



2023 Summer Meeting Minutes

Wild Sheep Initiative

Thursday, July 13, 2023 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Mountain Time Eldorado Hotel, Santa Fe, NM

Attendance

WSI Members: Todd Nordeen (NE), Andy Holland (CO), Froylan Hernandez (TX), Caitlin Ruhl (NM), Mike Cox (NV), Hollie Miyasaki (ID), Kevin Hurley (WSF), Callie Hartson-Cavalcant (AZ), Tom Stephenson (CA), William Moore (WA), Brian Logan (USFS), Elroy Masters (BLM)

Guests: Luke Meduna, Anne Justice-Allen, Vern Bleich, Kate Huyvaert, Marcus Blum, Doug Brimeyer, Rick Ward, Shane Roberts, Mike Scott, Mark Freese, Pam Herrera-Olivas, Stewart Liley, Drew Trausch, Elin Crockett, Colin Gillin, Scott Sprague, Brian Wolfer, Tricia Hebdon, Richard Whitney, Nicole Tatman, Calvin Richardson

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

Capture and Handling Guidelines -

- Schedule for document completion – Our intended timeline for completion of the guidelines was this fall with the goal to present to the Director’s at their winter meeting in November, 2023. However, it seems likely more time will be needed for review, compilation, and a final edit for layout, formatting, etc. If this is the case, we will spend the time necessary at the winter meeting in Reno to finalize the remaining chapters; and then do the compilation and final publication edit (layout, formatting, etc.) and have ready for the Summer, 2024 meeting. WAFWA administrative staff is able to do this final formatting edit.
- Finalize “completed” chapters – Critical and thorough review of the Animal Health and Vet. Care, Neonate Captures, Drop Net, and the Translocation chapters consumed the majority of the morning session.
 - The first three listed chapters were finalized with a few remaining ***changes to be completed by the primary authors with final versions sent to Vern Bleich and Daryl Lutz by July 31st, 2024.***
 - The Translocation chapter required more extensive review. For example, the discussion about captures relative to stage of gestation was controversial and requires more thought. To facilitate continued discussion and resolve the issues identified:
 - ***Tom Stephens will provide suggested language.***
 - ***Daryl will plan a time in the next few weeks for Tom, Brent, Daryl and Vern to meet and resolve the issues identified.***
- Review remaining chapters and schedule for completion – The 3 remaining chapters include Net-gun, Collaring and Marking, and Basecamp Operations are near draft completion. The Net-gun and Collaring and Marking chapters are being reviewed/edited in the next couple of weeks and the Basecamp Operations chapter is yet to be drafted.
 - ***Daryl will coordinate a meeting with M. Cox and V. Bleich to conduct the post edit review for the Net-gun chapter.***
 - ***Vern will start work editing the Collaring and Marking Chapter.***

- *Daryl would like to see a draft of the Basecamp Operations chapter from Don Whitaker by August 31, 2023.*

Review Completed Projects

- The WSI has completed 3 projects for Director Approval including:
 - Test and Remove fact sheet.
 - South American Camelid brief
 - WSI Annual Status Report
- All three projects/products were approved by the Director's at their Business meeting on 7/14/23.
- It was also agreed that publication of the Test and Remove fact sheet and the Status Report by WSF is acceptable and appreciated.

2012 Recommendations for Domestic Sheep and Goat Management in Wild Sheep Habitat - Update

- This document is widely referenced and used by many including Federal land management agencies. It is 10-years old and the WSI agreed in January it needs to be reviewed and updated.
- Holly M. presented the work she and her sub-group have done. Their recommendation is to essentially rewrite the "informational" or "background" portions of the document as most information is outdated. The recommendations in the 2012 document remain appropriate and will not require updating.
- It was recognized the BLM used and referenced this document when creating their policy 1730 to create separation. It was suggested the updated recommendations should be compared with BLM's policy 1730 to bolster the recommendations and/or to ensure consistency if appropriate.
- *Holly is requesting jurisdictions provide updated legislation, policy, or protocol for the removal of wandering/foraging wild sheep by July 31st.*
- Reminder:
 - WSF's PRAB offered, and it was agreed, to assist by reviewing the revised document and offer comment before it is finalized.
 - Kevin Hurley and Elroy Masters also offered to review.

Gene Expression in Wild Sheep

- Lizabeth Bowen presented a project proposal focused on "Gene Transcription and Wild Sheep Health."
 - This project's goal is to "use measures of gene transcription to assess individual, population, and ecosystem health in bighorn sheep."
 - The objectives of the work are: 1) Use gene transcription to identify markers of chronic carriers and 2) Create a west-wide bank of samples that can be "mined" to inform wild sheep herd health research and management.
- Liz is asking for blood samples as jurisdictions capture bighorn sheep. If you're interested and able to contribute, please contact:
 - Liz Bowen (lbowen@ucdavis.edu)
 - Kate Huyvaert (kate.huyvaert@wsu.edu)
 - Kezia Manlove (Kezia.manlove@usu.edu)

Biomeme Testing

- Kate H. provided an overview of her work to assess the feasibility/usability of the Biomeme Unit to identify chronic carriers in the field at the time of capture.
- Kate also presented potential field-based LAMP technique and will include in the comparative work.
- The merits and challenges of each technique are:

MERITS AND CHALLENGES OF TESTING OPTIONS

	WADDL PCR	Biomeme	LAMP
Merits	Published methods	Field-friendly extraction	Inexpensive
	Accredited labs	Fast (~1.5 hrs post swab)	Fast (~45 minutes post swab)
	Very sensitive + specific	Likely very sensitive + specific	
Challenges	Cost	Single vendor	Needs work
	Turnaround time	Technical personnel	May not be as specific

- Currently, Texas has 2 Biomeme Units, BC has 2, and Oregon has 1. Wyoming and Nebraska have funds available to purchase units, but until a workaround for the “go strips” is available and tested are waiting results.
- To keep this work moving forward the WSI provided input to two critical questions:
 - False negatives – How many (or what proportion of) Movi-positive sheep willing to leave on the landscape? *The group decided to be conservative and ensure test and remove efforts were as effective as possible this should be zero.*
 - False positives – How many (or proportion of) Movi-negative sheep willing to remove by mistake? *The group suggested 5%.*

Jurisdictional Priorities

- The 3 priorities that have been brought forward to date include:
 - Biomeme testing.
 - Foray distance analysis
 - ***Don Whitaker, Daryl Lutz, William Moore, Melanie Woolever, and Mike Cox will convene a meeting in the next few weeks to discuss and perhaps draft a project prospectus.***
 - Wild sheep work in wilderness.
 - ***Daryl will work with Leader Sponsor Brian Nesvik to chart a path forward.***
- Daryl asked that as priorities are identified for the WSI, to please get them to him so he can get and keep them in the que for future discussion and work/focus for the WSI.

Executive Overview

- A presentation was provided to review the WSI’s Mission/Goals, a history of major accomplishments/outcomes, and the three outcomes ready for Director approval (Test and Remove fact sheet, SAC Brief, and the 1st edition of the Annual Status Update.
- The Capture and Handling Guidelines were discussed and the timeline outlined above was presented.
- It was also mentioned the WSI, WHC, and WSF will likely host a 3rd Test and Remove Workshop in January, 2025.
- Future projects were discussed and included:
 - Evaluating foray distances re. Risk of Contact Assessments.
 - Re-engage in “Work in Wilderness” conversation. It was suggested by USFS that WAFWA/WSI should engage with USFS as soon as possible to start this conversation. It was also recognized AFWA is engaged in this conversation.
 - Biomeme/field PCR assessment.
- Leader Sponsor, Brian Nesvik, asked the WSI to consider creating a possible addendum to the Recommendations for Domestic Sheep and Goat Management in Wild Sheep Habitat document

to reintroduce bighorn sheep in consideration of the risk of contact/domestic industry to help further support translocations. It was recognized that in no way should the Recommendations document be changed to erode current protections provided.

Closing Comments and Adjourn

➤ Important dates:

- ***WSI winter meeting will be in Reno, NV on January 16th*** and the Professionals day will be January 17th in conjunction with the WSF Sheep Show, January 18-20.
- WSF Grant in Aid funding proposals due July 31st.
- Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council Symposium will be April 29 – May 2 in Anchorage, AK.
- Summer, 2024 WAFWA in Stephenson, WA will be June 2-6.

“To identify priority topics and management challenges to wild sheep in North America; collaboratively develop solutions to those challenges; foster strong relationships between state/provincial/territorial jurisdictions, federal land management agencies, indigenous groups, and wild sheep advocates; and engage with domestic livestock owners and users that share the same landscapes inhabited by wild sheep.”