

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)
Wild Sheep Working Group (WSWG) meeting
July 18, 2010
Anchorage, AK**

1) Welcome/Announcements/Introductions/Attendance List: At 0810 hours, WSWG Chair Kevin Hurley welcomed those in attendance, including WSWG agency reps or their designees, plus other interested parties. Kevin thanked Becky Schwanke & Tom Lohuis/ADF&G for assisting with taking meeting minutes.

WSWG reps in attendance (N=5): Becky Schwanke (AK), Clay Brewer (TX), Kevin Hurley (WY), Melanie Woolever (USFS), Amy Krause (BLM). WSWG Director Sponsor Jim Karpowitz (UT) attended in the afternoon. Jim Heffelfinger (AZ), Ken McDonald (MT), Jim Unsworth (ID), Eric Larson (UT), Cal Baca (NM), Dr. Colin Gillin (OR), Dr. Kristin Mansfield (WA) represented their agencies for all, or portions of, the WSWG meeting.

Other attendees (all or portions of meeting): Tom Lohuis (AK), Mark Burch (AK), Raul Morales (BLM), Gene DeGayner (USFS), Neil Thagard (WSF), Eric Tomasik (USFS), Gail Tunberg (USFS), Keele Johnson (UT), John Gale (NWF), Gerry Lent (NV).

2) WSWG Roster: Kevin circulated the current WSWG roster (date stamped June 14, 2010), asking for edits and/or updates; none were offered.

3) Review of Agenda and Requests for Additions: agenda embedded, at end of these minutes. Jim H. requested discussion on foot-and-mouth disease and hunter selection/genetic effects.

4) Review of Action Items from July 16, 2009 & January 9, 2010 WAFWA Business Meetings:

July 16, 2009

13). That the WSWG draft a letter clarifying language dealing with “wandering wild sheep” in the 2007 report “WAFWA Recommendations on Management of Domestic Sheep and Goats in Wild Sheep Habitat.” Said letter to be brought forward for director’s action. ADDRESSED IN JULY 21, 2010 REVISION TO WAFWA REPORT.

14). That the Association send a letter to Idaho Governor “Butch” Otter and Idaho Fish and Game Commission President Wayne Wright, voicing its concerns and requests regarding Senate Bill 1232, as amended. WAFWA LETTER SIGNED/SENT JULY 21, 2009.

15). That the Association recommend that beginning no later than FY 2011, both USFS and BLM receive or reallocate funding to provide two positions within each agency, each spending at least 50% of their time dealing with wild sheep issues and management, at both the policy/national level and at the technical/field level. SEE ACTION ITEM #109.

January 9, 2010

109). That the Association send a letter to BLM Director Bob Abbey regarding the need for two ≥ 0.5 FTE wild sheep positions within that agency. LETTER SIGNED/SENT TO BLM DIRECTOR BOB ABBEY FEBRUARY 26, 2010

Response letter dated May 25, 2010...BLM declined pursuing our recommendation, but acknowledged our concerns, agreeing that heightened collaboration was more important now than ever...Discussions have been held with western field-level BLM biologists & BLM State Directors, to investigate

assignment of additional wild sheep management duties & responsibilities, perhaps with one BHS specialist for the southwestern states, and one for the central/northern Rockies...

110). That the WSWG proceed with revision of the Recommendations on Management of Domestic Sheep and Goats in Wild Sheep Habitat report to clarify language dealing with "wandering wild sheep". REVISION SENT JUNE 22, 2010 TO JIM KARPOWITZ & LARRY KRUCKENBERG (See Agenda Item #10, below)

111). That a second letter that only includes the desired clarifying points be sent to Howard Schwartz, Esq., involving the Texas wild sheep license situation. PER FOLLOWUP DISCUSSION WITH JIM KARPOWITZ IN JANUARY 2010, DECISION WAS MADE TO NOT SEND 2ND LETTER; TPWD ADVISES SITUATION HAS BEEN RESOLVED FAVORABLY

5) WSWG Website: Kevin advised that Jacey Garceau of Delaney Meeting & Event Management continues to do a good job, posting items in timely fashion to the WAFWA WSWG website. No other edits/changes to the WSWG website were offered.

6) WSWG List/Status of Action Items: Kevin reminded the group of the current (date stamped July 9, 2010) list/status of WSWG action items (now grown to 11 pages), and asked WSWG reps to please notify him of changes/updates to that WSWG list.

7) USFS/BLM GIS mapping project on Domestic Sheep & Goat grazing allotments & trailing routes vs. occupied BHS ranges: With WSWG reps from 14 western states, Melanie Woolever/Janice Wilson (USFS, Region 2, Colorado) and Amy Krause (BLM) have been coordinating GIS mapping to show current BHS distribution and current USFS/BLM domestic sheep/goat grazing allotments (active and vacant) and trailing routes. Updated maps reflecting BLM and USFS data (including vacant cattle allotments) were handed out to WSWG reps on February 2-3, 2010 in Reno, NV. By August 1, 2010, state agencies were to have closely reviewed those maps, in particular focusing on "edge-matching" with adjacent states, to make sure BHS distribution shown in one state doesn't necessarily stop or truncate arbitrarily across a state boundary. By today's meeting, Melanie reported she had not received edited maps back from any jurisdiction but Wyoming, so she was considering all 14 state maps largely completed. Amy stated that we all needed to agree on the frequency of revision; annually is too often, but review every 3 years would be appropriate. Melanie pointed out that the USFS updates their grazing allotment data in June of each year, so states should keep that timeline in mind.

8) USFS/BLM Policy Updates, Projects, Briefing Statements: Kevin handed out (and will distribute electronically to those WSWG reps not in attendance) hard copies of the USFS (2-page) and BLM (1-page) briefing papers on the topic of domestic sheep and goat grazing and potential disease transmission to bighorn sheep. Gene D. stated that the USFS policy revision should be published in the Federal Register by the end of calendar year 2010. Amy stated that BLM is reviewing the draft USFS policy, to hopefully establish some consistency and standardized language.

Discussion turned to the pending Record of Decision (ROD) for the Payette National Forest (PNF) in Idaho; this ROD is expected by late July 2010. Jim U. (ID) expressed frustration that Idaho had not been able to get the USFS to seriously pursue re-opening closed DS allotments (closed for other reasons, not related to proximity to BHS). Gene D. requested IDFG provide a specific list of DS allotments they would like to see reopened. Discussion turned to the USFS R4 internal teleconference and planned briefing(s) for Idaho state agencies. It is anticipated that Western Watersheds Project (WWP) may likely use the PNF decision, once announced, to challenge other DS grazing activity in other locations. Raul acknowledged that BLM is monitoring the PNF pending decision/situation very closely.

It was pointed out that USFS R2 had designated BHS as a Sensitive Species in March 2007, R4 did the same in July 2009. Eric T. stated that R1 is currently discussing possible designation with 4 state wildlife agencies (MT, ND, SD, ID), with a decision expected by end of summer 2010.

9) 9 BHS Die-offs in 5 western states, winter 2009-2010: Kevin distributed a 2-page summary (also posted on WSWG website) of these 9 die-offs this past winter/spring. Kevin noted that in Hood River, OR in early June 2010, there was a 5-hour NWSGC workshop specifically addressing these die-offs; each of the 5 states involved (i.e., MT, NV, WA, UT, WY) presented their updates, and will be following up with written summaries (to be posted to the WSWG website, as well, if agencies are amenable). Eric T. asked if the WSWG was fully informed and up-to-date with BHS die-offs that might have occurred this winter and spring on tribal lands; those present indicated some coordination and information exchange with tribal fish and game managers, but it was acknowledged that much better coordination and dialogue could/should occur. Kevin recounted discussions he'd had in Hood River, OR with tribal F&G reps, asking for their assistance in helping improve this information exchange. In particular, the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society was identified as a good conduit to exchange information, including the revised WAFWA WSWG document on "Recommendations for Domestic Sheep and Goat Management in Wild Sheep Habitat", once approved by the WAFWA Directors (see next discussion item).

10) Revision of WSWG July 2007 report: Kevin described the timeline/process followed by the WSWG during spring/early summer 2010, to revise the July 2007 report "Recommendations for Domestic Sheep and Goat Management in Wild Sheep Habitat". Kevin informed the WSWG attendees of yesterday's (July 17th) Wildlife Chiefs' discussion concerning possible expansion of the July 2007 report to include cattle/domestic ruminants. Wildlife Chiefs unanimously (Jeff ver Steeg, CDoW abstained) voted to recommend to WAFWA Directors that reference to domestic ruminants be stricken from the revised report, and that the revision continue to focus on management of domestic sheep and goats in wild sheep habitat, as originally mandated in January 2007 by WAFWA Directors.

11) BHS/DS Pneumonia Research Needs, USAHA: Kevin recounted to the WSWG that a USAHA subcommittee of Drs. Mike Miller (CO), Walt Cook (WY), Nancy East (CA), and Annette Rink (NV) had been working to identify and prioritize research recommendations dealing with respiratory disease control and prevention in domestic and bighorn sheep. These authors have extended an invitation to the WSWG to review/comment on their draft priorities, recognizing that this is a USAHA subcommittee, not a WAFWA WSWG nor WHC, document. *Action Item: if WSWG members are interested in reviewing this draft document, comments must be sent to Kevin no later than August 16th; Kevin will then forward an integrated WSWG comment to this USAHA subcommittee no later than August 20th, cc'ing Dr. Mansfield of the WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee.*

12) Non-respiratory Wild Sheep Disease Summary (Dr. Colin Gillin/WAFWA WHC): At the behest of the WSWG, the Wildlife Health Committee agreed to develop, and Dr. Gillin volunteered to lead, an effort to briefly synthesize known information about non-respiratory diseases which wild sheep may be susceptible to. That brief summary (based on Shelli Dubay's work in AZ and Elena Garde et al.'s work in NWT, YK) has been reviewed by several wildlife vets, and once finalized (anticipated early September 2010), will be posted on both the WSWG and WHC websites.

13) WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee Meeting (July 20, 2010): Dr. Kristin Mansfield (WA), current chair of the Wildlife Health Committee, described the upcoming WHC meeting, and noted 3

topics of interest (#9, 11, 12 from this agenda) to the WSWG would also be discussed @ the WHC meeting; Kevin will attend, representing the WSWG.

14) GIS Mapping project of all Wild Sheep translocations in U.S. and Canada: Kevin went through a brief history of this mapping effort, starting with the 1996 NWSGC workshop in Silverthorne, CO. In the past 2 years, WAFWA has been revisiting, expanding, and improving these jurisdictional data, to construct GIS maps of all wild sheep translocations, as far back as records can verify. Currently, this mapping project is ~75% complete. Kevin went through a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction summary (date stamped June 2, 2010), to get updates on how the states and provinces are doing. *Action Item: please continue to send your data/revisions to Richard Jones (rejones@wavecom.net) ASAP, so this project can be completed.*

15) Round Robin Discussion:

AK: Becky stated ADF&G was currently updating their 3-year reports (addressing harvest, surveys, population parameters); recently, some unlimited hunts are changing to limited entry hunting, and some areas have gone to “any ram” limitation; ~50 any ram licenses now issued; annual ram harvest 800-900.

TX: Clay recounted that desert BHS were extirpated in TX by the 1950s. Recent introductions and management activities have restored desert BHS to many historic ranges, with statewide population estimated near 1,500 BHS. Source stock for transplants came from MX, NM, NV, UT, plus in-state transplants. Hunting was reinstated in 1990, now 17 permits issued annually. Issues and management challenges are different, due to high percentage of private land; TPWD has to work well with private landowners. Currently, no disease issues. TPWD working w/ counterparts in Mexico on joint surveys and projects.

AZ: Jim H. stated that AZGFD had commented on the Heber-Reno DS stock driveway EA.

OR: Colin discussed ongoing work (e.g., disease screening) in Hell’s Canyon, Lostine herd; overall, CABHS fairly healthy, not so with RMBHS.

NV: Gerry Lent stated that BHS die-offs were an issue. NDOW’s transplant policy states that mountain lion control must be accomplished prior to BHS reintroductions, similar to TX and UT.

UT: Jim K. recounted the current situation in UT, with total BHS #s between 5-6,000; very successful program over past ~20 years or so.

WY: Kevin stated there were ~6,200 BHS, 256 hunting licenses for 2010 (25% to non-residents); efforts to address DS/BHS contact have been quite successful, but further work remained to be completed.

BLM: Amy/Raul discussed fast-track approval process for wind/solar/renewable energy projects/goals for Interior. Amy mentioned that BLM is involved with, and has initiated, ecoregional assessments. BLM goal is to reduce feral horse/burro numbers, per Secy. Salazar’s plan.

USFS: Gene stated that USFS would be coming out with a wind energy policy/draft regulations sometime next year.

16) Continuation of WSWG Chair position: Kevin reminded the WSWG that he is still a 100%, full-time employee of WGFD, with 50% of his time dedicated to chairing this WAFWA WSWG. Nine wild sheep NGOs (46%) and 17 states/provinces/territories (34%) help fund Kevin's current position, with WGFD putting up the remaining 20%. This position was originally approved for a 2-year time period, and this position is set to expire January 31, 2011; Since the WGFD FTE position will go away, Kevin will have to retire from WGFD at that time. Kevin, Jim Karpowitz, and the WSWG have discussed Kevin continuing this WSWG chair position, possibly working ~½ time as an independent contractor for WAFWA. Jim K. stated that at the WAFWA Director's retreat, there was widespread support to keep the WSWG going, with a part-time chair in place. For all paid committee/working group chairs (e.g., wild sheep, sage grouse, western native trout, grassland), Directors would like to see better accounting, cooperative agreements/contracts in place, and a list of specific products/expectations. Jim K. will make a presentation to the WAFWA Directors on July 21, 2010, recommending continuation of the current agency assessment of \$3,000/year/agency (those with a wild sheep resource) for 2 more years (February 1, 2011 – January 31, 2013).

17) Identify/Finalize WSWG Activities and Projects for Coming Year:

- Completion of N=14 western state GIS maps showing occupied BHS distribution vs. active/vacant domestic sheep and goat grazing allotments and/or trailing routes;
- Completion of N=17 state/provincial GIS maps (with associated databases/attribute tables) graphically depicting past wild sheep translocations;
- Outreach with Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, tribal/First Nations fish and game management agencies, on domestic sheep and goat management in wild sheep habitats;
- Development of WSWG part-time chair contract for Years 3 & 4, to be reviewed and hopefully approved by WAFWA Directors at January 2011 winter meeting in Tucson, AZ.

18) FY2012 Federal Budget Priorities:

- Provide research \$ to investigate and improve respiratory disease prevention and control between domestic sheep/goats and wild sheep.
- Maintain/increase USFS and BLM wildlife budgets (especially discretionary line item spending authority) to address/resolve on-the-ground interaction/overlap between domestic sheep and goats and wild sheep.
- Recognize local needs/situations by agency planning unit (e.g., National Forest, BLM District), in addition to regional initiatives (e.g., water conservation).

19) Range-wide Harvest Summary for Wild Sheep and Mountain Goats: Jim Heffelfinger (AZ) inquired if range-wide harvest summaries for rams and billies were available, similar to the long-term, range-wide harvest summaries for mule deer and elk reflected in the biennial Deer & Elk Workshop. Consensus opinion is that those harvest summaries may be available within/for each jurisdiction with wild sheep and/or mountain goats, but composite, range-wide summaries were not currently available.

20) Other Business: Jim Heffelfinger described a recent manuscript (unknown publication outlet) which he and Brian Wakeling (AZ) had reviewed/commented on; the manuscript continued the argument that trophy hunting has led to deleterious effects on ram genotypes, average size/age of harvested rams, etc. Jim reported that The Wildlife Society's quarterly magazine *The Wildlife Professional* (possibly fall 2010 edition) is going to feature the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation; furthermore, in some future volume, there will be a point:counterpoint article on hunting and genetic implications. Kevin offered to provide age vs. size data from harvested rams from NW Wyoming, for Jim H. and his colleagues to examine.

Melanie stated that a WSWG cohesive list of research needs and priorities would allow us to leverage efforts and \$ across jurisdictional boundaries.

21) Closing Comments and Adjourn: Kevin thanked everyone for their efforts on behalf of wild sheep, and for participating in today's WSWG meeting. Meeting adjourned 1610 hours.

WAFWA

WILD SHEEP WORKING GROUP (WSWG) MEETING

Club Room 2

Hotel Captain Cook

Anchorage, Alaska

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Sunday, July 18, 2010

Chair – Kevin Hurley, WAFWA Wild Sheep Working Group Chair, Cody, Wyoming

AGENDA

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| 1. Welcome, Announcement, Introductions, Attendee List | Kevin Hurley |
| 2. WSWG Roster Update | Kevin Hurley |
| 3. Review of Agenda and Requests for Additions | Kevin Hurley |
| 4. Review of Action Items from July 16, 2009 & January 9, 2010
WAFWA Directors' Business Meetings | All |
| 5. WSWG website | Kevin Hurley |
| 6. WSWG List/Status of Action Items | Kevin Hurley |
| 7. GIS Mapping of Wild Sheep Distribution and Vacant/ Active
Domestic Sheep and Goat Grazing Allotments | All |
| 8. USFS/BLM Policy Updates and Projects | All |
| 9. 9 BHS Die-offs in 5 western states, winter 2009-2010 | All |
| 10. Revision of WSWG July 2007 Report | All |
| 11. BHS/DS Pneumonia Research Needs, USAHA | All |
| 12. Non-Respiratory Wild Sheep Disease Summary (Colin Gillin/WHC) | Kevin Hurley |
| 13. WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee Meeting (July 20, 2010) | Kevin Hurley |
| 14. Update on GIS Mapping for all Wild Sheep Translocations | All |
| 15. Round Robin Discussion – Each Jurisdiction | All |
| 16. Continuation of WSWG Chair position | All |
| 17. Identify/Finalize WSWG Activities and Projects for Coming Year | All |
| 18. FY 2012 Federal Budget Priorities | All |
| 19. Rangewide Harvest Summary for Wild Sheep & Mtn. Goats | Kevin Hurley |
| 20. Other Business | Kevin Hurley |
| 21. Closing Comments and Adjourn | Kevin Hurley |