



Secretary Brooks L. Rollins

Washington, D.C. 20250

December 9, 2025

CASEY SIXKILLER

Director

Department of Ecology

State of Washington

P.O. Box 47600

Olympia, WA 98504

DAVE UPTHEGROVE

Commissioner of Public Lands

Department of Natural Resources

State of Washington

MS 47001

Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Director Sixkiller and Commissioner Upthegrove,

I am writing on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture concerning actions the State of Washington has taken at the behest of the Department of Ecology and the Department of Natural Resources inappropriately targeting Wade and Teresa King with excessive penalties for normal ranching activities. The State of Washington imposed more than \$250,000 dollars in civil penalties, it has also revoked leases on state land that have been ranched by the Kings for decades, and pursued a secretive criminal action behind closed doors without any ability for the Kings to defend. Combined with the massive legal fees needed to protect this family's way of life, this amounts to the state of Washington threatening the existence of their legacy ranch. This war on agriculture must stop.

It is common knowledge, especially in the West, that access to water is preeminently important in raising cattle. The creation and maintenance of stock water ponds is one of primary ways ranchers ensure their livestock have access to water. For over 60 years, the King Ranch has had farm ponds on the property they own and lease. These man-made structures eventually start filling back up with sediment and need to be cleaned out. However, now the state is claiming

farm ponds are wetlands and is attempting to bring the hammer down on a ranch simply for doing what they have always done: steward their land and livestock. Targeting a ranch for actively maintaining a man-made farm pond is not only wrong but impermissible under state and federal law, and the Trump Administration will not sit idly by in the face of this injustice. Targeted lawfare against American agricultural producers and the weaponization of government agencies is a clear assault on those who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people.

In July, the Department sent a letter to the Kings clarifying that there was no evidence of any activity that would constitute a conversion of a wetland pursuant to USDA authorities. Also, we are aware of a third-party review of the farm ponds in question that determined they do not constitute a wetland pursuant to the Clean Water Act or Washington state law. It's important to note that, even under Washington state law, the definition of wetlands expressly does not include farm ponds.

USDA is reviewing funding it provides to the state of Washington and any institutions within it that may be weaponized against farmers and ranchers such as the Kings. Defending farmers and ranchers from the weaponization of laws is a top priority for this Administration. The aforementioned governmental overreach threatens the existence of the King Ranch in Washington and would set a dangerous precedent for ranch families across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brooke Rollins", written in a cursive style.

Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture

CC: Governor Robert Ferguson