

**WAFWA Wild Sheep Working Group teleconference
November 9, 2010 (10:00 am – Noon, MST)**

1) WSWG reps on call (N=15): Helen Schwantje (BC), Tom Stephenson (CA), Janet George (CO), Dale Toweill (ID), Tom Carlsen (MT), Bruce Trindle (NE), Mike Cox (NV), Brett Wiedmann (ND), Don Whittaker (OR), Ted Benzon (SD), Clay Brewer (TX), Anis Aoude (UT), Donny Martorello (WA), Kevin Hurley (WY), Tom Rinkes (BLM).

2) WSWG Roster: Kevin mentioned the current WSWG roster, asking for edits and/or updates. Tom Rinkes is now the BLM rep to the WSWG, and with Melanie W.'s detail, Eric Tomasik may be the USFS rep to the WSWG. **Action Item: Kevin will distribute an updated WSWG roster.**

Kevin discussed his current status and planned future, specifically, that after his 2-year position as WGFD BHS Coordinator/WAFWA WSWG Chair ends on 1/31/11, he will go to work ~1/2-time for the Wild Sheep Foundation as their Conservation Director, + ~ 1/3-time for Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, as their Executive Director. Discussion focused on possible replacements as WSWG Chair. Clay indicated he was willing to help as much as he could, but was not in a position to take on the chair role. Eric R. was not on the call, but he and Kevin had held some conversations about this pending vacancy. Mike C. indicated he was willing to pursue further conversations, with his NDoW administration, NV wild sheep NGOs, Kevin, etc., but nothing tangible was in place. From the discussion, it was clear that: a) no one was willing/able to take on another ~50% workload onto their current work schedules; b) no one's agency was likely going to provide them enough "slack" in their work schedules to take on another ~50% workload; and c) if the WSWG is to continue, it might work best to help arrange a part-time paid chair position w/in one of the involved agencies, similar to what Kevin has had with WGFD. **Action Item: Kevin will continue discussions with Jim Karpowitz, Larry Kruckenberg, Mike Cox, Eric Rominger, etc., on potentially continuing a paid, part-time WSWG chair position.**

3) Updates on BHS die-offs in western states: Tom C. stated not much had changed in MT; few/no lambs were evident in 3 herd units; MTFWP has lambs where BHS culling occurred last winter/spring; in the Lost Creek herd @ Anaconda (N=~300), MTFWP removed ~37 BHS (mostly ♀, some ♂); based on current monitoring, this situation looks grim, and pneumonia appears to be spreading; MTFWP has seen continued mortality this summer @ Bonner herd; MTFWP characterizes the Skalkaho herd die-off as a "non-event", with lamb ratios still in the 40s:100♀; MT feels they have 4 other BHS herds that could be impacted by pneumonia; there are 9 sub-herds in this metapopulation; *M. ovipneumoniae* has been documented, via PCR analysis; no known contact with DS/DG @ Lost Creek herd, but this sub-herd is not all that far from the involved Rock Creek BHS herds that experienced pneumonia die-offs this past winter/spring, and interchange could have happened.

In NV, Mike C. advised of continued BHS mortality; 2 radiocollared ♀ died this summer; more BH S were seen w/ runny noses ~2 weeks ago; during a July 2010 flight, NDoW classified ~15 BHS total, in 2 herds, and estimated BHS #s have declined from ~500 to ~30 head; NDoW is continuing to collect nasal and cranial swabs from harvested rams; no new info on cause of pneumonia; NDoW did NOT meet w/ DS permittee, due to the political climate in NV; this summer, NV had a disease event in an inter-state, shared BHS herd with UT (Lepy Hills/Pilot Mtn, N=~60-80); found *M. ovi*; also found *Mannheimia*;

4) Payette NF update: Tom R. stated there would be an appeal resolution meeting in Boise on Dec. 14th; all appellants (N=8 individuals/groups) have been invited to attend/participate; IDFG and BLM will likely attend; ODFW and WDFW also expected to attend; Suzanne Rainville/PNF Supv., hopes to resolve some appeal points, but litigation is likely after an appeal decision is rendered; no new add'l appeals have been rec'd [Footnote: the Ada County Sportsmen's Association has submitted a 9th appeal, during the subsequent appeal window]; timeline to finalize appeal decision by Regional Forester Harv Forsgren is ~Feb. 9th, then 30 day period to appeal that decision to USFS Chief; ID BLM plans to apply PNF modeling across ID over the next year, starting in W central ID, then eastern ID; as far as policy updates, Tom R. advised BLM is supposed to come up w/ a draft manual supplement before end of calendar year 2010; it is anticipated this BLM policy will closely align w/ USFS policy, and address viability; Tom C. asked Tom R. if this BLM policy revision would be for ID, or westwide? Tom R. replied westwide; Dale T. mentioned the Nez Perce treaty rights, and the role those might play in PNF decision.

5) WAFWA WSWG/WHC reps meeting with USDA/APHIS/Veterinary Services on importation of BHS from Canada, during USAHA meeting in Minneapolis, MN

Kevin recounted discussions from late September/early October w/ Bruce Trindle/NEGPC, Mike Cox/NDoW, and Dr. Kristin Mansfield/WDFW, concerning USDA/Vet Services complete ban on importation of sheep and goats from Canada; both NE and NV have had discussions w/ Jim Allen in AB, about possibly obtaining Cadomin Mine BHS, for Xplant purposes; since a "mad cow/BSE" scare ~8 years ago, there has been a complete ban on importing any sheep and/or goats from Canada, which precludes bringing in BHS, as well; discussions have been held w/ Dr. Peter Merrill (Assistant Director, National Center for Live Animal Imports) and his staff from Riverdale, MD, and an evening meeting is planned for Nov. 15th, in Minneapolis, MN, during the USAHA meeting. Representing WAFWA WSWG and WHC will be Bruce Trindle/NEGPC, Dr. Colin Gillin/ODFW, Dr. Peri Wolff/NDoW, possibly Dr. Mark Drew/IDFG, possibly others; while arranging this meeting, Kevin is unable to attend, due to a conflict [Footnote: Dr. Jennifer Ramsey/Neil Anderson/MTFWP, Leslie McFarlane/UDWR, and others participated in this meeting]; purpose of the meeting is to lay out for USDA/VS the protocols, herd health histories, disease testing/monitoring, radiocollaring/subsequent monitoring of released BHS, etc. that western game and fish agencies typically follow, w/ a wild sheep transplant; in Eric's absence, Kevin briefed the WSWG on New Mexico Game & Fish's efforts to bring in 10 desert BH ♂ from CEMEX in Mexico, for their Red Rocks captive breeding facility, and the protocols/requirements USDA/VS is making NMDGF go through; Clay pointed out that USDA/VS requirements may have aided TX in keeping some wealthy private landowners from importing desert BHS from MX into TX; Clay recommended stressing to the USDA/VS folks the difference between a fish and game agency importation vs. a private landowner/entity importation.

6) Kevin briefed the WSWG on the schedule for the WAFWA Directors winter meeting in Tucson, AZ, mentioned the concept of some sort of BHS/DS workshop during the ASI convention in Reno, NV the 3rd week in January, and reminded WSWG reps of the February 8-9th WSWG meeting in Reno, just prior to the Wild Sheep Foundation convention.

7) GIS Mapping project of all Wild Sheep translocations in U.S. and Canada: Kevin reminded WSWG reps to continue to send their wild sheep transplant data/corrections to Richard Jones, so this project can continue moving forward.

8) Round Robin Discussion: Clay reported that TXPWD would be moving ~100 BHS in ~3 weeks (Dec. 1-10), near Big Bend National Park; Mike C. applauded the efforts of the WSWG to date, and encouraged its continuation; Tom S. pointed out some difficulties CADFG had had w/ doing BHS capture work in designated wilderness; Mike C. pointed out that NDoW had been able, in the past 5 years, to conduct BHS captures/wilderness entries w/ minimal red tape, but acknowledged that this is a more difficult issue now; USFS expedited permission for NDoW to net-gun BHS in wilderness areas last winter, during NV's BHS die-offs; Dale T. mentioned difficulties with the ID situation, with IDFG wanting to do helicopter-darting of wolves in wilderness areas; Tom S. pointed out that Vern Bleich was prophetic when he railed about wilderness designations handicapping wildlife management activities by state G&F agencies; T&E species designation may help obtain permission/allowances in wilderness for certain actions, but the overall mandate of wildlife conservation/management can be hindered, by same; **Action Item: Kevin pointed out a WAFWA document (chaired by John Kennedy) that dealt w/ fish and wildlife management in wilderness; Kevin will locate/distribute that report.**

9) Closing Comments and Adjourn: Kevin thanked everyone for their efforts on behalf of wild sheep, and for participating in today's WSWG teleconference; call adjourned 1205 hours.