

WAFWA Wild Sheep Working Group
July 12, 2008
Ramkota Inn, Badlands Room
Rapid City, SD
(minutes by John Kanta, edited by Kevin Hurley)

Introductions (meeting began at 8:05 AM)

Roster Accuracy (any changes in group composition/any edits to contact information?) No, and minor edits.

Kevin will resend updated roster.

- Attendees: Becky S., Jim A., Bob H., Bruce W., Dale T., Bruce T., Mike C., Eric R., Ted B., Calvin R., Anis A., Kevin H., Amy K., Melanie W. Jim K. off-and-on thru the day; all but 7 WSWG reps (i.e., Brett, Tom S., Tom C., Don, Jean, Donny, Helen) were able to attend. Kevin reported what he had heard from people who could not attend; budgetary restrictions on travel seemed to be the main reason folks could not attend. Brett W. (ND) is not able to attend, due to possible BHS die-off. Various guests/visitors came and went through the day. Tammy Scott attended the entire day.

Target Audience (revisit/reminder who we're working for)

- Kevin stated that first and foremost, we're working for the WAFWA agencies
- Mike C. stated that, in the in the end, we're targeting a bigger audience than just WAFWA

Participation from outside the WAFWA agencies (e.g., wild sheep NGOs, tribal reps, etc.)

- Kevin reminded the WSWG that, ultimately, we should actively dialog with WS NGO's and tribal/first nation entities, as they play a major part in wild sheep management

Glen Contreras (USFS) will send contact info for the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society to Kevin.

- Kevin stated that these were open meetings, and other folks were certainly welcome to sit in, observe, ask questions, etc.

Statement of Purpose & Structure

- Kevin handed out a draft for the WSWG to review. It is a requirement for WAFWA working groups to have one of these, and it is made available multiple places. The WSWG reviewed this, and made some suggested edits. Kevin will present this revised draft to the Directors at Wednesday's Business Meeting. **[Footnote: this Purpose & Structure was approved by the Directors on 7/16/08]**

WAFWA WILD SHEEP WORKING GROUP (WSWG)

Statement of Purpose and Structure

(Draft: July 12, 2008)

"To identify priority topics and management challenges to wild sheep in the western U.S. and Canada; to collaboratively develop solutions to those challenges; and to foster strong relationships between wild sheep agencies and wild sheep advocates."

Formed in January 2007, the WSWG was tasked with developing a comprehensive, west-wide assessment of all facets of wild sheep management in the western U.S. and Canada. The initial assignment was to develop WAFWA recommendations for management of domestic sheep and goats in wild sheep habitat.

The WSWG is comprised of a representative from each WAFWA state, province, and territory (N=19) with wild sheep, plus representatives from the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The WSWG meets twice/year, in conjunction with the WAFWA summer meeting and the Wild Sheep Foundation (formerly Foundation for North American Wild Sheep – FNAWS) annual convention.

Draft Problem Statements/Accompanying GIS Maps

- Kevin hopes to receive validation of the Topics/Priorities from WAFWA Directors at 7/16/08 Business Meeting **[Footnote: Directors endorsed our Topics/Priorities on 7/16/08]**

Combination/Reconfiguration of Problem Statements?

- Dale suggested combining topics and working together as an entire group, to write a “white paper” on each of the major topics
 - Anis suggested that we can boil it down to three topics (Predation, Habitat, Disease)
 - Kevin suggested that Disease did not necessarily need to be at the top of the list, since it was largely (but not completely) addressed by WSWG #1 [**Footnote: at the 7/15/08 WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee (WHC) meeting, Colin Gillin (ODFW) gave an update on the WS biomedical protocols which were identified in the WSWG #1 report; tentative completion date by July 2009. And, as an action item, the WHC moved to complete a literature synthesis/report on wild sheep diseases, other than pasteurellosis, including recommendations to the WAFWA agencies. Motion passed. Colin will lead this effort, but will visit w/ Mike Miller and others, to see what’s already available. Directors endorsed this action item from the WHC on 7/16/08]**]
 - Habitat and Human Impact, Predation, Disease were identified as the three major topics
 - Adequacy of Funding & Staffing will be a stand-alone topic; Kevin will continue to work on that one
 - Becky reiterated her earlier comment that the Funding & Staffing problem statement should include hard data on WS-related income, license/hunting demand, etc.
 - Melanie suggested tackling each topic one at a time, with the whole group working on a single topic. Do one topic, then move to the next one. Suggested spending 1.5-2 days, face-to-face, discussing one topic and fleshing it out
 - Kevin recommended Habitat and Human Impacts be the first topic to cover, since it will be the big one
 - From the distilled list of 11 topics, it was recommended to combine #1,2,7 and 9 into Habitat and Human Impacts topic
 - Bruce and Anis suggested adding Harvest Strategies and Population Management as another topic
- Using Becky’s template, Kevin will send a table out asking each WSWG rep. to enter wild sheep revenue information; to be returned to Kevin no later than September 1.**

Revising Priority Ranking maps

- Lengthy discussion ensued as to how these maps were initially developed. These were a hurried-up, stand-alone effort, basically done by each WSWG rep without input/feedback/discussion with other WSWG reps.
- Amy questioned how a new reader would understand what these maps were trying to show; she suggested some sort of “Methods” section/summary, to better explain development of these maps
- For the federal LM agencies, Melanie stated they would like to have some assurance that the explanations are representative of a collective agency position, not just one person’s individual opinion
- Kevin discussed how he had solicited add’l input/feedback from his agency on his original rankings. And, he mentioned how he had also solicited input from Wyoming FNAWS, and gotten their rankings, as well.
- Mike stated that we may be sending mixed messages with the maps; for example, if an issue was ranked 7 out of 7, could that be interpreted to mean that issue wasn’t important in that jurisdiction?
- Melanie thought that the reason WY was a lighter green for domestic sheep issues was because of the money WY-FNAWS et al. have spent addressing DS allotments in WY
- The group felt that the maps may misrepresent issues for people (both inside and outside the WAFWA agencies) who are not in this WSWG and who don’t fully understand what we’re trying to portray
- Further discussion on the need for individual jurisdictional explanations to clarify how and why each jurisdiction ranked these 7 topics the way they did
- Melanie felt that the maps were based on an individual state/province/territory ranking and the federal LM agencies (USFS, BLM) should not necessarily weigh in with their rankings, since they have to span state boundaries and look at the big picture
- Melanie encouraged an explanation of how each state decided to rank these 7 topics
- Anis stated that we do not necessarily need to solicit WS NGO input and jointly prioritize these issues, as the maps should depict how each jurisdiction’s wildlife agency deals with their WS management issues

- Dale stated that we welcome the input of the federal LM agencies, but believed this would be a state/province/territory report, in the end
- Mike suggested that we go back and define each topic. Explain how each jurisdiction ranked these 7 topics the way they did
- Ted suggested that we explain what we can do “short-term” vs. “long-term”, and explain how that might have affected the rankings
- The biggest problem that the WSWG sees is that each jurisdiction may have taken a different approach than the others

No later than September 1, each jurisdiction should solicit their collective agency prioritization of these 7 high-priority issues; send the revised rankings to Becky by that date, and she will revise the GIS maps, and send them back out to the WSWG. Also no later than September 1, each state/province/territory WSWG rep should send Kevin a ≤ 1-page explanation of how/why these 7 high-priority topics are important to each jurisdiction; Kevin will send a complete set of these back out to the group.

- The group agreed that development of an outline for the “Habitat and Human Impacts” white paper be routed, then people would either volunteer or be assigned to write portions of that white paper

Kevin will draft an outline for the Habitat and Human Impacts white paper, and send it out to the WSWG by September 1. Comments/suggestions on this outline should be sent back to Kevin no later than October 1. Kevin will then try to get a revised outline back to the group the first week of October.

- Melanie suggested that the group do a videoconference. Discussion ensued about the ability to do crossover video conferencing between state/province/territorial and federal LM agency VC equipment.
- Melanie will check in to the feasibility of having a videoconference via multiple IT systems. If that’s not possible, folks might have to get to their nearest USFS Supervisor’s Office, or possibly BLM office, if federal agency VC equipment is compatible. Kevin asked everyone to check with their own IT people, to see if the WSWG can videoconference across agencies. Tentatively set for either Nov. 4 or Nov. 21, 2008; please mark your calendars.**

<Broke for Lunch>

WSWG discussion on management of domestic sheep and goats in WS habitat with USFS (Ann Zimmerman, Gene DeGayner, Glen Contreras) and BLM (Dwight Fielder)

- Payette NF (ID) working on EIS – lists the WAFWA guidelines as an important document being used to help achieve “separation” between DS/DG and WS
- USFS is working on modifying national-level policies; both Payette Principles and WAFWA guidelines are being used as the basis for USFS policy update/revision
- USFS working with BLM on this issue – trying to collaborate, and trying to get some uniformity in their policy-level approaches
- USFS and BLM also working with the DS industry, to develop best management practices for DS/DG, to help achieve separation; [link included here, for reference]:
http://sheepindustrynews.org/?page=site/text&nav_id=9d43e4c889b801781c0ed985fc7fb87c&PHPSESSID=8f887e0a09379b6a56fd37b6eddb956e
- Mike stated that some of the NV BLM field offices have received copies of the WAFWA guidelines and they are doing their best to follow the guidelines; others have not, or are not doing so
- Eric thought that the BLM and USFS wildlife biologists were more in tune with the guidelines than their agency’s range conservationists
- Ann stated that the USFS has broadened the mapping effort on DS allotments and occupied WS range; they’re trying to determine land use patterns in relation to WS and DS/DG
- Glen has recently retired, but has been hired back to work on this mapping effort, to try to put together a comprehensive picture of what’s going on with federal land DS/DG allotments, private base properties, etc. that might have an effect on WS; report due by the end of October 2008

- Melanie gave an update on the state-by-state mapping effort and the hard copy paper maps she gave everyone to work on back in early February. She has not gotten everyone's updated information returned to her and Janice Wilson, her GIS person. Melanie and Janice have both been pulled off to work on some different projects, so has not had, or spent, the needed time. Melanie desperately needs the state-by-state updates so she can get her GIS person back on it, who is somewhat more available now. Melanie has a very short turnaround time on this, to get these updated maps to Glen for his effort, which is due by the end of October.

Kevin will send out an email to remind everyone to send their map data (showing DS/DG allotments on USFS lands compared to occupied WS ranges) back to Melanie as soon as possible; she is under an extremely short deadline for this information. Each state received a hard copy map at the SLC meeting in February to proof.

- Glen stated that the USFS WO Range staff has been pulling their information together, as well
- Mike showed a GIS example from NV of what the results of the mapping effort will look like, showing BLM and USFS DS allotments, overlaid with occupied and potential WS habitat in NV
- Dale gave an IDFG update on the Payette NF situation and pending decision. Based on direction from Gov. Otter, Idaho developed an Interim Policy to work toward separation and minimize risk of contact.

Dale suggested that the WSWG needs to look at the Payette NF document to insure accurate reflection of recommendations in our initial report to avoid DS/WS interactions. Dale will notify the WSWG when the Payette NF SEIS is out for review.

<At 2:00 PM, Kevin (+ 6 WSWG reps, including Jim K.) gave a brief presentation to WAFWA Wildlife Chiefs meeting. Kevin requested the Wildlife Chiefs to support their agency's WSWG rep's participation in our effort, and to also support travel for the 2 meetings/year which the WSWG holds>

After the Wildlife Chiefs presentation, and with Jim K. in attendance, discussion ensued as to a conceptual 2-year, ½-time WAFWA WSWG Chair position. Kevin said that the Wyoming Game and Fish Department was willing to commit Kevin to spending half his time working on WAFWA WS matters, and the other half on bighorn sheep matters in Wyoming, providing that 80% of the funding for this position could be raised from outside WGFD. Kevin reported that to date, ~\$110,000 had been conditionally committed by various FNAWS chapters (i.e., Wyoming, Eastern, Iowa, MN/WI, Utah), and discussions were ongoing with several more FNAWS Chapters and Affiliates.

Jim K. and Alan Clark (UTDWR Assistant Director) will be giving a presentation to the WAFWA Director's Business Meeting on 7/16/08, to see if any of the WAFWA agencies could contribute toward this conceptual position. Kevin reported that he has a 9/1/08 deadline to raise this \$\$ and report back to WGFD Administration. The WSWG largely supported this concept, but some concern was expressed about possible reduced project funding available from the FNAWS/WSF network if some of their funds went towards this type of salary, rather than on-the-ground projects. Overall, there was agreement that all the WSWG agency reps were very busy, and were pulling extra duty, additive work assignments (e.g., this WSWG), and couldn't devote much time to this WSWG. It was agreed that more would get done with someone focused on this effort, on behalf of all the WSWG reps. Kevin will keep the WSWG posted as to progress. **[Footnote: at their 7/16/08 Business Meeting, the WAFWA Directors discussed a possible agency assessment of \$3,000/year, X 2 years, to help fund this WAFWA WSWG Chair position. Several directors felt that they did not have enough advance notice of this assessment request, and the collective opinion was that further background information needed to be provided to the Directors before they could support/agree to an assessment. It was brought up that WAFWA needed to have a larger discussion about assessments for various WAFWA priorities. While it was acknowledged that wild sheep are a priority for WAFWA, there were also other pending assessments, and these were getting more commonplace. However, several directors offered that their agencies could voluntarily support this WS cost-share arrangement, without a mandatory assessment. Kevin will draft a letter for Jim Karpowitz to send to the WAFWA Directors, seeking voluntary contributions to this conceptual position].**

Possible Products/Appendices for the WSWG

- Population Estimates/Status, by Jurisdiction; Bruce recommended these include pop. trends, thru time
- Eric generated a west-wide population estimates table, and has that information already; Eric suggested that the population estimates be put as an appendix to the WAFWA document
- Kevin suggested links to all the jurisdictional WS Management Plans be ultimately put on the WAFWA WSWG website, if he can figure out who/how to get that done with WAFWA's webmaster
Kevin asked everyone to send him a link to their WS management plans if they have them.

Harvest Strategy Summary (output from Feb. 2008 FNAWS Wildlife Professional's Meeting – Eric)

- Eric is about 75% done with this summary and the 2 papers which will go into the 2008 NWSGC Proceedings; he will submit those papers to the Utah editors soon.

WS Translocation GIS Maps – Kevin

- Kevin has found a community college student and his professor willing to continue with this mapping/GIS effort. Kevin would like to ultimately get this to a web-based system, either on the WAFWA WSWG website, the Wild Sheep Foundation website, or elsewhere. Kevin has located ~\$5,000 to go towards this project; Tammy Scott is also trying to line up \$3-5,000 from various WS NGO sources, as well. As Chair of the DBC Tech Council, Ray Lee had offered to work on getting this data from DBC states.
- Kevin handed out draft GIS maps (from 2006) that displayed WS translocations (inter- and intra-jurisdictional) documented in the 1996 NWSGC Proceedings from Silverthorne, CO. Kevin asked those present to please review those rough maps for accuracy.

Kevin needs more current information (post-1996) from the northern states and provinces, as well all the desert bighorn translocation data. Kevin will follow up with Ray Lee and the DBC. By November 1, please provide Kevin (at a minimum) with Date of Capture, Capture Location, Release Site Location, and Number of Sheep translocated. Site data should be in UTM's or LatLong (decimal degrees, please). Please send the data to Kevin in tabular form; with all the differences in GIS programs, it is easier to compile with tabular data rather than shapefiles. Kevin will check with his IT guy on how to convert cadastral survey data (T,R,S) to LatLongs.

- Tammy suggested coming up with a new brochure on DS/DG and WS interactions. Dale suggested a brochure/pamphlet of the WAFWA recommendations, written in popular format. Kevin discussed seminars or presentations at the WSF Annual Convention, chapter/affiliate conventions, etc.; Dale suggested poster presentations might also be appropriate. In a brainstorming session, Kevin wondered if someone like Doug Chadwick (old mountain goat researcher from MT) and current writer for National Geographic magazine might have interest in doing an article on wild sheep.

Miscellaneous Topics

- Kevin will give an update/report to the WAFWA Directors at their January 2009 Winter Meeting in San Francisco, CA (or ask Jim K. to give that report, since he'd already be going to that meeting) Discussion ensued as to the 2009 Wild Sheep Foundation's Wildlife Professional's Meeting in SLC, UT; Kevin went through the tentative schedule of dates for the WSF Annual Convention. Since Dale and Vern Bleich are chairing this 2009 meeting (on Viability, Connectivity, Habitat Fragmentation), this will dovetail nicely into what the WSWG is doing. **It was agreed, to maximize attendance just prior to the convention opening at noon that day, that the Wildlife Professional's Meeting will be held the morning of Thursday Feb. 5, 2009; Kevin will check with the WSF HQ in Cody, to make room reservation arrangements.**
- **Following resolution of the WSF Wildlife Professional's Meeting date, it was discussed and agreed that this WAFWA WSWG would meet all day Wed. February 4, 2009 in Salt Lake City, UT; Kevin will make the necessary arrangements with the Wild Sheep Foundation. Kevin is also going to encourage the WAFWA Directors and Wildlife Chiefs to support their agency reps attendance at**

these 2X/year meetings. [Footnote: at their 7/16/08 Business Meeting, the Directors did not necessarily commit to sending their agency WSWG reps to 2 meetings/year, given the reality of agency budgets and escalating travel costs. However, the point was made that designation of agency reps to these various WAFWA working groups necessitated time, and travel support, for their personnel.]

- Folks should anticipate (and begin travel requests) to attend the WAFWA 2009 Summer Meeting in Long Beach/Newport Beach, CA, again for 1- to 1.5-day WSWG meeting. Meeting dates are July 9-16, 2009; specific dates/details for the WSWG meeting will be determined at a later date.
- Kevin told the WSWG that he had been selected to receive the “WAFWA Outstanding Contributor of the Year Award” for 2008, ostensibly for the efforts of WSWG #1 and the significant report that was produced by that initial group. Kevin clearly acknowledged and individually recognized, both at this meeting and at the Awards Banquet, that this award was deserved by all participants in both WS working groups.

Meeting adjourned at 1700 hours.

[Minutes edited by Kevin Hurley; 7/20/08]