

John Meyer, MT Bar # 11206  
Cottonwood Environmental Law Center  
P.O. Box 412 Bozeman, MT 59771  
(406) 546-0149 | Phone  
[John@cottonwoodlaw.org](mailto:John@cottonwoodlaw.org)

*Attorney for Plaintiffs*

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA

COTTONWOOD ENVIRONMENTAL )  
LAW CENTER, GALLATIN )  
WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION, )  
YELLOWSTONE BUFFALO )  
FOUNDATION )

Case No. 9: 17 – CV – 00155-DLC

Plaintiffs, )

vs. )

U.S. SHEEP EXPERIMENT )  
STATION; AGRICULTURAL )  
RESEARCH SERVICE )

Defendants. )

EXHIBIT 10

---



BILLINGS GAZETTE

## Grizzly disappearance draws criticism in Montana



MARCH 07, 2013 6:11 PM • MATTHEW BROWN ASSOCIATED PRESS

What happened to bear 726? That's the number researchers assigned to a collared grizzly bear that disappeared from an agricultural research station along the Montana-Idaho border.

Citing the unsolved disappearance, environmentalists Thursday called for renewed efforts to find out if it was illegally killed and studies on whether the federal facility is harming the region's protected bears.

Three weeks after the 392-pound male grizzly was last located, its tracking collar was found roughly a mile away. It had been cut off, and deliberately

hidden beneath a rock and a log at the bottom of a small stream, investigators determined in a report.

Hunters were ruled out as suspects after being interviewed. But a single rifle cartridge was discovered near where the bear was last located alive Aug. 30. A sheep herder from the U.S. Sheep Research Station, which grazes in the remote forested land, had been stationed in the same area where the cartridge was found at around the same time, according to the report.

However, the report was inconclusive as to who might have killed the bear and whether the rifle cartridge had any connection to the case.

The station's employees were never interviewed, and with no suspect and no carcass, "that's where it dead-ended," said Bill West with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who assisted the investigation.

West manages Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, just north of sheep station property in the Centennial Mountains that is used for summer grazing.

"Who are your most likely candidates? I say hunters, and after that, probably the sheep herders. And we interviewed all the hunters that came in through our park area," West said, adding that the bear is presumed dead.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Agricultural Research Service, which runs the station, said no grizzly bear deaths were reported by its workers last year, nor were there any bear sightings. If a bear was killed, it could have been someone else who came on the property, said spokeswoman Sandy Miller Hays.

"We didn't even see one," she said. "We don't have an enormous fence around the (sheep station property), so someone could have come on it."

John Meyer with the Cottonwood Environmental Law Center called for further efforts from the Fish and Wildlife Service to find out what happened to the bear. His group filed formal notice this week that if the government does not take action to ensure grizzlies are being adequately protected, the law center will ask a federal court to shut down grazing on 16,000 acres at the station.

Meyer contends that the evidence casts suspicion on government employees of the sheep station, although he acknowledged there's no way to know what happened. His organization obtained information on the missing grizzly through a Freedom of Information Act request.

The bear had been collared by federal researchers just two weeks before it disappeared.

The sheep station was established under an executive order in 1918 for breeding and grazing research. Headquartered in Dubois, Idaho, it controls more than 40,000 acres of grazing land in Montana and Idaho.

In recent years, the station has become a frequent target of wildlife advocates and environmentalists. They argue sheep grazing is disruptive to wildlife including grizzlies and wolves that use portions of the sheep station in the Centennial Mountains to travel to and from the Yellowstone National Park area.

The roughly 600 bears in the Yellowstone region are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Hunting remains illegal, but some are killed by wildlife agents each year because of conflicts, including attacks on livestock.

A 2011 determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said the sheep station's activities could result in the deaths of some grizzly bears due to conflicts with humans but would not reduce the survival or recovery of the population as a whole.

Meyer said that issue should be revisited given the disappearance of the male grizzly, with the Agricultural Research Service seeking a new round of consultations from wildlife officials over the operation of the sheep station.