

# Government harm

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The case of the north Idaho man who faces prison and a stiff fine after shooting a grizzly bear in his yard is another chilling example of a federal government that is out of control, overzealous, overreaching, overbearing and now, threatening the freedom of a father who was merely doing what any parent would do in responding to a mortal danger to his family. Indeed, Hill shot the bear because it wandered into his yard. Out of fear for his children's safety, Hill shot the bear, and afterwards, contacted Idaho wildlife officials to let them know what happened.

And yet, 33-year-old Jeremy Hill is charged by the feds with unlawfully killing the bear, which is protected by under the Endangered Species Act. Hill pleaded not guilty in the case days ago, and Gov. Butch Otter weighed in, sending a letter to U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar regarding the incident.

"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," Otter wrote. "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. Otter asked the government to display "fairness and compassion" in the case.

Not everyone is taking Hill's side. Spokesman-Review columnist Rich Landers was quick to stick up for the grizzly and the feds, writing that while federal law lets people shoot wolves that are threatening people, but not so with grizzlies. Writes Landers, "Coyotes and wolves have pups by the litter. Grizzlies reproduce at a glacial pace. Most forest critters can bear young at the age of 1 or 2. A female grizzly doesn't become sexually mature until she's 6 or 7. In ideal circumstances, that sow will give birth to a pair of cubs every three years. ♦ Strict protections have enabled grizzlies in this region to increase populations in the recent decade, but only by an average of 2 percent a year. At that rate, any loss is a significant setback."

Thus, Landers justifies and gives cover to the federal stance that has enabled Hill's prosecution.

Humans, it might be pointed out, also reproduce at a glacial pace, giving birth only every nine months, and usually to one baby at a time. Rare is the human mother who gives birth to a litter. Ah, but legal protections for humans appear to be miniscule. Compared side-by-side with bears, snails and wolves on the government's scale of importance, we human types, unfortunately, rate rather low for some strange reason. This despite a long-held contention that humans are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights,

among these being life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The federal government believes the only thing Hill is entitled to do is ritualistically observe federal law, which means in the case of this bear incursion, Hill should have consulted the Endangered Species Act, contacted “authorities” or entered into negotiations with the bear to get it to leave, instead of shoot it.

Hill had every right to do what he did, whether to protect his family or to preserve the quiet enjoyment of his property. A grizzly bear in Hill’s yard must have been unequivocally scary. The federal government’s reaction to it is equally so. We’ll never know if the bear intended to harm Hill or his family. But it’s abundantly clear that the government does.

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