

WAFWA Wild Sheep Working Group Meeting
Hood River Inn, Oregon [in conjunction with 2010 NWSGC Symposium]
June 8, 2010 (7:30-9:30 pm)

WSWG Participants (N=13): Helen Schwantje (BC), Janet George (CO), Dale Toweill (ID), Tom Carlsen (MT), Todd Nordeen [for Bruce Trindle] (NE), Mike Cox (NV), Eric Rominger (NM), Brett Wiedmann (ND), Don Whittaker (OR), Ted Benzon (SD), Anis Aoude (UT), Kevin Hurley (WY), Melanie Woolever (USFS)

Unable to Participate (N=8): Becky Schwanke (AK), Jim Allen (AB), Bob Henry (AZ), Tom Stephenson (CA), Clay Brewer (TX), Donny Martorello (WA), Troy Hegel (YK), Amy Krause (BLM)

More than a dozen other folks sat in on portions or all of this WSWG meeting, although they didn't all sign the attendance sheet. Those who did: Jon Jorgensen (AB), Kirby Smith (AB), Vic Coggins (OR), Justin Paugh (MT), Brent Lonner (MT), Ray Vinkey (MT), Bill Wishart (AB), Vern Bleich (ND), Neil Thagard (WY).

Kevin distributed an agenda, and routed the WSWG roster, asking for any updates/edits in contact information; *Kevin will send out an updated roster*. Kevin briefly discussed the WSWG List/Status of Action Items, and asked everyone to please check this list, to help him keep this current.

GIS mapping project for all wild sheep translocations: Richard Jones is working for us to put together GIS maps. Kevin distributed Richard's most recent status/assessment (June 2, 2010) of where each WAFWA jurisdiction was with their mapping and data. Richard is also creating a master database, which *Kevin will distribute to the WSWG*, so they can see progress. Richard is also doing quality control (i.e., highlighting errant or non-matching records, etc.) and may be back in contact with individual jurisdictions, if necessary. Kevin said it is OK to trickle information to Richard; he will work on it, as data are received. Kevin said he and Richard still need to hear from the WAFWA jurisdictions if what Richard sent out prior to Christmas 2009 is/was correct.

GIS Mapping-Domestic sheep allotments and bighorn sheep distribution: at the February 2010 WSWG meeting in Reno, Melanie handed out maps for N=14 western states, to be proofed/corrected/edited/returned to her; to date, she hasn't heard from anyone. Kevin showed a copy of the Wyoming map as an example. Melanie said that one of the primary areas to check is bighorn sheep distributions along state boundaries (i.e., "edge-matching"). There are several cases where sheep distributions abruptly change at stateliness, which is not realistic. Melanie really needs this done because edge problems reflect on credibility of the overall map. Mike Cox said they were having a statewide coordination meeting with BLM because several grazing allotments are no longer permitted but still appear on the map. BLM is supportive in Nevada and will get it reviewed this summer. Tom Carlsen said Montana's map is OK. South Dakota has an area adjacent to Wyoming that shows a BLM allotment; this needs attention. Several states commented the map was useful. Dale T. already sent most corrections in, but still has a couple spots with Montana and Oregon needing attention. Some state maps still show allotments that haven't been grazed in years and state office is trying to correct. BLM doesn't distinguish between active and vacant allotments like USFS does. Getting the proofing and corrections complete is important; *the WSWG set a new deadline of August 1st for map edits back to Melanie*. Someone suggested that the purple areas on the map legend should be referred to as bighorn sheep "distribution" not "occupied habitat". Distribution should include all movement areas and corridors even if bighorn sheep move through those areas quickly.

Payette NF update: Melanie said that the PNF is working on the final edits. The resulting document will receive a USFS-wide internal review on June 20. Melanie expects the final document will be out around the end of July. There probably won't be an electronic distribution. What happens when it hits the street? Western Watersheds Project (WWP) has been forthcoming and says they will file injunctions on all domestic sheep grazing allotments within the 'purple polygons' in Idaho (N=~14). Once the PNF decision is out, the rumor in Nevada, Idaho, and Utah is that the USFS will not allow domestic sheep grazing in habitat occupied by bighorn sheep; Melanie doubts that will happen, because NEPA analysis is required to close any grazing allotment.

Revision of WAFWA 2007 document *Recommendations for Management of Domestic Sheep and Goats in Wild Sheep Habitats*: Kevin said that the goal was to have the WAFWA Directors approve the revised document at their July 21, 2010 meeting in Anchorage, AK. *Kevin will take the comments he received in April and May, and send a final draft*

for the WAFWA Directors to Larry Kruckenberg and Jim Karpowitz by June 21st. Kevin also said there is a manuscript that has been accepted to JWD describing an instance in Colorado where cattle may have been involved in disease transfer to bighorns; Kevin asked Janet to elaborate. The situation occurred during particularly severe winter conditions when bighorn sheep were on a feed line with cattle. A pneumonia outbreak occurred in the bighorns, with most of the bighorn herd dying. The landowner/cattle producer was cooperative, and testing indicated that pathogen transfer between bighorn and cattle likely occurred. Based on this and other anecdotal reports, Colorado had sent recommended edits to the WAWFA guidelines that recognize some risk, although much lower, from domestic ruminants other than sheep and goats. Representatives of the other states and provinces were not supportive of including references to cattle in the WAWFA guidelines. Some in the WSWG asked if there were other literature citations. Melanie suggested that the wording may be edited to make it acceptable to all. *Several members of the WSWG asked if they could have a copy of the draft manuscript; Janet will ask Drs. Wolfe and Miller. [Footnote: on 6/13/10, Janet G. e-mailed the WSWG with a copy of this draft manuscript, along with CDoW's suggested wording/edits on the WAFWA Guidelines report].*

Summer WAFWA meeting – July 18, 2010: Kevin asked who would be able to attend the AK meeting. Kevin and Melanie would be attending, but no one else thought they could; Kevin pointed out that some WAFWA jurisdictions might have agency reps sit in (i.e., “pinch-hit”) on the WSWG meeting. *Kevin will report to the WAFWA Directors at the business meeting on 7/21/10 and handed out a draft agenda that he needs to return to Larry Kruckenberg no later than June 17th*. Kevin hopes to hear a decision on whether the WSWG chair would be funded again; he has provided Jim Karpowitz with a summary of hoped-for agency funding (i.e., assessments). Kevin reminded everyone that 17 WAFWA agencies each contributed \$3,000/year, for 2 years, for the first 24-month position, + funds from WGFD and 9 wild sheep NGOs.

Round Robin:

NE – Working on a bighorn sheep management plan. They are looking at a possible new transplant site 60 miles E of current distribution, and it would be on completely private land. They are looking at ways to minimize the risk of interaction with domestic sheep and goats.

NM – Now that desert bighorn numbers have increased within the state, they are trying to completely delist and return desert BHS to game species status.

BC – still some problems with domestic and wild sheep interactions. British Columbia has completed and distributed a mountain goat management plan.

OR – Wind power is a concern due to increasing number of wind stations/transmission lines. Other states are also seeing growth in wind energy exploration/development, and there is little information available to predict impacts to bighorns.

ND – Oil industry growth. Lots of new discoveries in BHS habitat. They are trying to protect BHS lambing areas.

CO – Have issues with road kills in a few BHS herds, and would like any information from the WSWG on ways to mitigate. Also experiencing low lamb recruitment in several herds, even though there is no evidence of adult disease mortality such as a die-off.

Jim Heffelfinger/AZGFD requested some long term data sets on male harvest for wild sheep and mountain goats; *Kevin will follow up.*