

A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN MULTIPLE USES: SHEEP VS. SHEEP



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BIGHORN AND DOMESTIC SHEEP – WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM?



Similar to Europeans coming to North America and infecting Native Americans with smallpox, measles, mumps, bubonic plague, etc., to which the Native Americans had little immunity – domestic sheep carry pathogens that are harmless to them, but have been shown to cause major bighorn sheep herd die-offs and reduction in lamb survival.

This has been a very controversial issue, as up until recently, there was no scientific evidence to prove this conclusively.

THE RECISSION ACT OF 1995

- ✘ SEC. 504. (a) SCHEDULE FOR NEPA COMPLIANCE.-
-Each National Forest System unit shall establish and adhere to a schedule for the completion of National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) analysis and decisions on all allotments within the National Forest System unit for which NEPA analysis is needed.
- ✘ South San Juan Sheep and Goat Allotments and North San Juan Sheep and Goat Allotments – both high elevation sheep grazing allotments located in or near bighorn sheep habitat.

SOUTH SAN JUAN ANALYSIS

- × 2001- 2006
- × Domestic sheep grazing had occurred since the late 1890's in this area, and to a much greater extent.
- × No issues had ever surfaced in regards to bighorn and domestic sheep.
- × Domestic sheep allotments were not being managed to prevent contact between domestic and bighorn sheep (lack of data on bighorn sheep locations, and not seen as a big issue at the time).
- × This NEPA decision implemented some measures to prevent contact, and allowed for further modification.
- × USFS sought participation from Colorado Division of Wildlife and Sheep Grazing Permittees (as well as the general public), to make sure we were accounting for everything that we could, as we tried to design solutions for this issue.

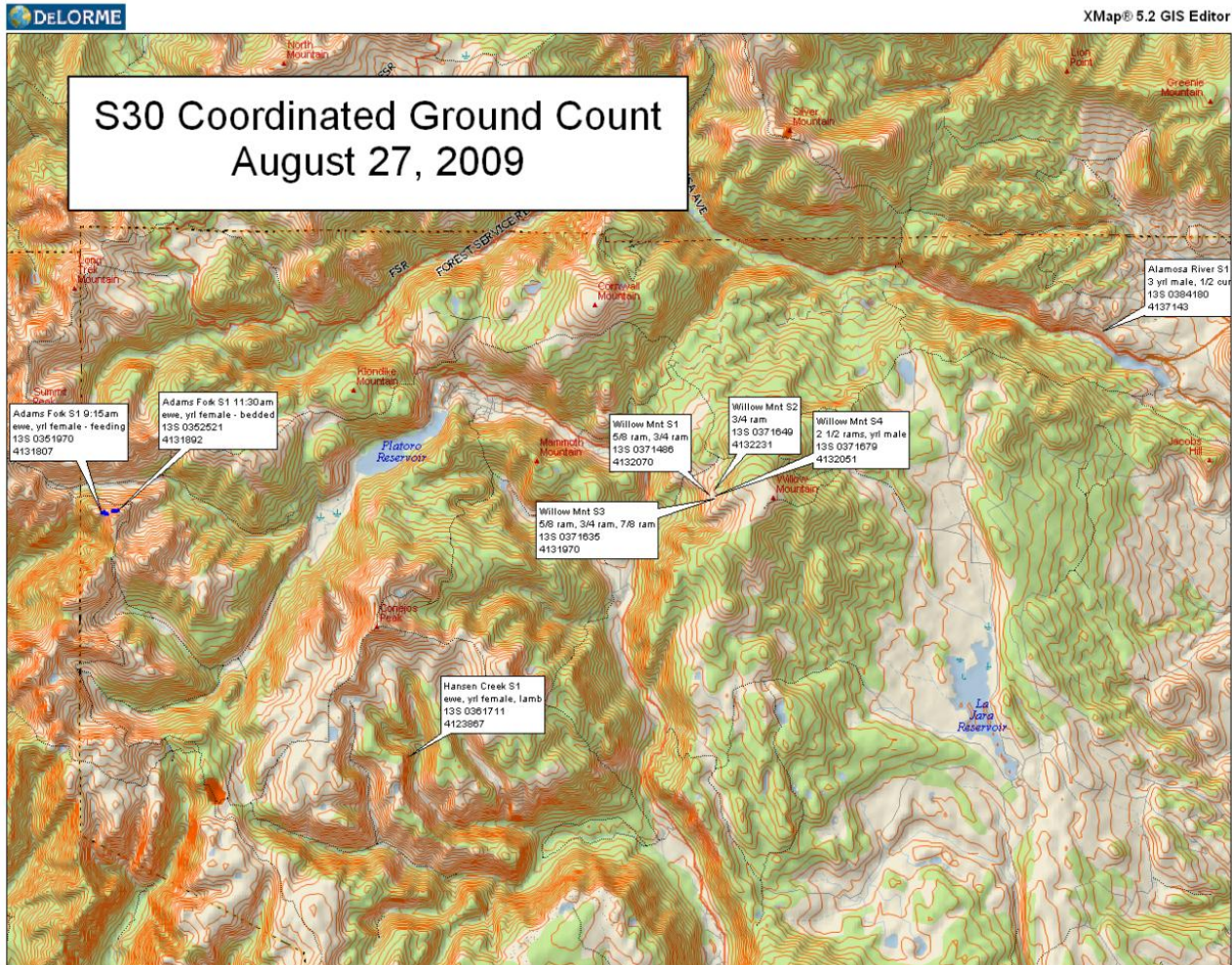
NORTH SAN JUAN ANALYSIS

- ✘ 2006-2010
- ✘ The “issue” becomes more of an ISSUE
- ✘ The Rio Grande National Forest has partnered with the adjacent San Juan National Forest and the Division of wildlife to survey for bighorn sheep (and our location data begins to exponentially increase).
- ✘ Bighorn sheep are located in many places where no one had ever seen them.
- ✘ Bighorn sheep become designated as a regionally sensitive species.
- ✘ Research is getting closer to showing a link between nose to nose contact between bighorns and domestics, and disease transmission.

DATA GATHERING

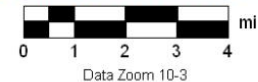


NEW INFORMATION



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BLACK OR WHITE?

- × National Wildlife Federation - Battle for Bighorns
Conservationists are struggling to protect bighorn sheep on public lands from disease-carrying livestock
- × Idaho Statesman – BLM Orders Sheep out of Bighorn Land
- × The Wildlife News - BLM sheep permitting kills another bighorn herd
- × **Sheep v. Sheep** - A legal battle over Hells Canyon grazing could determine the future of wild sheep and sheep ranching across the West

AS A MULTIPLE USE AGENCY, WITH EMERGING DATA, HOW DO WE PROPOSE TO MANAGE THIS?

- ✘ Brought affected parties to the table – sheep grazing permittees, Colorado Division of Wildlife, San Juan National Forest.
- ✘ Focused away from the argument of disease transmission, and towards the goal of physical separation, to avoid even the possibility of any germ transmission or blame to the domestic sheep permittees.
- ✘ Talked about long-term consequences of the issue: potential loss of native bighorn sheep genetics as well as potential loss of sheep grazing heritage.

BASIS FOR PARTNER BUY-IN

- ✘ High data standards - Developed a risk analysis mapping exercise to show where our lowest, moderate, and highest risk of contact occurred across the landscape, working with the little information and resources available.
- ✘ *Flexibility* was built into the process so that changes in the situation/information could be incorporated into management. This remains a key factor for success.
- ✘ Communication - Worked with partners throughout the process, providing honest facts, so that there were no surprises to anyone (permittees, Division of Wildlife, etc.)
- ✘ Focus - Worked towards common goals that everyone could agree with, instead of focusing on conflicting desires that no one could agree on.

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- ✘ In the end, we had a good balance of the public satisfied as dissatisfied, making us feel that we had struck a good balance.
 - ✘ The process we developed began to be recommended for use region-wide.
 - ✘ Wildlife and Range Staff received a regional award for working together through the issue.
 - ✘ We continue to monitor, communicate with all involved parties, and adjust our management to stay true to the decision that was made.
 - ✘ We are managing this issue for the first time ever in this area.

POLITICS STILL MAKING THE NEWS NATIONWIDE

Domestic sheep losing ground to bighorns

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) is trying to fend off environmentalists threatening one quarter of their business. Mike Simpson is making a five-year "time out" from the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) decision to limit sheep grazing in areas where they come in contact with bighorn sheep.

In 2007, environmentalists successfully ended sheep grazing along Idaho's western border, removing 13,000 sheep from the Payette National Forest based on unsubstantiated data that domestic sheep can spread a pneumonia-like disease to bighorns, according to Margaret Soule-Hinson, ASI president.

They are now trying to extend that decision to all public lands where domestic sheep graze. Environmentalists may interest with their wild cousins, the bighorn. This would mean the removal of 45 percent of the sheep that graze on national forests, or 35 percent of all domestic sheep in the country, Soule-Hinson said.

While disease transmission has been documented in forced close confines, it has never been substantiated in the wild. In fact, there have been repeated die-offs of bighorns where there was no contact with domestic sheep.

Despite that, scientists are working on a vaccine that will eradicate the disease. The five-year delay is, in part, to buy more time

for the development of the vaccine. "USDA is working on a vaccine and those five years will buy time for the sheep industry, as well as time to develop new management strategies to keep the domestic sheep from interacting with the bighorns," Peter Orwick, ASI executive director, said.

"Section 443, scheduled to come to the U.S. House of Representatives this month, provides a five-year time out from federal land management regarding domestic sheep grazing to address the bighorn sheep controversy that threatens nearly one quarter of the American sheep industry," Orwick said.

According to Western Watershed Project (WWP) website, bighorn die-offs are caused by domestic sheep spreading pneumonia intermingling with bighorn. While bighorns are not on the endangered species list, or even on the watch list, they easily gain emotional support from environmentalists and advocates ready to champion for a cause.

According to WWP, another obstacle bighorns face is grazing habitat. "Much public land in the West has been deemed unsuitable for bighorn reestablishment, not because bighorns did not historically thrive in these areas, but because of mismanagement by agencies that allow domestic sheep and cattle to over-utilize grasses and forbs on public

land," their website reads. They go on to brag about their success in protecting bighorn sheep in the Hall Canyon and Salmon River areas using litigation to pressure federal agencies.

As the sheep industry continues this battle, it appears that they may be fighting for more than just their industry alone.

Simpson, chairman of the House Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, moved the Interior and Environment Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2012 through committee in July. The bill contains several provisions essential for preserving grazing access to public grazing.

"Diverse grazing practices are vastly different than the ones of the past. The majority of farmers and ranchers recognize that their livelihood depends on a healthy and sustainable environment and the BLM [Bureau of Land Management] and Forest Service do a much better job of weeding out the bad players and protecting sensitive areas," said Simpson.

The bill also addresses Equal Access to Public Act (EAPA) fee payments. "Our ranchers have been under assault by frivolous lawsuits for years, lawsuits that are brought up for no other reason but to obstruct the process in order to protect land and water," said Simpson. "I'm concerned that some groups are bas-

ically funding themselves by blocking BLM, leaving using the government into a cottage industry where taxpayers are the big losers. Our bill shines some light on the BLM process, requiring detailed reports on the amount of program funds used, the names of the fee recipients, and the hourly rates of attorneys and expert witness statements in the applications that was awarded. Until now, this information has not seen the light of day, and the public has a right to know how taxpayer dollars are being used."

Highlights of the bill and report
Grazing: The bill includes language extending the grazing rider that has been in place since fiscal year 1999, which allows BLM to extend existing expiring grazing permits while they complete the environmental work required for 10-year renewals. This language was included in the president's budget request. This bill extends that language for five years.

Also, requested by the administration, the bill expands that language by allowing BLM to transfer permits under the same conditions without re-triggering the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The language will allow BLM to process approximately 2,250 permits per year, fully reducing its permit backlog over four or five years while

focusing on better environmental work.

The bill exempts the process of trailing from NEPA requirements for the years 2011 through 2014. This language will allow ranchers with existing permits to continue moving their cattle to grazing allotments while giving BLM the opportunity to begin including trailing as part of their environmental analysis when renewing permits.

The bill includes language preventing the USFS from applying the grazing rules that eliminate domestic sheep grazing on the Payette National Forest to other forests for five years while the USFS and USDA complete needed research on the impact that domestic sheep have on wild sheep and to continue development of a vaccine to protect bighorn sheep populations from respiratory disease. Research has recently produced an experimental vaccine that shows promise, but work still needs to be done. Although this bighorn sheep population is not endangered, the bill continues current preventive management, including buffer zones between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep. Similar language is included to prevent BLM from implementing similar grazing restrictions.

The bill also includes an increase of \$15 million for BLM Range Management

and a \$10 million increase for Grazing Management on the National Forest System.

Litigation: The bill includes language requiring litigants to exhaust the administrative appeals process before litigating in federal court on grazing issues.

The report also includes language directing the Department of the Interior (DOI), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the USFS to provide the Appropriations Committee with detailed information regarding EAPA payments and to make that information publicly available. The information required includes detailed reports on the amount of program funds used, the names of the fee recipients, the disposition of the applications including any appeal of action taken on the applications, and the hourly rates of attorneys and expert witnesses stated in the applications that was awarded, for all EAPA fee payments awarded as a result of litigation against any of the DOI bureaus, BLM or the USFS, or their respective employees. The report shall also include the amounts, outside of EAPA awards, paid in settlements of such litigation. Such information will also be included with each agency's annual budget submission in the future. —Tom Barthert, WJF Editor

Cronyism: Mike Simpson renews Bighorn Sheep Disease rider in 2013 Interior Appropriations Bill.

On June 21, 2012 By [Ken Cole](#)
Update: June 27, 2012

Congressman Mike Simpson has withdrawn his proposed new rider which the story below is about. He said he is going to try to bring people together in a roundtable soon. He also said his new rider had amplified the rhetoric on the issue which was not what he wanted.

LOCAL SUCCESSES

- ✘ We now are implementing a viable method to balance these multiple uses!
- ✘ Our method is fluid and relies on influx of new information which will therefore likely equal long-term sustainability of this process!
- ✘ All of our partners understand their roles and continue to cooperate towards a solution!
- ✘ The method we are using to manage requires minimal resources to maintain!
- ✘ We were able to develop a process prior to the political pressure becoming more influential than the science and collaboration!

QUESTIONS??

