



P.O. Box 30715
Billings, MT 59107
Phone: 406-252-2516
Website: www.r-calfusa.com
Email: r-calfusa@r-calfusa.com

November 3, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

Wade and Teresa King have owned and operated the generational King Ranch in Grant and Douglas counties, Washington, for more than 70 years. The ranch lies in the semi-arid climate of eastern Washington and includes a mix of state and federal leases as well as privately owned land.

On Feb. 3, 2023, the Washington Department of Ecology fined the King Ranch \$267,450, alleging the Kings illegally excavated at least 22 wetlands. Subsequently, the Washington Department of Natural Resources, which oversees revenue-generating state trust lands, canceled leases held by the Kings. This decision has rendered them unable to produce on their private property, which is unfenced and interwoven with the state and federal leases. Grazing is recognized as the highest and best use of this land, with water being the most essential.

The Department of Ecology alleges that 6.37 acres of wetlands were impacted and 1.76 acres of wetland buffer were damaged, allegedly affecting 0.00039% of the ranch's 21,000-plus acres. The department maintains that the excavated areas in question are considered wetlands, and the Kings did not obtain prior authorization.

The Kings claim that the excavation was simply cleaning out man-made watering holes intended to collect runoff for watering livestock and wildlife. They argue these areas lack the requirements to be considered wetlands; rather, they are nothing more than stock ponds. Additionally, the Department of Ecology does not have a permit process in place and, in a 2019 letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, it admitted that "no program to authorize impacts currently exists."

Madam Secretary, from my perspective, this is nothing more than another land grab by two out-of-control state agencies. In this case, the Department of Ecology and the Department of Natural Resources appear to be colluding to remove valuable producers from the land in an effort to further their "war on beef," ultimately ending state revenue sources and harming local communities. In addition, the Department of Ecology recently violated the Administrative Procedure Act by illegally adopting rules without public engagement. The department also referred the case to the Washington Attorney General's Office for possible criminal charges against the Kings and an employee in Grant County—for cleaning out stock ponds.

The state of Washington has wasted more than \$1.5 million in taxpayer dollars investigating this erroneous case, while completely stifling production on the King Ranch. To date, the Kings have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars defending their position and are unable to derive income due to the agencies' anti-ranching agenda. The operation's financial viability is in imminent danger, and I respectfully request federal oversight and assistance in this case.

All over 6.37 acres of stock pond maintenance.

Sincerely,

Shad Sullivan
Property Rights Chair, R-CALF USA
shadsullivan@yahoo.com