



Summer WAFWA Conference
Wild Sheep Working Group Report
July 9, 2017 (8:00 – 12:00)

Chair, Mike Cox, WAFWA/Nevada Department of Wildlife

Attendees: 58 Total (10 Jurisdictions represented and 48 guests)

Members in Attendance: Andy Holland (CO), Hollie Miyasaki (ID), Todd Nordeen (NE), Mike Cox (NV), Colin Gillin (OR), Froylan Hernandez (TX), Brian Logan (USFS), Rick Kahn (NPS), Clay Brewer, (WSF), Frank Quamen (BLM) and Tony Wasley (Director Sponsor-NV).

1. Welcome, announcements, attendance sheet sent around, and introductions from everyone.
2. Review of Agenda: no additions to the agenda were recommended.
3. Approval of 2016 Committee Meeting Minutes – no changes
4. **WAFWA WSWG Webpage and Associated Modules (Cox)**

Pulled up the WAFWA WSWG webpage on the screen and displayed the various components and modules that have recently been added to webpage as a source of information “everything wild sheep”! WAFWA staff, primarily Carolyn Boyd has been tremendous to work with in updating, adding and improving the WSWG webpage.

- **Main Page** – includes mission statement, upcoming events, most recent mtg documents, current issues and information, member list, and banner photos of all the wild sheep subspecies
- **DMV Page** – objectives, mission statement, and DMV Strategy; flowcharts of herd response and status/pathogen variables, candidate herd list, steering committee notes, presentations (recent powerpoints shown at forums), emerging diseases, and education and media materials,
- **Resources** –Notes from past meetings, reports on various topics, publications developed by WSWG, jurisdictional wild sheep management plans, population and harvest data, and correspondences
- **Maps** – pdfs of each jurisdiction’s occupied wild sheep habitat and public land domestic sheep allotments
- **WSWG Members Only** - GIS Files-of FS and BLM domestic sheep allotments, and soon to be occupied habitat of all jurisdictions
- **Changes and How Best to Organize Webpage Information;** Suggestions- Melanie – add literature section; John – Risk of Contact model

5. **Disease Management Venture**

a. **Jurisdictional Updates on herd monitoring:**

Texas conducting disease surveillance on herds for baseline data even though currently no domestic sheep issues in Texas; will increase monitoring and sampling. Oregon – PhD research project along NV border evaluating several California bighorn herds (known to have connectivity across state lines) involving their responses (lamb/adult survival, movements, herd structure dynamics) to exposure to *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. Idaho continues to monitoring various herds including Owyhee River herd and detected more Movi herds and working on making “Movi-free” farm flocks of 40 to 200 animals and herd of 80 goats; In 2nd year of removal positive animals.

b. Test and Cull Experiment Updates

SD - Black Hills, WA and ID - Hells Canyon, and NV - Snowstorm Mtns are testing and removing Movi positive animals after being tested 2-3 times to recover herds (increase lamb survival) that have had chronic low lamb recruitment survival; remove shedders then see if lambs survive. *Peri* – Caught 10 adults and sent to SDSU – Tested adult ewes each year. Any positive was shipped to SD, Any negative were put back on mountain. Now have 6 lambs with 6 ewes in key subherd. *Mike* – SD showing very positive results in their treatment herd *Andy* – Were ewes kept separate in trailer? *Peri* – No, each subherd had infected animals put in trailer to SD.

Justin – Should you remove any sheep you test positive for Movi? *Mike* – Let jurisdictions try various levels of culling, so yes, just document results.

Hollie – consider age, higher Movi prevalence in yearlings due to continued shedding.

c. Pilot Project on Herd Response

Mike – Nevada pulling together all their data from years of disease surveillance, population response of herds (lamb ratios, pop estimates, and rates of increase), and host of other predictor variables like animal heterozygosity (genetics), herd history, moisture, NDVI, etc. Trying to uncover why some herds perform poorly and some recover well after a pneumonia event. Data from 20 herds with 1-4 years of pathogen data. Demographic data on herds since translocated. Showed suite of pathogens test results (sample size and % prevalence).

Peri – trends over time, any particular bug. Very preliminary. Used WADDL for all the pathogen testing. Look at Leukotoxin A gene too for the various bacteria. Still compiling data; will continue to evaluate the variables related to herd performance across all herds for any cause/effect patterns.

Peri – How much info can you get from carcasses (i.e., look for sinus tumors)? Look at hunter harvest samples to evaluate for pathogens.

Mike – NV has a few “Rock star herds” – one particular herd had over 300 sheep then lost 25%, a couple other setbacks but recovered well to over 400 sheep. Only one year of poor lamb recruitment then much better. Will add info on this project on website.

d. Funding Opportunities

Mike – No major funding source found yet. Many states: NV, OR, ND, are dedicating portion of their USFWS federal aid funding toward the DMV work with matching funds from sportsmen and NGOs. Anyone who has any funding source ideas get in touch with Mike.

e. Other Related Topics such as making Movi-free domestic sheep flocks

Eric – what are the opinions from experts on pursuing Movi-free flocks?

Peri – can see mild pneumonia in lambs. Old world sheep evolved with Movi. Can we eliminate it in domestics that have potential to impact BHS- this work is occurring in Idaho, Washington, and British Columbia. Potential for improved weight gains in lambs Movi free.

Eric – small flocks have potential to impact any decontamination process, swap out domestics too. *Mike* – large herds very difficult..

Rick – any plans to work with USDA?

Hollie - complicated with breeding programs, etc.. bio control, etc...

Todd – any incentives provided to owners to make their herds Movi free?

Hollie – no, just asked producers.

Jenny – Other pathogens may need to be considered

Skipped disease spillover

6. Update on Process of Colorado's Sheep Working Group.

Andy – Gore herd closet to Vail, numbers dropped. Copper herd better, Colorado Working Group met 3 times, about 40 members (stakeholders) – NGOs, FS, BLM, Woolgrowers, CPW, NPS, DOA, etc... have previous MOU with Woolgrowers – theme is uncertain, not total buy in. Statutes and authority on strays. A benefit of the working group is direct communication with stakeholders.

Matt – have momentum.

USDA-WS – how do we make USDA research folks feel more part of the solution?

Mike – perhaps share data sets. *USDA-WS* – Is there other avenues?

Terry – Don Knowles and Maggie Highland have been invited. *Andy*- they have come to some meetings. There has been lack of communication. Proactively address issues that are going on. This group is doing a lot of that. *Mike* – will reach out to Don, Maggie.

Andy – will be posting information on their website too.

Peri – Seems like there is lots of opportunity for discomfort, need trust, constructive dialogue.

Andy – CO agrees, NEPA process will still determine actions on public lands. *John* – In WY is a certain level of trust with the group. Applauds CO.

Justin – Utah not there yet with this type of group.

Clay – MT had their first meeting.

Matt – how long did it take WY working group to build trust among its stakeholders? *Daryl* – over two years for document and still working on it; *Melanie* – actually longer, about 4 years.

Doug – still working through issues. *Daryl* – WY plan is now in state statute.

7. Update from BLM – “Management of Domestic Sheep to Sustain Wild Sheep” Manual 1730

Frank – Manual 1730 out over a year now; beginning to implement it. No formal opposition to manual. Met with ASI – some concerns but want to resolve this issue. Some disagreement on implementing, i.e., removal of domestics.

GIS mapping of occupied BHS habitat and domestic allotments each year. Still need updates from states. Risk of Contact modeling – working with states on modeling, prioritizing where to use this model. Working on Incompatibility issues and updating the Risk of Contact Model to ArcGis 10.4 and 10.5. Other mapping efforts – mapping National monuments that have BHS.

Mike – 75% of sheep in NV are on BLM lands have met with BLM NV leads to prioritize high risk herds.

8. Update from NPS

Rick – Retiring NPS in 6 months

Jenny – Gathering information on sheep on NPS units; 35 units have BHS with shared management with states. Wide spectrum of herd health issues. Brought Melanie on in Nov. to help. Looking at separation, doing mapping, working with NPS staff to work with WSWG and state entities. NPS wants to participate in BMPs.

Mike – Highlighted Mojave Preserve disease surveillance effort Jenny has been working on. Also Badlands and Glacier NP. Glad to have her on board.

9. Update from USFS

Brian Logan – Region 4 Risk of Contact (ROC) analyses; Working with Besser and agreement with him, education, domestic sheep meetings across country.

John – ROC model has slowed but working on improving that. Looking at viability in each state, then produce a report, highlight where risks are. Model is limited, not about disease transmission. Sitting down with constituents, trying to get everyone in room at the same time. NV is up and running, working WY, ID and others. Updating model to newer versions of ArcGIS in similar effort with BLM.

Andy – Any grazing EIS come in after the ROC model was run? *John* – using model to look at ROC with domestic sheep beyond the USFS lands, including BLM land, private land, etc.
Terry – Clarify how you plan to disseminate the model and information.
John – First work with states, then give to Forests; will post online so is available to all.
Mike – Be interesting this fall when models numbers come out. Look at bringing BLM and FS models together. *John* – use the ROC model within NEPA, etc; *Mike* – may see retirements considered as part of the BLM ROC process; *Frank* – Many tools in the toolbox.
Justin – What about Movi free sheep on FS lands; *Brian* – working with Dr. Besser on this question
Brian Locum (FS) Region 3, southwest – fish and wildlife management in wilderness. Been working with New Mexico Game and Fish. Will be talking with leadership to develop interagency working group especially with bighorn sheep. *Mike* – GPS collars in wilderness considered installations?
Rob – Appreciate the initiative brought forward by Colorado. Working and respectful to others. Working groups are powerful tool. Not easy but good process. Applauds CO.

10. Pressing issues from Jurisdictions

Todd – lamb captures in NE, Barrel Butte and Fort Robinson herds.
Deputy Director, California DFW -Sierra/Nevada bighorn – getting close to recovery thresholds but lost 119 individuals from severe winter including 25 to predation – took action against lions. Took 2 lions.
Justin – Utah doing more capture this winter. Thank you to federal agencies in working together on captures in wilderness. *Mike* – also appreciates federal relationships and their efforts to analyze and approve bighorn mgmt activities in wilderness.
Collin – OR - 3 disease area issues. Share with Washington, Idaho, Lower Owyhee River herds – Identified Movi in 2015 – lost 80% of herd. Continuing with this project for another year.
Andy – CO - Continued good support with FS, continuing to capture sheep and collect data.
Eric – NM - trapped 5 herds, reached 1,000 desert sheep after being down to ~100. Working with CO on domestic issues and potential contact on shared border.
Mike – NV – reached milestone in 2017, 10,000 Desert bighorn and 12,000 all BHS in Nevada.
Doug – WY – Jackson herds doing good. Some competition with goats in Tetons, Other herds doing well. Elk Mountain herd growing and developing landowner issues along SD border. Took out 4 rams north of Rawlins. Sampled many sheep, evaluate data. Look at habitat issues as well. Mtn goats a concern in some areas of the northwest. Grant Teton NP looking at eliminating from park.
Jenny – Washington – live capture 70-100 nannies from Olympic NP and move to other areas.
Mike – is it habitat issue with goats and sheep? *Doug* – In Grand Teton NP it appears to be.
Peri – Had found same strain of Movi in Mt Goats and RMBS in NV. One mtn goat herd doing poorly for 7 years since 2010 dieoff.
Annette - UT – profiling sheep herds and herd performance. Some herds doing well.
Ted - Alaska – Dall sheep concerns – looking at preventative measures, looking at Separation Program from Dall and domestic sheep.
Hollie – ID - statewide genetics project, connectivity, etc... Need BHS source data and will be contacting folks. Collecting hunter harvest data from sheep and mtn goats. *Peri* – Getting heads from taxidermists. *Hollie* – Give hunters swab and blood tube
Peri – send letters out to hunters and taxidermist about sinus tumors and others. BHS hunting seminars. Target hunters in certain regions.
Clay – *Wild Sheep Foundation* - Follow up on Thinhorn Summit. Yukon doing hunter samples. WSF Grant-In-Aid process is underway; will work on DMV proposal with Mike; branched out internationally – Kurt Alt, WSF involved on many levels.

11. Update on national Wild Horse and Burro Issues

Mike – WAFWA Resolution (slide). BLM Wild Horse Advisory Board voted in Sept 2016 to allow lethal removal. National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition (NGOs, etc.) is involved too.

White House Administration wants to see language in FY2018 BLM budget which allows BLM to use all methods to manage horses within the WHB Mgmt Act. Mike met with Larry K, and WAFWA resource leads to generate resolution. Asking for support, edits, etc. to take forward to resolutions committee. Will be presented to the Directors as well. Congressional hearings for budgets are this summer so this needs to get forwarded to legislators. AFWA could help with this. Reached out to Ben Masters to provide information and help with a documentary film Need about \$50,000 funding to produce film. *Jim* – Don't believe there is a statutory AML. Western Governors Assoc. has been active in this. WGA support may be useful. WGA has 1.5 hr webinar that may be available. Potentially tie WGA to this resolution?

Melanie – Getting outlets for the film is important. Melanie can help with that.

Mike – Midwest and Eastern Congressionals are less supportive; key audience.

Clay – Wild Horse and Burro Summit coming up Aug 21-22. Zinke invited

Matt – Any fertility testing? *Mike* – All measures should be considered.

Jim – Adoption rates have declined to about 1/3 of what it once was.

CPW staff – we support resolution, may add to resolution to not allow horses outside of HMA; no opposition from any WSWG members or guests

Mike – Asked if there was any opposition in moving the resolution forward to the Directors? No opposition; will make edits based on Jim's and CPW comments; will explore NGO and various coalition support for outreach efforts on the message to better manage wild horse and burros on public rangelands and improve wildlife habitat westwide.

12. Update with First Nations and Mexican States on Wild Sheep Management

Mike – gave presentation at Native American Fish and Wildlife Conference in Rapid City; well received.

Clay – Reaching out to Mexican states and landowners. Landowners and others getting on board. Have a lot of sheep, lot in captivity. Clay is working with Mexican landowners to expand south of the border.

13. Jurisdictional Data Sharing – focused on License/Tags, Harvest and Population numbers

slides on population numbers from all 20 jurisdictions including NWT and harvest numbers of each wild sheep species. 190,000 total wild sheep. Will post slides on website.

14. 2018 Wildlife Professionals Meeting Planning

Mike – Any ideas or suggestions. See slides – Wild sheep taxonomy, Pack Goat Management, Movi domestic sheep flocks, share information on DMV related projects, Ram and ewe forays, sharing/comparing GPS collar success and failures. Other ideas

Justin – summary of sheep harvest criteria and the internal and public processes that each state uses to set tag/quotas would be good topic. *Andy* – agreed!

Eric – he summarized ram harvest criteria in the past but not process

Clay – send out a survey

Mike – will suggest this topic for the next wildlife professionals meeting.

15. Upcoming WSWG and Wild Sheep Related Events – January 2018 in Reno

16. Closing Comments Adjourn