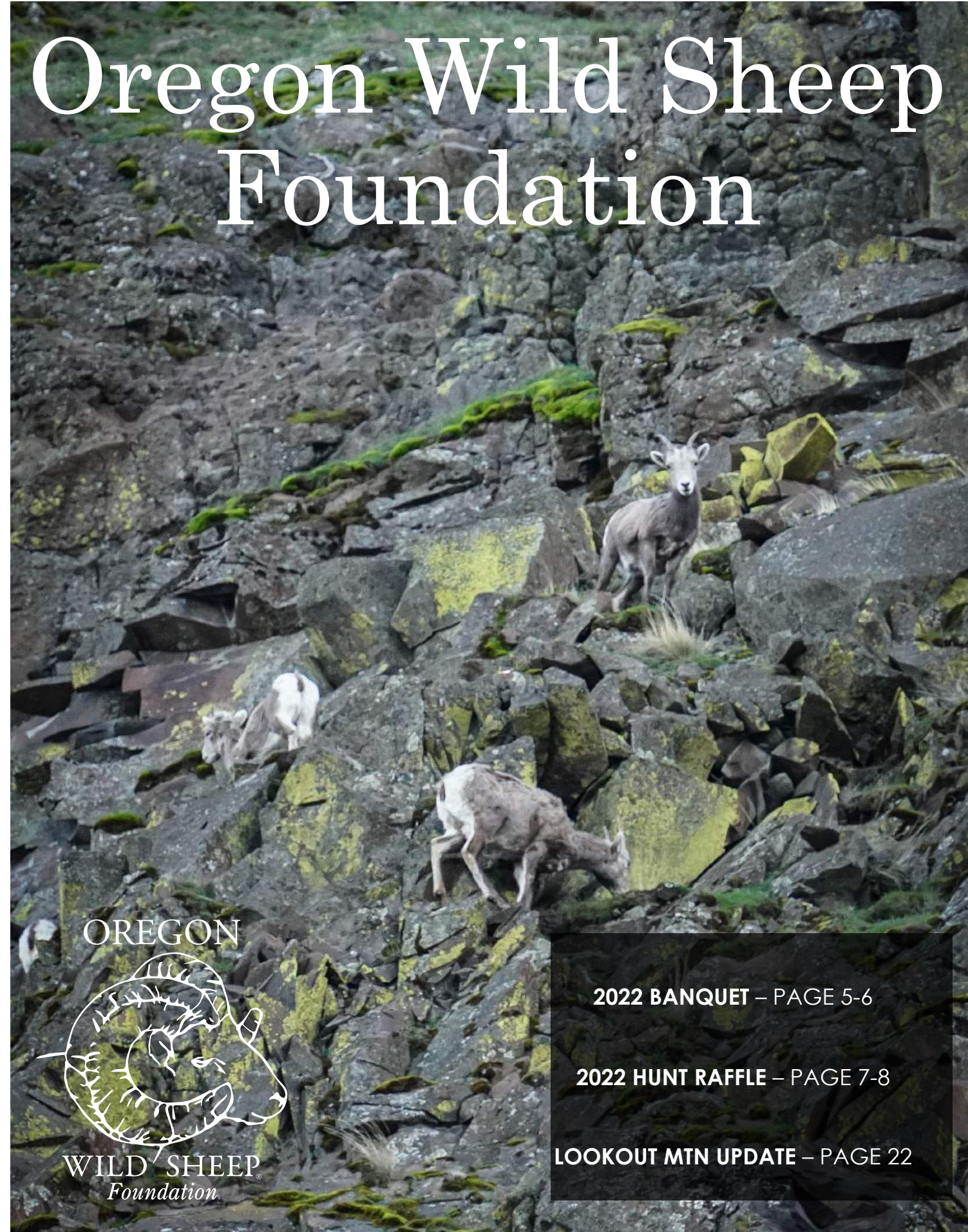


Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation



OREGON



WILD SHEEP
Foundation

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SPRING 2022

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3 President's Message

WALTER CHUCK



OR-WSF had not been back to Central Oregon for quite sometime and held our first Banquet Fundraiser since 2019, it was great to see a room full of friends old and new. We sold out the event a month early and even with an increase of almost 100 attendees. Preliminary reports have this being one of our best events for total funds raised yet. The only downside is that it looks like we have already outgrown this venue and will have to look for a larger one to host our next event in the same general area. This event was a great success due to the hard work of the Banquet Committee and Board members.

We did have some bad news these last few months with the loss of 2 of our founding board members Linda South and Lee Martin. Linda was a dedicated and hardworking member of the board serving as Membership Chair for many years and running the registration table at our banquets. She will be sorely missed. Lee Martin and his family have been big supporters of Oregon WSA/FNAWS. Lee was a past president and huge advocate for Oregon Bighorn Sheep and his community. Besides being founding members they both put in many hours of volunteering and applied for Bighorn Sheep tags for many years and never drew a tag. Linda and Lee are great examples of the dedication and passion of the Sheep Community. We miss them both.

Our next event is the Bighorn Sheep and Goat Workshop on 7/16 at the Dalles Readiness Center where we will get to work with this years' Sheep and Goat tag holders. We have been hosting this event with ODFW Staff for over 15 years and it is a great opportunity to educate people about Sheep and Goats and our mission. The Workshop is open to anyone wishing to attend.

Don't forget to put in for those Sheep and Goat Hunts!

Walter Chuck

ORWSF President

5 | 2022 Annual Banquet

Shane Byerly



After much preparation and anticipation, we hosted our 21st annual banquet on April 30th in Redmond, OR at Eagle Crest Resort. We sold out the banquet with 300-person capacity and raised record funds that will go directly towards wild sheep and mountain goat conservation here in Oregon. Total sales were over \$150,000 and profit from the event of \$100,000 that goes directly back into the bighorn sheep and mountain goats here in Oregon.

We gave away over 30 guns and bows through raffles, wall of guns, Sam Mason raffle, Rack of Purses and the live auction. Auction highlights consisted of the Oregon Statewide Mountain Goat tag, fishing trips, hunts, banquet rifle and more.

We want to thank all of you members and guest who attended the banquet to help us raise money to put and keep sheep on the mountain. We look forward to many more in person events and hope to have you all join us in 2023 for the 22nd annual banquet. More information to come on a new venue for next year!



2022 Wolf Hunt Raffle



6-Day Baited Alberta Wolf Hunt

500 tickets sold @ \$20 each

Winner will be drawn September 15th @ 6pm

Hunt Dates: November 2022 - February 2023

Hunt location: La Crete, Alberta

Outfitter: Kyler Knelsen

Need not be present to win

Tickets: www.oregonfnaaws.org



Purchase Tickets: www.OregonFNAWS.org

2022 Baited Wolf Hunt Raffle

Marcus Gores

Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation is raffling off a 6-Day Baited Wolf Hunt in Alberta, Canada. This hunt has extremely high opportunity and great success rate. First wolf is covered. 2nd wolf can be taken for a trophy fee of \$1,000.00 and the 3rd wolf is FREE! Only 500 tickets will be sold and tickets are \$20 each.

We will draw the winner on September 15th at 6pm. Hunt takes place between November 2022 and February 2023.

Tickets can be purchased online: www.OregonFNAWS.org

Included in Hunt:

- Food and Lodging During Hunt
- 2x1 Guide Service
- Skinning, field dressing of animals
- Transportation via La Crete airport
- 1st Wolf trophy fee
- 2nd Wolf can be taken for \$1,000
- 3rd Wolf is FREE!

Not Included in Hunt:

- Transportation to and from Alberta
- Housing and food before and after hunt
- Tags and Licenses
- Tips for Guides

Luck Lion Hunt

Doug Johnson

I guess you could say that 2021 was a lucky year for my wife and I. My wife Pat drew a California Big Horn Sheep tag in the Warner Unit and harvested a nice ram. While we attended the 2021 Bighorn Sheep & Mountain Goat Orientation the Dalles, we also went to the Mountain Hunters Rendezvous at the Deschutes River State Area Campground put on by the Oregon Chapter of FNAWS where my wife purchased 4 tickets to the Arizona Mountain Lion Hunt. She put my name on them and then we pretty much forgot about entering. On Saturday, September 18, we got a call about 2 pm and Marcus a board member of the Oregon Chapter, on the other end asked if I had any hunting plans coming up. When I said I am not sure he told me that my name had been drawn to go on a fully guided Mountain Lion hunt with Sam Dieringer. After catching our breaths and trying to make sense of this the reality of a Mountain Lion Hunt set in. I got a hold of Sam and tried to set up a hunt in 2021 but the dates he had did not work for me. After a lot of looking for a time that worked for me that he had open we decided on the hunt starting February 7, 2022. I flew to Phoenix on Sunday the 6th and rented a car to Pima Arizona where Sam and his wife live and hunt out of.

Sam, his son Scotty, and his dad Scott all participate in the Lion hunts. When I arrived Sam asked what I thought about hunting off horseback? I said not sure, that I did not ride horses so whatever. It was all set at dinner that I would be picked up at 5:30 AM by Scotty and his horses and dogs and off we would go on our big adventure. We would meet up with Scotty's grandpa Scott who also has a mule he rides plus he has dogs. We drove for about an hour into the mountains where we unloaded the horses and dogs and started up into the mountains. It was about the time we got going up the mountain that it occurred to me what question I may have not answered truthfully. The question on the disclaimer was "Do you want to wear a helmet when riding a horse?" I thought to myself, what sort of cowboy mountain lion hunter would wear a helmet? For 5 days this question and answer haunted me. Should I have a helmet on? Would it save my life when I fell off the horse? Luckily, I never fell off the horse and I am still alive. Up hills, down hills, through large boulders, I somehow I kept in the saddle. Scotty had asked if I wanted to wear chaps? I was not sure, but he said try them this first day and then decide.

Made of heavy leather, I found out that there is a trick to getting them on and off and when on they are hard to walk in and feel like they are falling off all the time. These chaps were a god send as all brush that you ride through had sharp thorns or needles. They saved my legs from getting torn to shreds. Keeping my balance on the horse and getting a sore butt were some of the highlights of most of the 5 days of hunting. The scenery was spectacular, and the dogs were a real treat to watch. Sometimes I could just about imagine how a cowboy felt riding in this country as a lawman or a cow puncher.

Most days we found old sign of Lions, such as old deer kills and older tracks. One day the dogs got on Lion scent and for a couple of hours barked and bayed back and forth. In the end this turned into no Lion. Friday was the last day of my hunt. I was proud that I had stuck it out and I may have to admit I got a little used to riding a horse. On Wednesday I almost called it quits, but in the end I am glad that I did not quit. Friday found everyone out looking for a Mountain Lion and with luck a Lion was found and treed. By the time we got to the Lion I was worn out but ready for the final chapter of this hunt. After getting a few pictures in the tree, I brought him out of the tree with Scott's Lever Action 30-30. After more pictures we loaded up on the horses for my final ride in this spectacular country. All of a sudden, the 1 hour ride back to the trailer was not as bad as the ride in had been. When we got back into cell service I called my wife and said "I have some good and bad news for you". The good news is that I got my Mountain Lion, The bad news it that you need to pack up and move down here. I just signed on to be a cowboy "After a good laugh we were headed to check the Lion with the Arizona Fish and Game. After heading back to Sam's, Scotty skinned the Lion out and into the freezer it went.

I want to let everyone know that is thinking about booking a trip with Sam, that the most important thing for all of the Dieringer's is that you get a Mountain Lion.

I cannot thank them enough for not listening to my complaining about riding a horse and making me get up at 4:30 each morning. In the end they got me my Lion. Also, I want to thank the Devri (Sams wife), and Elizabeth (Scotty's wife) for cooking the meals. Each morning there was a breakfast burrito in the oven, sandwiches made and fruit, cookies, chips, granola bars, and cookies so I could get my lunch packed. The dinners were family style with everyone including Scotty's and Elizabeth's 3 kids (Paisley, Sammy, and Roman) eating at the table with us. Also, I want to thank Wyle a local rancher that helped with the successful hunt. And finally, I want to thank Pistol and Scarface, the two horses I rode, for putting up with my riding skills and for not having me fall out of the saddle. If anyone is looking for a hunt like this I would get a hold of Sam Dieringer @ 928-322-2627.



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Putting and Keeping Wild Sheep on the Mountain

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January 14, 2022 - SW Idaho/N Nevada/SE Oregon Bighorn Sheep Meeting at the Sheep Show - Reno, Nevada.

The objectives of this meeting were to have a discussion and decision on the need/desire to formalize a working relationship around the multiple bighorn sheep herds in the SW Idaho, Northern Nevada, and SE Oregon area. This would include the State and Federal Agencies, Tribes, Research Institutions, and Wild Sheep Foundation Chapter and Affiliates with interest in the bighorn sheep herds in the area, 63 individuals participated.

Several folks from the existing “Tri-State” partnership (Idaho, Oregon, and Washington) and the Hells Canyon Initiative shared the history and background of this long running partnership that began in the mid 1990’s, 26 years ago. The discussion focused on the strengths that a private/public partnership can have. They shared how the multiple State and Federal agencies, in partnership with Tribes, the three State Wild Sheep Chapters, the WSF, and Universities were able to pool their strengths to accomplish a lot more than anyone organization could alone. It was pointed out that many of the outcomes/outputs from the Hells Canyon Initiative have been used across the west and have affected bighorn sheep management and research across north America.

There was a discussion from members of the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF), Professional Resource Advisory Board (PRAB), that large landscape, multi-partnerships were exactly what they were interested in for potential future funding. They would hope that if this partnership does come together that there would be a landscape wide, multiple year plan laying out the needs and projects. It was indicated that this would make for a higher priority and higher probably of funding.

The meeting then rolled into discussion of the issues, challenges, and information sharing of the bighorn sheep herds and management in SW Idaho, Northern Nevada, and SE Oregon. Mike Cox (NDOW) and Kevin Hurley (WSF) shared maps showing the locations of existing bighorn sheep herds in the three states, as well as domestic sheep allotments, and wild horse ranges. We went around the map and had the states and others share what was known for issues, how the bighorn sheep herds were faring, and potential opportunities. As expected, there was a mix of issues, from existing domestic sheep allotments, small private flocks of sheep and goats, wild horse conflicts, disease, habitat issues and needs (including large fires), predation, genetic bottlenecks, and water availability concerns.

There was ongoing research, proposed research, ongoing test and remove, and quite a bit of communications already occurring between the three state agencies. It appeared less so with the Federal agencies, although that appears to vary. The BLM expressed interest in the partnership and that it would be helpful as they move through land management decisions in this part of the three states. It was pointed out that the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest would be an important agency to reach out to as there are national forest lands in Nevada that potentially have effects on all three state bighorn sheep populations.

After a healthy discussion, the groups settled on not jumping into a full formal initiative, but continuing the discussions, working on what a more informal partnership/work group might look like that would increase communications, collaboration, and implementation across the entire area.

Government & Legislative Affairs

January 19, 2022 - Meeting with the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Regional Directors, and Staff, with the Washington Wild Sheep Foundation - We discussed the following issues and interests in greater detail than during our last meeting with the Forest Service's Regional Office Natural Resource and Planning Staff:

Existing National/Regional Direction related to Bighorn Sheep:

- Including past and potential future Congressional Direction. The need/desire for reestablishing the national Full Curl Coordinator Position. Washington State University Disease Research and Endowed Chair. Forest Planning - specifically the Blue Mountains planning effort. This included requesting that Bighorn Sheep are classified as a Species of Conservation Concern. Need to implement the Risk of Contact Modeling (ROC) on bighorn sheep herds and existing domestic sheep grazing allotments. This model was developed and now updated by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA). The Forest Service and BLM were partners in the update and design. Concern with Pack goats/sheep and we continued to share concerns around the use Pack goats/sheep in and near existing bighorn sheep herds because of the potential risk of disease.

- We discussed the Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Initiative - (Multi-State, Multi-Agency partnership) which the Forest Service has been a key partner from the initiative's inception

- We shared the latest information and successes of the Hells Canyon Domestic Sheep Small Flock Outreach Program partnership - (ODFW, WDFW, IDFG, Asotin County, U of I, ID WSF, WWSF, and OR FNAWS).

- We continued the discussion and Ongoing Concerns/Issues in the Yakima Canyon - Okanogan/Wenatchee NF range allotment planning and the negative effect to existing bighorn sheep populations and management

January 20, 2022 - received correspondence from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge on the release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision - the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in partnership with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and U.S. Department of Agriculture - Wildlife Services, published the final environmental impact statement (EIS) and signed the Record of Decision (ROD) for the management plan to address an alarming decline in the California bighorn sheep population on Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. There has been no litigation to date and Wildlife Services has started the removal of cougars. There will be opportunities to assist in the funding and implementation of the proposed vegetative habitat improvements and water developments in the future.

The California bighorn sheep population on Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge has declined by 67 percent since 2017 – 149 in 2017 to 48 in 2020 – and is now at a potentially unsustainable population level. The population decline is a result of high cougar predation and declining habitat quality due to juniper encroachment and invasive plants. In cooperation with ODFW and USDA-Wildlife Services, the Service has developed a final EIS and management plan to address the population decline.

January 25, 2022 - Oregon Chapter Wild Sheep Foundation joins other Oregon Sportsmen to Form a New Coalition to Protect Hunting, Fishing and Trapping for Today and the Future. On Tuesday, January 25th many of Oregon's sportsmen and women joined together for the first meeting of the Oregon Sportsmen's Conservation Partnership, a new coalition of hunting, fishing, trapping, and conservation groups from across the state.

Over 32 organizations are represented on the coalition, including the Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation. Together the coalition will focus on several key policy areas, legislative efforts, and will collaborate with multiple State and Federal agencies and State and Federal legislators.

Many of the Sportsmen organizations have been working together in response to the proposed Initiative Petition 13 (IP13), one of the most blatant attacks on our outdoor heritage, which would ban all hunting, fishing, and trapping in the state. Economic mainstays for rural Oregon such as livestock production, rodeos, and seafood harvesting would also likely cease to exist. Wildlife management and conservation efforts would be reduced by both the criminalization of wildlife management practices and the loss of conservation funding paid by hunters, anglers, and trappers.

Many of the organizations in the outdoor and sporting community recognized the need to have a formal, ongoing coalition that could work together in response to this initiative, but also on other efforts that could impact the future of Oregon's outdoor heritage—whether at the ballot box, in the form of legislation, or during agency decision processes.

February 21, 2022 - Letter to ODFW Commission and Director Melchor - Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain Goat application and drawing periods. The purpose of this letter was to request that the application and drawing periods for Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain Goat be changed to occur with Spring Bear (Feb 10th application deadline, Feb. 20 results available).

Draw results are one of the most anticipated times of year for Oregon hunters. Oregon has been known to be one of the western states who releases draw results last. Controlled hunt applications are due by 15 May and results are posted by 20 June. Currently, most Oregon deer and elk hunters have enough time to prepare for their upcoming hunts with the current draw result date. Most of these applicants are not first-time hunters. and therefore, they understand the preference point system, have a good understanding of their probability of drawing an antelope, deer or elk tag and can start the process of hunt planning before draw results are released. This is not the case when it comes to Rocky Mountain Goat and Bighorn Sheep.

Mountain Goat and Bighorn Sheep tags are a once in a lifetime opportunity. Most tag holders have never hunted sheep or goats before and have most likely never been on a goat or sheep hunt. The odds of drawing one of these tags are so small that the need for early hunt planning is negligible. Most successful applicants want to gain as much knowledge as possible and need an ample amount time to prepare for their upcoming hunt.

Based on the timeline currently in place, successful applicants are noticed on June 20th. Some of these coveted tags have seasons that start August 1st, giving these tag holders 41 days from the time they are awarded the tag to opening day. To put that into perspective that is roughly 6 weekends for scouting, securing adequate vacation time, learning how to access some of the most remote places in Oregon and all the additional things that are required to go on a big game hunt. Within that time frame Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation (OR WSF) and ODFW hosts the Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain Goat Orientation, which for those who attend, takes away a weekend for scouting/hunt planning but gives tag holders a chance to learn more about their hunt. The purpose of the Orientation is to provide hunters a one-day seminar on the specifics of hunting bighorns and goats, meet with ODFW biologists for their respective hunts and satisfy the mandatory orientation requirement for goat hunters.

Having the Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat controlled hunt draw period at the same time as spring bear would give hunters five and a half months to prepare for the once in a lifetime hunt. It would allow OR WSF and ODFW to host the orientation earlier in the year. Which would give tag holders over two months of preparation after the orientation as opposed to two-four weeks.

Based on our understanding of tag allocation process, ODFW sets tag numbers for hunts in the previous year, which we believe, will make no additional work for ODFW to change the application deadline and release draw results. Biologists will not have to report allocated tags per hunt any sooner or perform in field work earlier to make this change, and the emergency rules would still be in place should a disease event or other factors affect sheep or goat populations in a specific herd range. The application process will change slightly as the work that goes into sheep and goat tag applications for ODFW's will occur sooner but no more of a workload than the later application time. There are few Bighorn Sheep (81) and Rocky Mountain Goat (27) tags available and substantially less applicants for those tags when compared to deer and elk. There will be a short-term additional workload to notify applicants of the changed process and respond to those that miss or ignore the notification the first year of the change.

Government & Legislative Affairs

February 21, 2022 - Letter to Forest Supervisors of the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests - Bighorn Sheep Management Concerns.

The Oregon (OR WSF) and Washington Wild Sheep Foundations (WA WSF) had been closely following the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision processes before it was tabled. We are concerned that due to the amount of time it is taking to complete these plan updates bighorn sheep populations are being put at risk.

We pointed out that the most significant threat facing bighorn sheep in the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington, and throughout the West is disease transmission from contact with domestic sheep and goats.

Multiple bighorn sheep populations in the Hells Canyon area, the Wallowa's and throughout the Blue Mountains have experienced high rates of mortality due to pneumonia outbreaks from the 1980s, through the 2000s. The origin of these outbreaks has been documented as domestic sheep and/or goat strains of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi); which continues to have lingering effects. Many of these populations have not recovered, and are currently limited by low lamb survival, primarily due to persistent pneumonia caused mortality. Pathogen transmission to bighorn sheep is controlled by maintaining separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and/or goats.

Regarding potential domestic/wild sheep conflicts, we suggested that Forest Service (FS) policy and direction should be to: (1) achieve effective spatial and temporal separation of authorized domestic sheep and/or goats from wild sheep, and (2) to minimize risk of contact between the species. We believe that well designed Risk Assessments (using the updated Risk of Contact Model that the FS and BLM has invested in) coupled with wild and domestic sheep/goat monitoring are critical to evaluate effectiveness of grazing management, especially when it comes to maintaining and restoring wild sheep populations. When making resource management decisions and conducting environmental analyses of proposed grazing management, where there is a potential threat to wild sheep, the FS should continue to provide opportunity for public participation.

We believe that the FS needs be more responsive to the clear direction from Congress related to bighorn sheep conservation, direction that has been repeated annually over at least the past 6 years to resolve conflicts between these two uses.

Bighorn and domestic sheep/goat conflicts may continue to arise during administration of grazing permits, conflicts that may or may not have been anticipated during the planning and permitting decisions. These need to be addressed before issuance of another annual permit.

We continually note that currently, the only effective means of preventing conflicts with bighorn sheep are dealt with in the location and operating instructions for a grazing permit. However, both to reinforce permit terms and conditions and to respond to unanticipated conflicts, we listed multiple practices that we believe should be standard for all permits and could be included in the future forest plans.

We would like to see a decision that if a new or existing domestic sheep or goat allotment is proposed for stocking, the Forest will complete a Risk Assessment, using the latest available model, of contact on potential pathogen transmission. If the risk assessment is above the threshold suggested by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Bighorn Sheep Working group, additional allotment adjustments need to occur (ex. Boundary adjustment, livestock conversion, etc.). Collectively, these standards will reduce the chance new pathogen transmission events will occur from Forest Service allotments.

We indicated that we were willing to engage in, a transparent and collaborative, stakeholder driven process where the Blue Mountain Forest's in preparation for the continuation of the Forest Planning process, work with stakeholders to complete a Risk Assessment, using the updated Risk of Contact Model. We suggested that the Forests convene a meeting of stakeholders (at a minimum Domestic Sheep Permittees, ODFW, WDFW, Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Wild Sheep Foundation, and OR and WA WSF Chapters) interested in collaborating on strategies and solutions to address the risk of disease transmission. We believe it to be in the best interest of both the bighorn and domestic sheep interests to work collaboratively together to identify potential problem areas and work together to find solutions. Solutions that could potentially be integrated into the Blue Mountain Forest Planning process.

February 21, 2022 - Letter to the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forest - IDF&G Sheep Collaring Project #61527. The Oregon (OR WSF) and Washington Wild Sheep Foundations (WA WSF) commended the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forest for recognizing the role of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi) and associated pneumonia in the health of bighorn sheep and the difficulties in capturing free ranging bighorn for disease sampling, specifically in the Salmon River corridor of the Frank Church and Gospel Hump Wilderness areas. This work is also part of a larger multi-jurisdictional project using "test and remove" to clear Movi from bighorn, improve overall animal health, and restore populations.

During November 2021 the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) attempted to capture and sample bighorn sheep in the lower Salmon River corridor using jetboats for access. Unfortunately, low water levels, icing, and the difficult locations of the bighorn sheep populations, prevented IDFG from collecting the desired number of samples. The most viable management option available to successfully obtain an adequate sample size to evaluate the prevalence of Movi in the bighorn sheep populations in the lower Salmon River corridor is utilizing helicopters and net guns for capture operations.

Due to the connectivity of bighorn sheep herds within the Salmon River corridor, it is imperative to sample individuals within the entirety of their distribution in the corridor. The documented success of using the test and remove procedure that was developed in the Hells Canyon Initiative area and used elsewhere around the west; provides justification to apply test and remove to the Movi infected bighorn sheep populations in the Salmon River corridor.

OR and WA WSFs are both keenly aware of the value of wilderness and believe bighorn sheep are an important component of these wilderness areas. We believe that the potential reduction or worse the loss of bighorn sheep populations would diminish the value of these wilderness areas. The Wilderness Act does not preclude wildlife research and/or management, however such activities must be reviewed, planned, and implemented with a minimal impact to wilderness values. The proposed sheep collaring, and disease testing activity is planned during a time of low visitation. The proposed motorized activity is managed to reduce the number of intrusions into the wilderness area by limiting the number of wilderness captures, cumulative hours of helicopter use, the total number of days, and whenever possible, select animal processing sites outside the wilderness boundaries. The intrusion on wilderness values would be minimized as much as possible.

The OR and WS WSFs support the Sheep Collaring Project #61527. We believe the 1964 Wilderness Act provides justification for the Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest to authorize IDFG to use helicopter net gun capture in designated wilderness. Without helicopter access to implement the test and remove management procedures, IDFG will not be able to determine the prevalence of Movi in the bighorn populations within the Salmon River corridor or attempt to reduce the effects of Movi on the populations. The importance of Movi free bighorn populations is paramount to increasing bighorn populations and genetic diversity throughout the Salmon River corridor. Without reducing Movi in the Salmon River corridor, those bighorns represent a threat to bighorn populations up and down the river corridor, including potentially into the Snake River/Hells Canyon bighorn sheep populations where we have been expending considerable time and resources to manage and reduce Movi.

The current strain of Movi was introduced into the Lower Salmon over two decades ago, and at this point natural clearance is unlikely in an acceptable timeframe. That is why this project is so critical to support.

February 21, 2022 - The Oregon (OR WSF) and Washington Wild Sheep Foundations (WA WSF) letter to Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) on the update to the Idaho Bighorn Sheep Management Plan. OR and WA WSFs are interested in the management of bighorn sheep populations across Idaho but have specific interest in those population management units along the western and southern borders. These are the Idaho bighorn sheep populations that have the potential to have a direct effect on Nevada, Oregon, and Washington bighorn sheep populations.

There has been a lot learned relative to bighorn sheep management since the plan was last updated, much of it due to the leadership and work accomplished by IDFG with the numerous partners in the Hells Canyon Initiative. IDFG has been a leader in the research and management of bighorn sheep and the information learned has been shared and is used widely across western North America.

As the Draft Management Plan and scientific literature indicates, the most significant threats facing bighorn sheep in Idaho and throughout the West is disease and parasite transmission from contact with domestic sheep and goats.

Government & Legislative Affairs

Regarding potential domestic/wild sheep conflicts, policy and direction as the Draft Plan indicates, should be to: (1) achieve effective separation of domestic sheep and/or goats from wild sheep, and (2) to minimize risk of contact between the species. We believe that well designed Risk Assessments (using the updated Risk of Contact Tool developed with support from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) coupled with wild and domestic sheep/goat monitoring are critical when it comes to maintaining and restoring wild sheep populations. The importance of Movi free bighorn populations is paramount. Without reducing Movi some existing bighorn populations represent a threat to bighorn populations up and down the many river corridors between the states, including the Salmon River and Snake River/Hells Canyon bighorn sheep populations where ID, OR, and WA have been expending considerable time and resources to manage and reduce Movi; and in Southwest Idaho, Southeast Oregon, and Northern Nevada in the Owyhee River country.

We pointed out the use of pack goats for recreational use is of great concern. Their use should be prohibited where there is a potential risk to bighorn sheep populations. We encouraged IDFG to continue to actively engage with the United State Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), allotment permittees, Tribes, Universities, the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) and appropriate WSF Chapters & Affiliates on managing and modeling potential risk on the Federal lands where domestic sheep/goat allotments and pack goats could pose a potential risk to bighorn sheep populations. We suggest that the updated risk of contact model should be used to gauge relative risk posed by any existing domestic animals within the area including, domestic sheep/goat allotments, domestic sheep/goat trailing, places where domestic sheep and goats are used for invasive weed control, recreational pack goat use, and domestic sheep and goat herds on adjoining private lands, including small hobby flocks. We suggested the focus of habitat management should be to maintain healthy, resilient plant communities and minimize human negative effects. Activities could include reducing and/or eliminating invasive weeds and grasses, utilizing fire to promote healthy plant communities, and reducing and/or eliminating competition for vegetation and water from feral horses and domestic livestock. As the Draft Plan indicates, much of the existing bighorn sheep habitat exists on either federal or private lands and there will be a need to work closely with partners to assure bighorn sheep habitat remains healthy and resilient in the face of climate change.

We suggested there is a need to work with the BLM and the neighboring states of Oregon and Nevada to address the increasing amount of recreational use in SW Idaho, SE Oregon, and Northern Nevada and the potential effects to bighorn sheep populations and habitat. Much of this use is coming from the large urban areas in Idaho.

We agreed with the need to implement Idaho's Predator Management Policy when evidence indicates that predation is a major cause of bighorn sheep populations not meeting objectives. Predation, especially cougars, can be a major cause of bighorn population reductions and may lead to local population extinctions. This will require IDFG to assure adequate population monitoring for both bighorn sheep and the associated predators.

January 21, 2022 - OR and WA WSF Meeting with the OR/WA BLM State Director and Deputy State Director. OR and WA WSF Presidents and Government and Legislative Affairs Committee met with the leadership of the BLM in Oregon and Washington. This was a first meeting with the State Director and so we keep the meeting informative and informal. We started off with introductions, and objectives for the discussions.

We shared and discussed existing National and Regional Direction related to Bighorn Sheep, including existing Congressional Direction, discussions related to the past Full Curl Coordinator and what we thought it did for the partnership and BLM National Direction - (1730 Direction). We discussed our interest in seeing the RMP's for Vale and Lakeview get restarted and suggested that the BLM utilize the updated Risk of Contact Modeling (ROC) from Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and that the BLM assisted in developing.

There was discussion related to Range allotment planning - specifically Prichard Creek (Vale BLM) and the concern with potential contact to the Lookout Mountain and Burnt River bighorn sheep herds. There was a short conversation on the need for the BLM to improve grazing monitoring and analysis. We discussed several opportunities and partnerships: the Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Initiative - Multi-State, Multi-Agency partnership - that the BLM has been an active partner in and the proposed SE Oregon/SW Idaho/Nevada Initiative - now know as the Idaho, Oregon, and Nevada partnership (ION).

This was a short list and items touched on were not covered in much detail. All in all, the meeting was a good first step and we thank BLM leadership for their time.

March 1, 2000 - OR WSF Letter to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) on the use of domestic sheep and goats on WDFW lands. The Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation (OR WSF) has been closely following the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the management of WDFW properties.

We are interested in the management of bighorn sheep populations across Washington but have specific interest in those populations along the southern border. These are the Washington bighorn sheep populations that have the potential to have a direct effect on Oregon bighorn sheep populations.

Multiple bighorn sheep populations in the Hells Canyon (ID, OR, and WA) area have experienced high rates of mortality due to pneumonia outbreaks. The origin of these outbreaks has been documented as domestic sheep and/or goat strains of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* (Movi); which continues to have lingering effects. Many of these populations have not recovered, and are currently limited by low lamb survival, primarily due to persistent pneumonia caused mortality. Pathogen transmission to bighorn sheep is controlled by maintaining separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and/or goats.

Regarding potential domestic/wild sheep conflicts, WDFW policy and direction should be to: (1) achieve effective separation of domestic sheep and/or goats from wild sheep, and (2) to minimize risk of contact between the species.

OR WSF is writing in support of banning domestic sheep/goats on WDFW property near any bighorn sheep populations. Domestic sheep/goats carry pathogens that are deadly to wild sheep. It is not worth the risk to Washington's, and potentially near-by Oregon and Idaho, populations of bighorn sheep by allowing domestic sheep/goats near bighorn sheep populations on WDFW managed lands. It took approximately 25 years to overcome the devastation (and rid the herds of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*) caused in the greater Hells Canyon bighorn populations from the die-off that begin near Asotin in 1995 and impacted populations in Idaho and Oregon as well.

We fully respect the access sought by those that use domestic goats as pack animals. However, it is simply not worth the risk to bighorn sheep populations. Best Management Practices are NOT full proof and still put bighorns at risk. There is a place for pack goats but NOT near bighorn sheep! It only takes one incident to have catastrophic consequences that could take decades to overcome.

Domestic sheep and goats carry genetically different strains of Movi. A pneumonia outbreak in bighorn sheep at Heller Bar in 2014 was associated with introduction of a domestic goat strain and a pink-eye epizootic in bighorn sheep in Arizona was associated with contact with domestic goats.

Government & Legislative Affairs

March 4, 2022 - Letter from the Forest Supervisors of the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests - OR and WA WSFs received a response for reaching out and sharing our concerns regarding bighorn sheep and the risk of disease transmission caused by contact with domestic sheep and goats. The letter indicated the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests, are committed to managing landscapes for multiple uses, while providing habitat for viable populations of wildlife, including bighorn sheep.

They recognized the potential risk that domestic sheep pose to bighorn sheep herds and the importance of maintaining effective separation to prevent disease transmission. They also recognized the significant adverse effect that disease transmission has on bighorn sheep herds and that those consequences are irreparable. In coordination with state agencies and Tribes, the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests have been managing domestic sheep grazing on National Forest lands to implement mitigations with the goal of reducing that risk.

Over the years, the forests have taken steps to increase separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep allotments. These efforts have included reducing allotment sizes, reducing number of sheep authorized on an allotment, and implementing conservation measures in AMPs for allotments adjacent to bighorn sheep herds.

Over the past several months, they have been coordinating closely with relevant government agencies, including the Tribes and states, on this topic. As a result of those discussions the Forest Service plans to update the Risk of Contact analysis in the Blue Mountains. The initial analysis will focus on the Wenaha bighorn sheep herd, given recent changes to landscape conditions from wildfires and changes in herd numbers since the last analysis. They are also working with CTUIR and the permittee on the North End Allotment on potential innovative methods for daily sheep counts.

The forests appreciated our continued engagement ensuring bighorn sheep populations are protected. The Forest Service participates regularly in the Hells Canyon Initiative meetings, and they will continue to provide regular updates on forest management during those meetings. In addition, they welcomed continued engagement and ideas from the Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation on forest management, particularly as we prepare to reinstate the Forest Plan Revision effort.

March 9, 2022 - Oregon Terminally Ill Youth Bighorn Sheep Tag - Brian Wolfer, ODFW Game Program Manager shared the following information with OR WSF. The 2022 bighorn sheep tag issued through the Tags for Terminally Ill Children Program will go to a youth sponsored by Children of Circumstances Outdoors.

The application processes for this tag are similar to the process to allocate the tags for other the species with a couple extra steps. The sponsoring organization must be a 501(c)(3) with the principal purpose of granting hunting and fishing adventures for children that have been diagnosed with a terminal illness. For the bighorn tag, ODFW will require the sponsoring organization to first contact Steve Cherry, District Biologist in Heppner, to learn the details about the hunt. Steve then provides the sponsoring organization contact information for the cooperating landowner. The sponsoring organization must contact the cooperating landowner and obtain access permission prior to submitting an application.

The remainder of the processes is the same regardless of the species tag being requested. The sponsoring organization must submit an application to our Licensing Department with supporting documentation including an attestation by a licensed physician confirming the child is clinically diagnosed with a terminal illness. Applications are accepted after January 1, however with the modification to the program this year the 2022 application packets were not mailed out until the second week in January. Applications are processed in the order in which they are received with a tag issued if the application is complete, the child is qualified, and a tag is available for the species requested. All the sponsoring organizations that have participated in the program over the last couple of seasons were notified of the proposed rule changes to the program prior to the December Commission meeting and were all mailed the 2022 application packet at the same time. The application from Children of Circumstance Outdoors was received by our Licensing staff on January 31.

March 15, 2022 - Letter to the Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service - from OR WSF, TRCP, OHA and BHA. OR WSF signed on to a letter to Martha Williams, Director of the USFW requesting a that Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge complete a revision of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the refuge. As hunting groups located in Oregon we are looking for an update to this important plan.

March 29, 2022 - Letter to Area Manager Vale BLM - Bighorn Sheep Management Concerns. The Oregon Chapter Wild Sheep Foundation (OR WSF) has been closely following the process for the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement before it was tabled. We are very interested in seeing this RMP process move toward completion and will continue to participate throughout the planning process. We are concerned that due to the amount of time it is taking to complete this plan bighorn sheep populations are being put at risk. Multiple bighorn sheep populations in southern and eastern Oregon have experienced high rates of mortality due to pneumonia outbreaks from the 1980s, through today. The origin of these outbreaks has been documented as domestic sheep and/or goat strains of Mycoplasma ovipneumonia (Movi); which continues to have lingering effects. Many of these populations have not recovered, and are currently limited by low lamb survival, primarily due to persistent pneumonia caused mortality. Pathogen transmission to bighorn sheep is controlled by maintaining separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and/or goats.

Regarding domestic/wild sheep conflicts, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) policy and direction 1730 is to: (1) achieve effective spatial and temporal separation of authorized domestic sheep and/or goats from wild sheep, and (2) to minimize risk of contact between the species. OR WSF believes that well designed Risk Assessments (using the updated Risk of Contact Model that the BLM has invested in) coupled with wild and domestic sheep/goat monitoring are critical to evaluate effectiveness of grazing management, especially when it comes to maintaining and restoring wild sheep populations. When making resource management decisions and conducting environmental analyses of proposed grazing management, where there is a potential threat to wild sheep, the BLM should continue to provide the opportunity for public participation.

We believe that the BLM needs be more responsive to what we believe is the clear direction from Congress related to bighorn sheep conservation, direction that has been repeated annually over at least the past 6 years to resolve conflicts between these two uses. Bighorn and domestic sheep/goat conflicts may continue to arise during administration of grazing permits, conflicts that may or may not have been anticipated during the planning and permitting decisions. These need to be addressed before issuance of another annual permit.

We noted that currently, the only effective means of preventing conflicts with bighorn sheep are dealt with in the location and operating instructions for a grazing permit. However, both to reinforce permit terms and conditions and to respond to unanticipated conflicts, we provided a list of practices that should be standard for all permits and could be included in the future RMP. We would like to see decision that if a new or existing domestic sheep or goat allotment is proposed for stocking, the BLM will complete a Risk Assessment, using the latest available model, of contact on potential pathogen transmission. If the risk assessment is above the threshold suggested by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Bighorn Sheep Working group, additional allotment adjustments need to occur (ex. Boundary adjustment, livestock conversion, etc.). Collectively, these standards will reduce the chance new pathogen transmission events will occur from BLM allotments and trailing.

We indicated that we were willing to engage in, a transparent and collaborative, stakeholder driven process where the Vale BLM in preparation for the continuation of the Resource area planning process, work with stakeholders to complete a Risk Assessment, using the updated Risk of Contact Model. We suggested that the BLM convene a meeting of stakeholders (at a minimum Domestic Sheep Permittees, ODFW, WDFW, Tribes, the WSF, and OR WSF) interested in collaborating on strategies and solutions to address the risk of disease transmission. We believe it to be in the best interest of both the bighorn and domestic sheep interests to work collaboratively together to identify potential problem areas and work together to find solutions. Solutions that could potentially be integrated into the Vale BLM RMP Planning process.

Stop Poaching Stakeholders - At our last call/meeting we were introduced to the new Wildlife/Anti-Poaching Resource Prosecutor and Senior Assistant Attorney General Jay D. Hall. He introduced himself and talked about his new role. Oregon State Police (OSP) Fish and Wildlife Captain, Casey Thomas, shared several of the interesting poaching cases he has been involved in. ODFW also shared a KGW news broadcast/video related to poaching in Oregon, wildlife population effects, and the new emphasis by the State and Partners (including OR WSF) to deal with poaching.

Owyhee Sportsman Coalition - The Owyhee Sportsman Coalition continue to meet by ZOOM. There has been a change in Senator Wyden's Staff - the new Staff person for the Natural Resource/Energy sectors is Jacob Egler and we had a meeting with him on April 11, 2022, to discuss our partnership (Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition) and our many and varied interests in the Owyhee country.

Wild Sheep Foundation Bi-Weekly Legislative Affairs Calls - Full Curl Coordinator - the Full Curl Coordinator position that used to be part of the USDA Forest Service's organization with a focus on bighorn sheep issues and management has not been filled for over 6 years. OR WSF has been working with Senator Merkley's Oregon Natural Resource Staff, his Staff in Washington DC, and the WSF to get direction and funding in the Forest Service's annual appropriation. Senator Merkley is the Chair of Senate Appropriations and as Senate Leadership can have significant influence. With the assistance of the Senator's Staff we were able to get wording added to the draft appropriation language but were unable to get it to the final. We will continue to work with our Senators, Congressmen, the WSF and others to get this important language added.

Sutton Mountain National Monument Proposal - OR WSF had a discussion with Senator Merkley's Staff (BJ Westland) about this potential proposal. The proposal is likely not to have any negative effects on hunting and fishing. Depending upon the language in the final bill there could be minor effects to habitat improvement efforts in the higher elevation areas proposed for less activity and/or wilderness allocation. Our local ODFW biologist (Steve Cherry) did not have any issues with the proposal currently either. We will continue to monitor this legislation.

Update on Lookout Mountain and Burnt River Bighorn Sheep Herds – Scott Peckham

As we reported last year, in 2020 two of our bighorn sheep herds became infected with *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (*Movi*). *Movi* is a bacteria species typically carried by domestic sheep and goats, and when domestic species and bighorn come in contact, it often triggers a pneumonia-related die-off in adult bighorn followed by many years of low lamb recruitment. Continued research and management of this disease in wild and domestic sheep is a top priority for OR WSF and state wildlife agencies across the western U.S. Wildlife managers in Oregon are now in year two of a project aimed at speeding up the clearance of *Movi* and helping to recover both herds. Over the next several years, ODFW in collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, will be conducting a “test and remove” project to identify and remove any wild sheep that are chronically infected with *Movi* and preventing disease clearance from the herd. This work is also being supported by grants from OR WSF, USFWS, and the Wild Sheep Foundation

In 2021, August surveys yielded very few lambs: zero in Burnt River and only six in Lookout Mountain (4.7 lambs: 100 ewes). This was somewhat expected given the high rate of active infection and mortality the previous year. The fall-winter capture season was busy. In total, 177 bighorn sheep were live-captured, tested, and collared (138 in Lookout Mountain, 39 in Burnt River). Because ODFW began some captures in fall of 2020 and early 2021, we were able to recapture some bighorn during 2021-22 capture season that had active *Movi* infections the previous year, four in Lookout Mountain and three in Burnt River. Of these recaptures, two adult ewes, one in each herd, met the criteria as a persistent carrier of *Movi* (minimum 2 of 3 positive tests separated by one year) and were lethally removed by ODFW staff in February of 2022. Identifying persistent carriers of *Movi* this early in the project period was considered a success. During the spring and summer of 2022, besides data analysis, the focus will be on monitoring lambing and survival of both lambs and adults as summer progresses. Additional capture work is planned for the fall of 2022 to sample more individuals and continue the search for persistent *Movi* carriers.



ODFW Wildlife Technician Scott Quigley collects biological samples for disease testing and secures a GPS telemetry collar on an adult ewe in Lookout Mountain



Adult ram in Lookout Mountain that has had samples collected and been fitted with a VHF telemetry collar and is ready for release.

Upcoming Events

June 10-12: Guzzler Project

June 20: Oregon Draw Results

July 16: Sheep & Goat Orientation

July 16: Mountain Hunters Rendezvous

July 17: Summer Board Meeting

New Life Members

- 163. Vince Bloom
- 164. Sean Gores
- 165. Andrew Pratt
- 166. John McCollum III
- 167. Kevin Hurley
- 168. Shad Hulse
- 169. Mark Shears
- 170. C&A 2022 Donation
- 171. Tim Valentine
- 172. Ruthann Valentine
- 173. Jim Manley
- 174. Nick Keser
- 175. John McCollum Jr.
- 176. Nathan Ingram
- 177. Mariaelena Hobgood
- 178. Mike Marshall
- 179. Bill Bayliss
- 180. Kerry Johnson
- 181. Renee Thornton
- 182. Gray Thornton
- 183. Ellen Campbell
- 184. Dale Campbell
- 185. Kristie Harrison
- 186. Bud Bowen
- 187. Michael Hill
- 188. Jeremy Thompson
- 189. John MacDonald
- 190. Todd Erickson Jr.
- 191. Rebecca Jefferies
- 192. Burk Whitmire
- 193. Shelby Halladay
- 194. Calvin Halladay
- 195. Debbi Gores
- 196. Hanree Ghores
- 197. Hunter Hesseltine
- 198. Alyn Vail
- 199. Jacob Hanning
- 200. Craig Foster
- 201. Kelly Hafer
- 202. Jase Jansen
- 203. Jarrett Thompson

Membership and Renewals

Navigating through many trying times we want to take a moment to thank all of our current annual and life members. Without your support we would not be able to assist and advocate for wild sheep in the state of Oregon. As most of you may know we have changed the way we accept new memberships and renew annual members. If you are an annual member and you have not renewed through our website we would urge you to go through the renewal process there. We are working away from paper renewals and increasing our active members through the website. Online renewals ensures we have up to date information for all members and assists in the ability to contact members to inform them on upcoming events, newsletters, and our annual banquet.

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