



# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

**PURPOSE:** Formed to advise Southwest RAC on issues related to domestic sheep grazing in bighorn sheep habitat managed by the BLM Gunnison Field Office on high alpine allotments near Silverton, Colorado.







# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

## Sub-Committee Members

**Category 1: Mark Roeber**

**Category 2: Jim Haugsness  
Jon Holst**

**Category 3: Steve Garchar  
Matt Thorpe**





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

## Six Monthly Public Meetings

Each meeting took a deep dive into specific component of sheep grazing issue:

- 1 - Framing the Issue
- 2 - Regulations and Standard Operating Procedures
- 3 - Economics
- 4 - Mitigation Opportunities
- 5 - Best Management Practices & Public Outreach Tools
- 6 - Conclusion and Next Steps

Public comment periods were informative and contributed to understanding issue.

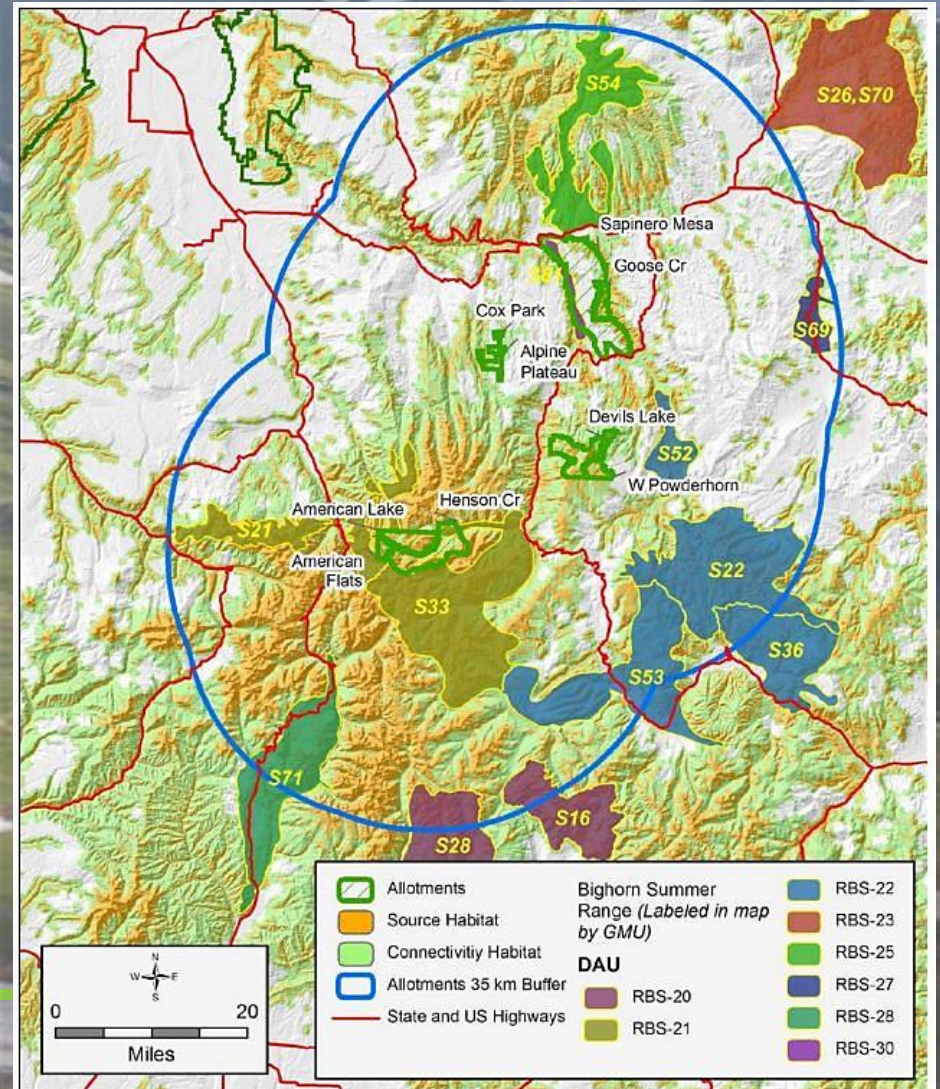




# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

## PART ONE: Framing the Issue [March 14, 2023]

- ❖ Introduce the Challenge: Issues associated with domestic sheep grazing in bighorn sheep habitat
- ❖ Procedural Side: BLM Grazing Requirements and NEPA Process
- ❖ Perspectives from a range of stakeholders







# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

## PART TWO: Legal Framework [April 5, 2023]

- BLM history of livestock grazing
- BLM management of domestic sheep grazing
- BLM management for bighorn sheep as Special Status Species
- Basic statistics on economics
- Differences between the agencies' Grazing Practices and Processes





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

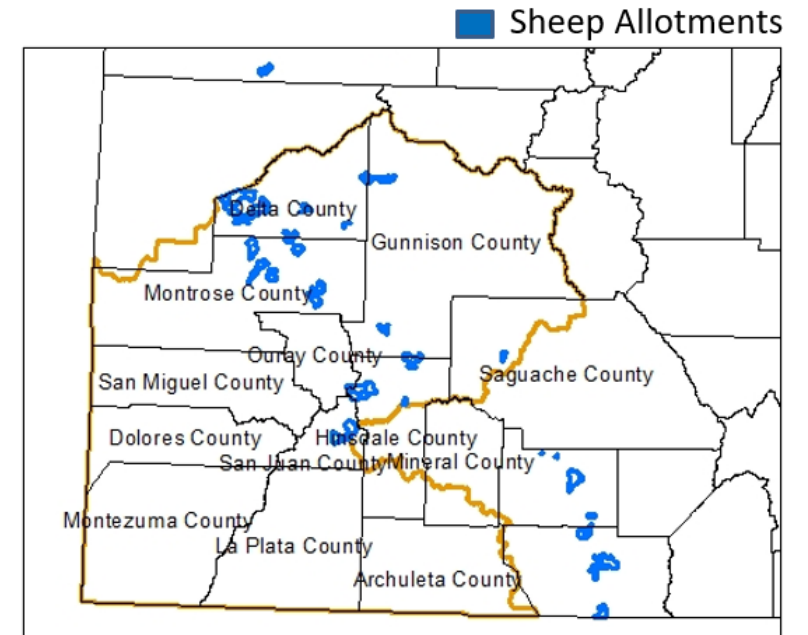
## PART THREE: Economic Overview [May 9, 2023]

**22% of Colorado's sheep and lamb production are from counties within the Southwest District.**

**30% of Colorado's Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep are from counties within the Southwest District.**

### Grazing Allotments in SW District

- Grazing authorizations on 464 grazing allotments are located on over 2.6 million BLM-administered acres in the Southwest District.
- Of the total, sheep grazing authorizations on 47 grazing allotments are located on over 181,000 acres in the SW District, or 10% of the allotment total.



Source: BLM Rangeland Administration System (RAS).





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

---

## PART FOUR: Mitigation Opportunities [June 13, 2023]

### Terms and Conditions from the EIS:

- ❖ Permittee's role in immediately notifying BLM authorized officer of any observed or reported contact of wild sheep;
  - ❖ Prevention of any turnout of domestic sheep or goats with observed or known respiratory infection or disease;
  - ❖ Immediate reporting of any wild sheep sightings in proximity;
  - ❖ Requirement of an additional herder for more than 1000 animals; and
  - ❖ Assurance of the herder's ability to identify bighorn sheep.
-





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

## **PART FIVE: Best Management Practices & Public Outreach Tools [July 18, 2023]**



Sub-committee members discussed viability of potential BMPs to help resolve issues related to sheep grazing and whether they would consider potential closure of allotments.





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

---

## PART SIX: Conclusion and Next Steps [August 15, 2023]

- **Guiding principles for the recommendations were shared.**
- **Formal recommendations were developed.**
- **Consensus among the SubRAC members was reached.**





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

---

## Recommended path forward...

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUB-COMMITTEE:

- **1. Annual Data and BMP Implementation Review** - Annually review CPW occupied sheep habitat map updates and management options to implement additional mitigation/BMP strategies based on the best available science and technology. Incorporate any necessary changes in mitigation/BMP implementation into the annual grazing instructions for the permittees.
- **2. Domestic Sheep GPS Collaring** - Secure funding and coordinate with the permittees to GPS collar a representative sample of domestic sheep within bands grazing on BLM lands. Review domestic sheep and bighorn sheep GPS collar data at Annual Data and BMP Implementation Review meeting with the permittee and agencies. Look for opportunities to incorporate real time GPS collar information and related technology to minimize risk of contact.





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

---

## Recommended path forward...

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED):

- **3. Strengthen Communication and Response Protocols** - Develop transparent and robust communication and response plans with permittee for timely reporting and responses to:
  - Observations of wandering or left behind domestic sheep.
  - Instances of foraging wild sheep.
  - Wild sheep near or within domestic sheep allotments.
- Incorporate best available technology to enhance communication speed. Incorporate mechanism for educating the public and for reporting and responding to public observations in communications plan.





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

---

## Recommended path forward...

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED):

- **4. Conduct Annual Table-Top Exercises to Test Communication and Response Protocols** - Annually conduct table-top exercises to ensure no points of failure and complete understanding of communication protocols and available responses.
  - Table-top exercises should include herders, permittees, CPW, BLM, USFS, and public. Document results of exercises, including response times and available response actions to minimize risk of contact. Develop recommendations for improving communication and response options based on table-top exercises.
-





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

## Recommended path forward...

### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUB-COMMITTEE:

- **1. Update 2020 Final EIS for Domestic Sheep Grazing Permit Renewals to incorporate more comprehensive set of options to minimize Risk of Contact** - Revise Final EIS (FEIS) to incorporate a robust set of tools (outlined in on the next slide)
- **2. Develop landscape-scale cross-jurisdictional approach to managing domestic grazing and reducing Risk of Contact**

**\*\*SubRAC recommends that BLM State Director work with State of Colorado, USFS, and other large land managers to develop comprehensive statewide plan to reduce risk of contact between domestic sheep and bighorn.**





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

## LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUB-COMMITTEE (SUBPARTS OF #1)

- a. Integrate currently vacant BLM allotments into the FEIS and permit renewal process to offer options for moving livestock when such allotments offer a significant lower risk of contact to wild sheep.
- b. Analyze in the FEIS adding vacant allotments to allotments under permit without increasing AUMs – to provide more flexibility for permittee to rotate through pastures to reduce conflict. Annual meetings should address which pastures to use based on the most current data provided by CPW.
- c. Work with the USFS to integrate the nearby vacant USFS allotments into the planning process and update the FEIS analysis with this concept in mind.
- d. Analyze livestock conversions in the FEIS where forage and elevation are conducive to cattle grazing.
- e. Re-evaluate and re-consider in the FEIS the strategy to include pasture boundary adjustments to avoid areas of overlap – incorporating the concept of using annual data sharing and real time information (if available) to adaptively manage pasture use to reduce risk of contact.
- f. Evaluate in the FEIS a strategy to forgo sheep grazing within portions of current and future vacant allotments that are determined to demonstrate a high risk of contact with wild sheep.
- g. Analyze in the FEIS not restocking allotments where a voluntary relinquishment has occurred until a quantitative risk assessment has been completed that indicates low risk of contact with wild sheep.
- h. Analyze in the FEIS voluntary 3<sup>rd</sup> party buy outs, if available, for allotments determined to have a persistent high risk of contact with wild sheep.





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

---

## SUBRAC MEMBER REMARKS





# Southwest RAC Sheep Grazing Sub-Committee

---

**QUESTIONS?**