**WAFWA Wild Sheep Initiative (WSI) 2023 Winter Meeting**

**Reno/Sparks Convention Center, Room A8 *WSWG Meeting January 10, 1 pm – 5 pm PST*** Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88982146651>

Tuesday, Jan. 10, 1 pm – 5 pm PST

# Welcome, Online Attendance Sign-in Sheet, Announcements, Introductions

# Kevin – Welcome to WSF Sheep show 2023, announcements

# Daryl – Welcome, announcements, signup sheet passed around and online signup sheet Introductions. Daryl – history/background with WYGF

 **WSI Member Attendance:** Todd Nordeen (NE), Andy Holland (CO), Caeley Thacker (BC), Bill Jex (BC), Froylan Hernandez (TX), Brent Lonner (MT), Melanie Woolever, Mike Cox (NV), Hollie Miyasaki (ID), Rusty Robinson (UT), Don Whitaker (OR), Chad Lehman (SD), Kevin Hurley (WSF), Dustin Darveau (AZ), Tom Stephenson (CA), Brad Wendling (AK), Brian Logan (USFS), Daryl Ratajczak (BLM), Elroy Masters (BLM), Nathan Galloway (NPS)

 **Guests:** Luke Meduna, Craig McLean, Heidi Hatcher, Tammy Scott, Erin Butler, Anne Justice-Allen, Tim Schommer, Anna Fontana, Vern Bleich, Jason Salisbury, Hunter Burkett, Erin Wood, Mike Wardle, Chris Morris, Ion Ewanyk, Ed Partee, Andrew Meyers, Cooper Munson, Helen Schwantje, Karen Gordon, Nate LaHue, Aly Courtemanch, Peach VanWick, Sara Bridge, Kendra Young, Pete Coppollilo, Michele Vasquez, Becky Schwanke, Terry Meyers, Brad Banulis, Ashley Evans, Danielle Glass, Jeff Villepique, Rudy Mena, Rick Ianniello

**The Change in Chairmanship - Thanks to Mike for 6+ years**

* Chair construct-WAFWA changing chairmanship construct. Daryl will Chair for at least the next 2 years while carrying on with his Wyoming Game and Fish full time duties. Daryl is confident he has the efficiency and capacity to do this. He asks that the WSI is critical of him and the “working group” over the next year or two as we evaluate whether this construct works. After two years if Wyoming Game and Fish, WAFWA leadership, you, and the working group determines the chairmanship needs to be somebody/something different, then we'll retool accordingly. This construct will be an item of discussion at each of the WSI’s bi-annual meetings (Summer and Winter) for the foreseeable future.
* What can you expect from Daryl and vice versa
* What you can expect from me?
* All I got – I’m truly excited and motivated to learn and engage with you in whatever capacity is needed. So, you can expect me:
* To ask a lot of questions – I’m a wildlife biologist responsible for everything that has fur or feathers – I’m not a wild sheep expert. Many of you know I have spent much of my career focusing on mule deer, but I have always been engaged in bighorn sheep management in some capacity and to a large extent the past 11 years.
* To be communicative – my door is always open to you and I will return your calls and emails as timely as is possible.
* I have spent considerable time learning how to best collaborate with colleagues, the public, NGOs, and others to move work or an issue forward.
* I believe in open, frank and honest dialogue.
* I understand I can, at times, be too frank – that’s not meant to be an affront to anyone – that’s just my style.
	+ I appreciate criticism and feedback – and I will respond to it.
	+ To delegate tasks to each of you and to be a bit demanding of your time as we are a Working Group.
	+ To coordinate and lead our efforts to provide results and tangible products – this is important to continue the legacy of this Group and to maintain and increase the relevancy of our work.
	+ To be responsive to our Director Sponsor to the WAFWA leadership.
	+ To make mistakes……
* What Daryl expects from you as a WSI member
* All the above………
* Let me get to know you better
* That you will engage
* That when needed you will find and prioritize time to complete tasks.
* Continue to bring your talents to bear.
* Keep me in line and let me know when things don’t go the way you think they should or maybe when you think they did.
* Initiative vs Working Group **–** WAFWA is defining an Initiative as a group, given issues and needs, that will be convened in the long-term. A “working group” will be a subset of members of an Initiative assigned to a specific need or function necessary to complete a task or product (e.g., Capture and Handling Guidelines working group).

The Wild Sheep Working Group is an Initiative (WSI) and we will appoint or assign working groups as needed. Wyoming Game & Fish Director, Brian Nesvik is our Director Sponsor.

Working groups, as they are assigned and needed, will be reported to WAFWA leadership and the Directors so they know who is appointed to complete a task, etc. This serves to ensure agency leadership is aware of work obligations to the WSI so they can allot needed time and resources, etc. to allow the member to complete a task. It also serves to ensure WAFWA Executive Committee and Directors know what we’re working on and who is doing it.

It is WAFWA’s intent to continue to assess the member agencies to support our work. Obviously, it is important the WSI continue to demonstrate that that investment in our group is as expected. The assessment dollars will be made available to the WSI to accomplish projects/products.

The WSI desires to go back to an 8-hour meeting at the Summer WAFWA. WSI recognizes there was a push to condense the Summer meeting a few years ago. Regardless, the WSI believes it can accomplish more with a return to an 8-hour day and that may be justification for agencies to ensure members are allowed to attend in person. Also, Daryl would like to see our meetings turned into work sessions to accomplish needed tasks.

It is important that the WSI day does not conflict with the Mule Deer Working Group, as several are members of both.

It was recognized there may be some value in scheduling both the WSI and WHC on the same day to allow a dual meeting with both groups for part of the day.

On that note, several members expressed a desire to return to a full day meeting at the summer WAFWA. meeting length at our summer meeting to

***Action Item: Lutz will make a request to return to an 8-hour work session at the 2023 summer WAFWA.***

# Where do we go from here and what are your priorities?

* Jurisdictional WSWG priorities **–** Of the 8 responses received, diseases and herd health were the most common item. Other topics included: removing barriers to sheep expansion/management (UT), rangeland assessments (USFS), migrations and habitat connectivity (USFS), re-establishing BHS into previously occupied habitat (MT), State action plan implementation (ID), collaboration with working partners (AZ), trophy regulation and ram harvest (AB), Climate change (AK), Federal agency overreach/dual management (AK).

We will spend some time in July discussing these topics to help guide where our efforts are focused over the next year or two.It was stressed that we often focus on bighorns and less on thinhorn sheep, so please if you have responsibility for thinhorns, let us know your priorities/needs.

***Action Item: Please, if you have not responded with your state/province top two priorities, please get them to Daryl by Jan 31. He will then summarize and send back to the group.***

**Data/Spreadsheets and Wild Sheep Annual Status Report**

* There is a wealth of information and data stored in the many spreadsheets the WSI has created. It was stated for those spreadsheets the members deem important to maintain, it is critical they are completed by each jurisdiction. For example, the population status, harvest, etc. information is used by several and needs to be kept current.

***Action Item: Daryl and Mike will get together this spring and inventory the spreadsheets and data status. Once that is done, we will update the website and let everyone know what is maintained and the status of each from each jurisdiction. In particular, the group listed population status, forays, die-offs, translocations and new issues as priorities.***

Daryl presented the idea that the WSI provide an annual summary of the status of bighorn and thinhorn sheep in each state/province similar to that done by the Mule Deer Working Group. After some discussion about what that looks like and the needed commitment to produce it, was decided this would be valuable for the Directors, NGOs, and others. This will be done in time for the Summer WAFWA and presentation to the Directors.

***Action Item: Daryl and Andy H. will provide a format (copying the Mule Deer Working Group’s) for all to use by February 28th . Each state/province will provide their update to Daryl by April 30th. Lutz will write the introduction and put the final document together (including editing) for the Summer WAFWA.***

After this first edition, Daryl will be seeking a volunteer to take on this task, so please consider doing so.

# Capture and Handling Guidelines

* Update from Mike Cox **–** Mike provided the following status update of the individual chapters for the guidelines.
	+ - The Helicopter, Drop Net, Chemical Immobilization, and Neonate Captures chapters are ~ 90% complete
		- The Collaring and Marking chapter needs to be written. There is a good outline to start with.
		- The Base Camp and Translocation chapters are about 75% complete.
		- The Wildlife Health and Veterinary Care Chapter is complete.
* The Guidelines (all 8 chapters) will be completed with an introduction and then in a bulleted statement format – not lengthy prose.
* Vern Bleich will be contracted to edit the completed chapters.

***Action Item: Lutz will work with WAFWA to complete a contract or letter of agreement with Vern to outline expectations, cost, rates, etc.***

***Action Item: Chapter Authors and  Timeline***

**         *Mike Cox will reach out to Chapter leads by January 24 with the chapters, outline, and format.  Chapters will be written as stand-alone documents with a literature cited section.***

**         *Mike Cox -  Wildlife Health and Veterinary Care, Helicopter net gun, Drop Net, Chemical Immobilization, and Neonate Capture chapters will be completed by January 31.***

**         *Froylan Hernanadez and Bill Jex – Collaring and Marking by February 28th.***

**         *Brent Lonner – Translocation by February 28th***

**         *Don Whitaker – Base Camp by February 28th.***

**         *Remaining chapters (Collaring, Translocation, and Base Camp) will be sent to Vern by March 1.***

**         *Guidelines will focus only on wild sheep and not include mountain goats.***

**         *All Chapters will be sent to Mike Cox for his review. Mike will then forward them to Lutz and he will forward to Vern for editing.***

***Action Item:  Editing, WSI Review, and completion***

**         *Vern will have these first five chapters edited by March 15th and the remaining chapters as soon as he receives them and can get them done.***

* ***Vern will provide edits on the remaining chapters in a clean version and a “track changes” version to Lutz by June 15th.***
* ***Lutz will distribute both clean and “track changes” versions to the authors and the Wild Sheep Initiative as soon as possible for their review prior to the July WAFWA meeting.***
* ***The WSI will review and resolve any needed changes for finalization and chart a path to complete the document at the July WAFWA meeting.***

# South American Camelids

* Daryl and Anne Justice-Allen provided a review/history of the issue(s) the WSI and the Wildlife Health Committee has addressed regarding South American Camelid use in wild sheep habitat. They also provided a summary of the recent meeting held (January 5th) with three of the llama producers that have engaged the working group over the past few years. Overall that meeting was productive, though frustrations still exist with the WSI/WHC draft brief which was sent to them in fall 2022 for their review and comment. They commented extensively and would like the two WAFWA committees to review and consider the information/data they provide or reference. It was stressed that we would like to have the opportunity to sit down with SAC/llama folks to share information and come to some resolution in a fashion similar to that done with the pack goat community.

***Action Item: The WSI and Anne (WHC) agreed to thoroughly review the comments received and re-work the Brief.***

* + - ***WSI member Dustin Darveau (AZ) will coordinate with Nate LaHue, Peach VanWick (WY), Becky Schwanke (AK), and Helen Schwantje (BC) and the WHC (Anne) to review and revise the Brief by March 1st.***
		- ***Anne will identify Health Committee members to assist with this review and revision.***

***Action Item: Daryl and Anne will forward the comments received to the WSI and WHC members for their review.***

**Test and Remove Fact Sheet**

* With increased implementation of the Test and Remove in wild sheep populations throughout their range, it was emphasized there is a need for more tools to use when interfacing with the public and with agency leadership.

***Action Item: Kevin Hurley and Daryl Lutz will use Kevin’s Wild Sheep article that is already written to convert into a fact sheet and/or a one page information sheet by January 31st.***

***This document will be finalized and presented to the Directors at the Summer meeting.***

***Action Item: WSI will include updates on T/R efforts in the new annual report from each jurisdiction for the Directors.***

# 2012 Recommendations for Domestic Sheep and Goat Management in Wild Sheep Habitat

* This document is widely referenced and used by many including Federal land management agencies. It is 10-years old and the WSI agreed it needs to be reviewed and updated.
* Wyoming asked the group to consider or evaluate whether or not it is appropriate to include some language providing latitude for jurisdictions, if they choose, to accept risk of contact with domestic sheep/goats for newly reintroduced wild sheep into historically occupied habitats.
	+ - Wyoming’s Sweetwater Rocks was used as an example where if federal land management agency policy (based in part on these recommendations) allowed for state agencies to accept and mitigate risk of contact, then the reintroduction of bighorn sheep into this historically occupied habitat may be feasible.
		- Many expressed concerns that such language could “water down” or weaken the recommendations.
* **It is stressed the review and update of the recommendations will strengthen, not weaken or minimize protections for wild sheep.**

***Action Item: Hollie Miyasaki, Caeley Thacker, and Rusty Robinson will work with Nate LaHue and Frances Cassirer to review the document and the current science, edit, and update the document. The WSF’s PRAB offered to assist and it was agreed they would review the revised document and offer comment before it is finalized.***

* + - * ***This project will be a primary focus for WSI in the next 12 months.***
			* ***Hollie will coordinate with her working group and get back to Daryl by Feb. 15th with a timeline for completion.***
			* ***The Working Group will consider language that will continue to protect wild sheep populations yet allow for latitude regarding risk for NEWLY reintroduced wild sheep.***

**Summer Meeting**

* WAFWA’s summer meeting is July 9 – 14 in Santa Fe, NM.

***Action Item: Lutz will make a request to return to an 8-hour work session at the 2023 summer WAFWA and schedule so our meeting doesn’t conflict with the Mule Deer Working Group’s meeting.***