
For people in Idaho, a summer free of field smoke
The Associated Press
Published: Thursday, August 16, 2007

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho - After three decades of trying to shut out smoke from burning bluegrass fields on the Rathdrum Prairie, Vivian Evans can now sleep with her windows open.

"I can go out," said Evans, who has asthma and was a plaintiff in a lawsuit that led to a ban on crop residue burning in Idaho. "I can go fishing. I can take my grandkids to the park. I can actually work in my flower garden and do things I haven't been able to do for 30 years."

In January, a panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider its authorization of grass field burning in Idaho, saying the federal agency didn't take the health and environmental impacts of the long-standing practice into account before making its decision.

After the EPA told the state to issue burning permits while it reconsidered whether the state's burn rules conflicted with the federal Clean Air Act, the judicial panel in May clarified its earlier ruling and ordered the EPA to "vacate" its approval of Idaho's burning rules.

That put an end in Idaho to crop burning except on Indian reservations.

Kentucky bluegrass seed grown in northern Idaho is shipped across the nation to be used in landscaping and golf courses. Farmers say they must burn the stubble left on fields to improve next year's crop and control pests.

But critics of burning say it causes respiratory problems, and multiple lawsuits were filed.

"I never want a farmer to stop farming, but I don't think they should be allowed to endanger people's lives," Evans told The Spokesman-Review.

Linda Clovis, a spokeswoman for Farmers of North Idaho, which wants a return to field burning across the state, did not immediately return a call on Wednesday.

Safe Air For Everyone, which sought the burning ban along with the American Lung Association of Idaho, has started talks with the state over the state's Clear Air Act, said Patti Gora, executive director of the group.

She said her group might agree to some field burning if it's only allowed under restricted conditions, as is done in Washington state.

"Nobody is being hurt, nobody is being sent to the hospital, nobody has died," Gora said about the Washington program.

Heightened fire restrictions on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation have delayed field burning there, said Aliene ``Boom" George, smoke management program coordinator for the tribe. George did not have an estimate on how many acres would be burned.

Gail West, spokeswoman for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, said restrictions would likely remain in effect until fall rains return to the region.

Sponsored Links

ADVERTISING

Auto Insurance Quotes

Save \$303 On Fast, Lifetime Renewable Auto Ins w/ The Hartford Today!
AARP.TheHartford.com

Need Health Insurance?

Find low cost health insurance. One quick form. Multiple offers.
Health.InsuranceDesk.com

Refinance at 5.35% Fixed

Get \$300,000 loan for \$875/month. Calculate Your New Payment. Act Now!
Refinance.LoanOffer.com

How's your credit score?

0-500 Poor, 501-700 Average, 701+ Good. Find out your score now FREE!
CreditReport.com

Buy a link here