

Boundary County Public Information  
PO Box 419  
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805  
(208) 267-7212  
[publicinfo@newsbf.com](mailto:publicinfo@newsbf.com)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**‘We must ... protect the ability of the ... citizen to protect his family’**

Boundary County Commissioners today sent a letter to the Idaho U.S. Congressional delegation, Idaho District 1 Legislators and Idaho Governor Butch Otter seeking to defend a citizen’s right to protect their families despite Endangered Species Act laws that make doing so illegal.

The letter is in response to federal charges filed against Jeremy Hill, 33, Bonners Ferry, who allegedly shot and killed one of three grizzly bears that were right outside his home just north of town on Mothers Day so as to protect his six children. Immediately after the shooting May 8, he called Idaho Fish and Game conservation officers, who recommended that no charges be filed, a recommendation echoed by local U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials.

On August 8, U.S. District Attorney Wendy Olson, on behalf of the Department of the Interior, overruled those recommendations and filed felony charges against Hill for killing a species listed as threatened. If convicted, he faces up to a year in prison, up to a \$50,000 fine and loss of hunting privileges.

An arraignment hearing is set for 10 a.m. Tuesday, August 23, in the Coeur d’Alene District Courtroom, located in the Federal Building, 6450 North Mineral Drive.

Commission Chair Ron Smith will attend that hearing on behalf of county commissioners to show this county’s strong support of Hill and his family as they go through this ordeal.

“This letter is our attempt to add our influence on behalf of Jeremy Hill, who has been falsely accused of a crime that did not happen,” Smith said.

The letter, addressed to Idaho U.S. Senators Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, U.S. Representatives Raul Labrador and Mike Simpson, Idaho Governor Butch Otter, District 1 Senator Shawn Keough and District 1 representatives Eric Anderson and George Eskridge, reads in full:

“Boundary County, through efforts of all our partners and the efforts of our local collaborative, the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative, has assisted and promoted the recovery of Grizzly Bears in the Selkirk recovery zones for many years. We have one

goal in mind, which is to see the population increase to a point the species is recovered. In doing so, it will ease the restrictions on our National Forest and help our community economically.

“The efforts of educating the community regarding bears have shown that the last human mortality in the Selkirk recovery zone in the United States and in Boundary County occurred in the year 2004. That is a remarkable achievement.

“We recently had a bear killed by a local resident, Jeremy Hill. The shooting occurred approximately five miles outside of the recovery zone and adjacent to State Highway #1.

“Mr. Hill was defending his family when the incident occurred and he quickly contacted the proper enforcement person with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, from which a recommendation was made not to prosecute.

“Mr. Hill has lived here most of his life and is an honest, upright and productive member of this community. Jeremy has been charged by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife in Federal Court. We feel that at all costs, this man has the obligation and responsibility to protect his children. This is not some flagrant or malicious act. We urge you to do all that is in your power to have this matter settled. We must assist and protect the ability of the average citizen to protect his family when they are in danger.

“The press has stated that the animal was just crossing his property. In fact, it was a female with two sub-adult cubs. Three Grizzly Bears in a yard with your children is at the very least a dangerous situation, and the children must be protected at all costs.”

The letter was signed Respectively, Ronald R. Smith, Chairman, Dan R. Dinning, Commissioner, and Walt Kirby, Commissioner.

“As a board of county commissioners, we feel strongly that a person’s right to defend his or her family is among our most important obligations,” Smith said. “As individuals, we’re extremely pleased with the show of support that took place at the 4-H Market Animal Sale Friday night, which just reinforces the support this community is showing Jeremy and his family.”

At that sale, a 4-H pig named Regina was offered by Hill’s 14-year-old daughter, Jasmine. Bidders bought and turned the pig 15 times, raising \$19,558 for the family. The last bidder then gave Regina back to Jasmine, saving her from a trip to the butcher.