

# Dominguez-Escalante NCA AC Meeting

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18 November 2014

## **Attendees:**

**public** - Janice Shepherd, Mike Wilson, Lloyd Liebetrau, Terry Meyers, Don Coram, Mark Roeber, Bonnie Brown, Ernie Etchardt, Joe Sperry, Evan Phillips, Brad Banulis, Mark Richman,

**BLM – Collin Ewing**, Barb Sharrow, Lynae Rogers, Melissa Siders (took notes)

**Council members**– Katie Steele, Doug Atchley, Kaye Simonson, Tamera Minnick, Ralph Files, Oscar Massey, Steve Boyle, Bill Harris. Not in attendance – Bob Janowski, Kate Graham

## **Introductions**

Timeline:

- Draft RMP Published last year; comments received, reviewed and helped to develop the proposed plan
- Proposed RMP drafted
- Reviewed by local BLM, Colorado BLM State Office, Cooperating Agencies
- Currently being reviewed by BLM Washington Office
- Brief overview of designation of NCA and purposes of the NCA

AC:

- Two council members' terms expire in January 2015. Delta County and Wildlife Representatives.
- Currently published in Federal Register request for people to apply to replace those two members.

## **Powerpoint Presentation on Bighorn and Domestic Sheep Interactions**

by Collin Ewing.

## **Council Questions**

Oscar: Question about what if there is a disease outbreak, is there anything in WAFWA that says you don't have to move your sheep band. Concern that permittees will be forced off if a disease outbreak is detected.

Collin: Don't think that we have said either way in the plan. Actions are to avoid interaction; nothing about an outbreak.

Question: How many people were at these early bighorn/domestic sheep meetings.

Explanation that these meetings were before the beginning of the DENCA RMP, and were for the UFO RMP amendment and the beginning development of the Probability of Interaction model and management actions in the UFO RMP. Once the DENCA RMP process began, some of the information was used for it as well. There were approx. a dozen or so people in attendance at these meetings, permittees and CPW employees.

Steve: All of the big game species are managed by the state wildlife agencies and federal agencies for the values that they provide to the public. For the most part, other big game species do not have the disease issues at the level that bighorn do. Bighorn sheep, of all the big game, have the most disease problems. The wildlife community is not saying that the disease issue is not ONLY from domestic sheep. May be from other sources and/or from historic disease interactions.

Doug: Bighorn are sheep. CPW introduced the bighorn in the 1980s with existing domestic sheep and it should be recognized that they were here before the reintroduction of bighorn. Also, grazing revenue is important to Delta county.

Tamara: No comments at this time. Would like to wait to comment on what is actually in the plan currently instead of what was in the preferred alternative.

Oscar: Would like to hear comments from the public.

## Public Comments

Janice Shepherd: There are two Cactus Parks in this plan. Is the management action in the SRMA Cactus Park the northern cactus park? (Yes)

Council should be aware of a proposal to extend the Tabaquach motorized route, which would increase the use of 9-mile hill area, which may have more impacts to bighorn in that area (production area).

Joe Sperry: Expression of confusion about NCA vs wilderness in DE NCA. Appears like the conservation area is different from wilderness. Or the whole NCA area being managed as Wilderness? Is this discussion only about these allotments within the NCA or allotments outside of the area?

Collin: Wilderness area is managed for undeveloped nature, with no motorized use, non-mechanized, very limited development. This is talking only about the allotments only within the DENCA, they are all outside the wilderness. Other sheep allotments will be covered in the Uncompaghe Field Office RMP revision.

Bonni Brown: Don't want us to lose fact that these bighorn were introduced in existing domestic sheep area. Concerned about the statement of "avoid" exposure. MOU is renewed this year with same language ... science isn't there to say direct connection from domestic. Concerned that WAFWA guidelines did not have input from domestic sheep producers or epidemiologist. We shouldn't lock ourselves into certain numbers... needs to be worked out on a site specific basis. There has not been

good disease sampling to be able to document disease issues historically. Would like to see money spent on litigation to instead go toward research.

Ernie Etchardt: Bighorn were translocated into the area in the 1980s ... have not seen bighorn and domestic sheep getting together. Have issue with WAFWA guidelines due to no input from domestic sheep producers.

**-Break-**

### **Continuation of Powerpoint Presentation**

Collin reiterated that we want the measures to be Reasonable **and** Feasible

Requesting input from group to help make sure that these measures are reasonable and feasible.

### **Council Comments:**

WAFWA removed the recommendation about gregarious sheep breeds... why didn't we?

Collin: Didn't notice until just putting this presentation together.

Bill: Dog levels ... numbers. Seems like this should be figured out at the permit renewal level.

Doug: Agrees that numbers of dogs should be negotiated with the producer depending on site specific information. Depending on herders/dogs abilities.

Katie: I think the BLM should work directly with the herders on their efforts to minimize the interaction between the domestic sheep and the bighorns. And if a herder is not doing a good job or being effective, then the BLM should deal with that herder individually and not implement rules for all herders.

Steve: But it's hard to write the language to set the guidelines for reducing interaction between the sheep. How do you write a management action so that the intent is there to drive management. Responsibility, liability, etc.

Tamara: Why was it in the WAFWA guidelines to be specific for the numbers of dogs?

Bill: WAFWA guidelines were done to benefit wild sheep, not economics, domestic sheep operators.

Tamara: We don't do a good job of defining risk and how to decrease the risk.

Steve: In fairness, the professionals that put together this document came against the same issue of trying to write management guidelines. How does the RMP convey how to control their herds to reduce the probability of interaction?

Ralph: Dogs are bred, raised, etc. to guard from predators.

Collin asked the sheep producers in the audience if Guard dogs are effective at repelling bighorn sheep from domestic sheep.

Bonnie: Livestock protection dogs can be trained to deter wild bighorn ... intruders or something they don't recognize, to protect their herd. They don't only protect from predators. Legitimate management tool, but site specific for how many are needed.

Ernie: Said he typically has two good guard dogs (male and female) with a band of 2,000.

Bonnie: mentioned that guard dogs can be a concern to recreationists and that we should consider this when talking about a number of dogs required.

Oscar: Specific number of dogs is not the answer.

Steve: Concept is to increase the number of guard dogs per domestic sheep in the higher probability zones.

Bill: An operator needs to do the best he can to prevent interaction or at the end of the road, we'll have to make changes and may have to leave the areas

Collin: BLM needs to have a standard to hold up to all operators so that there is something to measure against.

Katie: .If I was a herder and not doing an adequate job in keeping my herd under control - what would be the consequences?

Lynae: We would work with the permittee to fix the problem before taking action on the permit.

Tamara: The last statement of if it's not working, changes have to be made. Maybe some of the earlier language can be loosened, to be determined between BLM and permittee. If monitoring indicates problems, deal with those individually with permittees.

What about monitoring? How will monitoring be done to indicate that things aren't working?

Ralph: why do yearling domestic ewes have to be bred, when all ewes have to be bred?

Lynae: Trying to make sure that yearlings are not turned out when they have absorbed fetus and go into estrus while on the range. Younger ones don't take as easily and can tend to absorb.

Several Council members discussed - Maybe change the language to "first term breeding" ... maybe it's just important that they are bred, no matter what age. Asked Brad Banulis when the bighorn breeding season is.

Brad: Desert bighorn can breed anytime of year, but generally summer. We know that domestic ewes and bighorn have been in the same area on the same day, but not documented interaction. If a herder sees a bighorn ram in a domestic herd, they can call CPW and they will remove the ram.

Mark Richman: There have been some interaction in Gunnison Gorge, but not within DENCA.

### Summary:

- Revisit the dog numbers to see if wording can be made to get the objective across without the numbers of dogs.

- Redefine the yearly/bred language
- Double check the gregarious breeds

### Public comments:

Lloyd L.: Where is the concern for predators? Predators have an effect on population. Did not see details of which routes are closed. Why was this discussion only about bighorn and wildlife?

Bill Harris: The other 35 meetings were about all the other topics related to this RMP

Bonnie: What is still driving the equation is contact equals disease transmission... which is not true. If you removed all domestic sheep, the bighorn will still have disease issues.

Gregarious sheep ... don't need to worry about it. In the producers best interest to have gregarious sheep.

Possible wording for the action regarding Guard dogs: BLM will work with permittees to use protection dogs to reduce interaction between wild and domestic sheep.

One way to deal with the increasing level of risk is to increase levels of monitoring.

Are there still goats?

Consider the words like "consider", "encourage"

Brad from CPW: Having the wording "gregarious" has a value to retain that language in the plan. CPWs main concern is the wandering rams that get into groups or individuals. As a comment on the translocations, we didn't know the disease issues back then ... we didn't even know as much 5 years ago. Things were done with the best intentions and the knowledge of the day.

Mike: Alternative: move desert bighorn out of an area to another area.

Terry: Risk of Contact Model ... Rocky Mountain Bighorn society requests that it be used to classify the allotments risk level.

WAFWA guidelines clearly state that they are not proven.

Bighorn winter concentration areas have overlap with domestic sheep permit dates...big concern.

WAFWA guidelines change from time to time. How will that affect the RMP? Do we lock it in to the current version? Concern that WAFWA will change in the future.

Joe Sperry: Success of guidelines is based on the permittees to do a good job ... all of them. Neighbors will have impacts to each other. How does information from bighorn study get to the permittees? Would be good to let the permittees know where bighorn move, what we're learning, etc.

Collin: RoC model was run for DENCA and incorporated. More details in the upcoming RMP.

Use the WAFWA guidelines as guidance. In our plan, as the WAFWA changes, we'll use them as guidance. Where we have specific things in the plan, then we'll follow that language.

**Next Meeting:**

March 4, 2015 3pm Grand Junction