



C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

August 22, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W., Room 6151
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

The U.S. Attorney for the District of Idaho has filed federal criminal charges under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) against Jeremy Hill of Bonners Ferry, Idaho, for killing a grizzly bear on his property on May 8, 2011. Mr. Hill reported there were two other bears with the grizzly that was killed.

Upon killing the bear, Mr. Hill contacted the Idaho Department of Fish and Game as a responsible citizen should. He reported that he thought his children were playing outside when he saw the bear, and he was concerned about their safety. Idaho Fish and Game visited Mr. Hill's home, took his statement, and did not pursue criminal charges. However, acknowledging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) jurisdiction, Fish and Game reported the incident to that agency and turned over the bear carcass. The USFWS conducted its own investigation, and turned the matter over to the U.S. Attorney for prosecution.

I recognize the federal jurisdiction under the Endangered Species Act, but I strongly support the right of individuals to defend themselves and others in such situations. Many, including me, feel Mr. Hill did what a concerned parent would do. Now, Jeremy and his family must endure the cost of a trial.

In addition, the USFWS needs to consider the impacts to grizzly recovery efforts because of Jeremy's case. There is a great public outcry about this issue, and prosecution may further damage community support for recovery efforts. There must be flexibility for citizens to protect their loved ones and property, and a sense of regulatory perspective about the larger impact of such enforcement actions.

One of the flaws of the ESA is the premium it places on protecting species at the expense of everything else. Although an individual can protect human safety under the law – as Jeremy felt he was doing – it's a shame that the Endangered Species Act still does not enable citizens to protect their private property and pets in the same manner.

No one disputes that Jeremy Hill killed a grizzly bear. The dispute appears to be over the reason for shooting the bear. I would sincerely appreciate your looking into this case and assisting in any way you can.

Thank you for your attention in this matter. The citizens of Idaho are looking for fairness and compassion from the federal government in the resolution of this issue.

As Always – Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. L. Butch Otter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "C. L." written in a smaller, more compact style than the last name "Butch Otter".

C. L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho

CLO/bb