past, but they were not specifically aware of the

proposals or their content," Fredericks said by email.

Fredericks and wolf board co-chair Chanel Tewalt, who heads the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, told the Idaho Statesman in an interview last month that it's common for large ranch operations to have multiple managers or family members in charge.

"It can be a challenge to know who may have communicated with whom on what topic," Fredericks reiterated by email.

In November, Fredericks said he wasn't certain how the wolf board initially became aware of the issues with Walch's proposals. He said the board was working with the ranch owners to determine whether they wanted to move ahead with the proposals anyway.

Suzanne Asha Stone, director of the Wood River Wolf Project, which uses nonlethal wolf deterrents to reduce livestock depredations, told the Statesman she reached out to Fish and Game with concerns about the Faulkner/Flat Top proposal, since her organization works with both ranches.

"We are grateful to our Wood River Wolf Project ranching partners for rejecting the state's reckless scheme to promote aerial gunning of wolves, even those coexisting peacefully with livestock," Stone said.

Another of Stone's organizations, the International Wildlife Coexistence Network, was one of a trio of groups that filed a petition late last month for the U.S. Forest Service to ban aerial gunning by private contractors over national forest lands.

The petition, prompted by Walch's proposals, detailed numerous trapping violations Walch has been found guilty of in Nevada. Walch was also one of several wolf hunters who were issued a warning by the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other [federal agencies](#) for violating the Airborne Hunting Act, according to an investigation by Wyoming news outlet WyoFile. Prosecutors declined to press charges.

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