

APPENDIX P
HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
9-13-01

Present: Levi Broyles (USFS), Jim Magagna, Kevin Hurley, Jim Collins, Ron Micheli, Mary Thoman

Habitat Enhancement

- Letters of encouragement/support to agencies to implement planned habitat treatments
- Split Rock/Reese Mountain
- Jim Mountain/North Fork Shoshone River
- Seek Congressional assistance to obtain funding and ensure implementation
- List of priority treatment areas statewide: *[There was a lengthy discussion about the WGFD's highest priority bighorn sheep management areas (i.e., "core" areas), and the overlap of these areas with domestic sheep. It was also discussed whether bighorn sheep should be allowed elsewhere. What's important to each side in this issue? Data tables and maps were passed out. Some committee members suggested we should include livestock projects here also. A suggestion was also made to send a letter to all domestic sheep permittees operating within the "core, native, bighorn sheep areas" {and maybe even hold a meeting} asking for suggestions on habitat enhancements which may include prescribed burning, water developments, weed control, etc. .]*

Cody WGFD Region:

- Prescribed burns on Jim Mountain/North Fork Shoshone River/Elk Fork (HAs 2,3): 1,100-1,600 acres total
- Chemical/mechanical/biological control of Dalmatian toadflax on South Fork Shoshone River (HAs 3,4,5): 2,000+ acres total
- Prescribed burns on South Fork Shoshone River (HAs 3,4): 300-400 acres total
- Prescribed burns on Wood River (HA 5): 500-800 acres total

Jackson WGFD Region:

- Prescribed burns in Hoback River drainage (HA 7): 4,000-7,000 acres total
- Prescribed burns and noxious weed control in Cache Creek/Flat Creek area (HA 7): 4,000-6,000 acres total
- Prescribed burns in lower Gros Ventre River (HA 7): 2,000-5,000 acres total
- Prescribed burns in Teton Range (HA 6): 800-2,000 acres total
- Prescribed burns and other treatments (e.g., fertilization, baiting, salt blocks) in upper Green River, Osborne & Big Sheep Mountains, Clear Creek, White Creek (HAs 8,23): 2,000-3,000 acres total
- Prescribed burns in Middle Piney Creek/Darby Mountain (HA 24): 500 acres total

Lander WGFD Region:

- Prescribed burns, herbicide control of mat forming cushion plants, range pitting, meadow restoration on BLM Ridge, Noon Rock, Whiskey Mountain, Sheep Ridge, Torrey Rim, Rim Draw, Trail Lake (HAs 9,10): 1170-1350 acres total
- Prescribed burns, opening up of migration corridors, water development in Red Canyon, Mexican Creek, Sinks Canyon, North Fork Popo Agie Canyon (HA 11): 550,000 acres total
- Prescribed burns on Ferris Mountains (HA 17): 1,000-1,500 acres total

Laramie WGFDR Region:

- Prescribed burns, timber management, fertilization, water development, etc. around Laramie Peak (HA 19): 178,560 acres total [*The committee felt a letter needed to be sent to BLM (Rawlins) strongly promoting this burn*]

Wind River Indian Reservation:

- East side of Wind River Canyon
- Prescribed burning inside designated wilderness is probably one of the highest priorities for maintaining/enhancing bighorn sheep habitat, but it is very difficult to implement with current wilderness management policies [*There was some discussion about sending a letter to the FS and the Congressional delegation about this matter*]
- Implement treatments with focus on transition and/or winter ranges
- Address habitat fragmentation; loss of migratory routes; and maintain or reestablish migration corridors
- Support large-scale projects that encompass multiple land ownerships
- Laramie Peak area
- Hoback River area
- North and South Forks of Shoshone River
- Timber removal where feasible and economical
- Encampment River Canyon
- Sinks Canyon
- North Fork Popo Agie Canyon
- Whiskey Basin
- Protection of winter ranges from recreational disturbance [*Send a letter to Regional Foresters*]
- Snowmachine use in Jedediah Smith wilderness, Tosi Basin
- Ice climbing on South Fork Shoshone River winter range
- Transplant/Augmentation/Population Management
- Finalize “Public Notification Process” for bighorn sheep transplants (Betty Fear’s ad hoc committee)
- If necessary, augment struggling, core, native bighorn herds with additional wild sheep from as nearby a source herd as possible, assuming an adequate health history is available on the source herd(s)
- Targhee herd, from Jackson herd
- Dubois Badlands, from Whiskey Basin
- Wind River Mountains on Wind River Indian Reservation, from Whiskey Basin
- Develop alternate source herd for trapping, other than Whiskey Basin
- Jackson herd/Gros Ventre River

- South Fork Shoshone River
- Adopt/adapt capture protocol to ensure proper disease sampling/reduced stress to bighorns during capture operations
- Transplant low-elevation, non-migratory bighorns into historic range; minimize chance of wild sheep being listed in WY [*There was continued discussion here about the fear of future bighorn sheep listings as T/E species in Wyoming. Some committee members wanted assurances this would never occur. There was also discussion about any of these future transplants being conducted under a 10-15 year voluntary agreement with the landowners, and less stringent applications, such as: no buffer zones, “hold harmless” clauses, ability of permittee to shift back and forth between cattle and sheep, etc.. These application terms should all be signed off on by the WGFD, the land management agencies, and the permittees. Have assessments in these areas included an analysis of domestic sheep use?]*
- Pedro Mountains
- Boxelder Canyon
- Sweetwater Rocks
- Goshen Rim
- Other locations in SE ¼ of Wyoming
- Critically review proposals for bighorn transplants, to avoid potential interaction with domestic sheep
- Develop legislation/statute/regulation to allow limited ewe harvest without affecting opportunity for drawing ram license; and to reduce population density in some herds, since high population density is implicated in enhanced disease transmission
- Improve monitoring of transplanted sheep movements and habitat selection, to better evaluate success/failure of transplant

Separation of DS/BHS

- Identification of bighorn sheep **and domestic sheep** emphasis areas [*There was some discussion here about how to identify domestic sheep emphasis areas?*]
- Develop site-specific solutions
- All actions should be taken only on a willing permittee basis
- If permittees are interested in allotment “buyouts” or incentives to waive permits back to USFS, financial compensation should be negotiated
- If permittees are interested, and where appropriate without creating other resource conflicts, evaluate conversion in class of livestock from sheep to cattle
- If available, find replacement AUMs elsewhere
- As near as possible to what was “given up”
- Be flexible to address individual permittee needs/wishes
- Identify vacant domestic sheep allotments on NF lands outside important bighorn sheep habitat: Bighorn Mountains on Bighorn NF, Wyoming Range on Bridger-Teton NF. [*It may be possible to convert distant cattle to sheep allotments*]
- Examine the separation issue from a larger-scale view (between forests, between regions, etc.)

Management of Grazing Allotments

- Identify strategically located vacant allotments and/or private lands (e.g., TNC/Heart Mountain) away from bighorn sheep habitat, that could be used for “grass banks”, to facilitate vegetative treatments (and pre- and post-treatment rest) on active allotments needing treatment(s). *[Develop/use grass banks or “rest” allotments/pastures to facilitate pre- and post-treatment rest on other allotments. Is “suspended non-use” (on BLM) an already existing “AUM bank?” Congress may have to be involved in this since lands would have to be held in non-use until purchased.]*
- Get elk population numbers down to *[need to be reduced to...]* agreed-upon objectives *[send a letter to the WGFD commission about this]*; reduce forage competition *[There was some discussion here about the “commercial” harvesting of elk. There was some concern expressed that elk just substitute for what ever gains in AUMs that were made with domestic sheep removal]*
- Allow “resource conservation” nonuse *[The question was raised whether this type of non-use could be confused with recent court decisions on this issue?]*
- Cooperatively review proposals for change in class of livestock where potential interaction between domestic and wild sheep exists *[The question was raised whether FS allotments closed to domestic sheep use could still be used by cattle? How about cattle allotments not receiving their full allocation of cattle use (e.g., Beaver/Twin, Kinky Creek, etc.). Subleasing (i.e., pasturing agreements) of Federal allotments is a potential for domestic sheep reintroduction on BLM. Not legal on national forests.]*
- Revisit allocation decisions during Forest Plan revisions *[...or if changes occur that affect the closure. Check on making “vacant” FS allotments on the Bighorn and Medicine-Bow NFs available for domestic sheep use. It is easier to reopen a vacant allotment than a closed one. When this occurs, is NEPA required? It might also be possible to create some domestic sheep allotments by redrawing the allotment boundaries of existing allotments. A few new domestic sheep AUMs might be created simply by turning on 1 day earlier and/or coming off the allotments 1 day later. Provide increased limited access for livestock management on national forest lands. As a last alternative, encourage change-of-use from domestic sheep to cattle in lieu of closure on all or parts of allotments in “core” native bighorn sheep areas. Conversions are preferable to closures. Flexibility is the key word here - cooperative agency attitudes have a lot to do with the success or failure of this. Predator control on national forests was given as an example here. Management of domestic sheep allotments outside of “core bighorn sheep” areas should be made easier by elimination of bureaucratic red tape and management restrictions. Are we talking about allotment capacity, or what is recognized by the agencies as available (e.g., conifer encroachment)? Are we using computers to determine these things? Conflicts with other wildlife species on these allotments are becoming a reality (e.g., grizzly bears, cutthroat trout, etc.).]*
- *[There was more discussion about where the domestic sheep AUM reductions on BLM went? Would BLM consider any legitimate proposals for domestic sheep*

- “re-entry”? Consider dual permits on BLM (i.e., cattle and sheep together) for more flexibility.]*
- *[There was some discussion about reactivating/reopening domestic sheep allotments which may previously have been closed to domestic sheep use adjacent to non-native bighorn sheep areas.]*
 - *[Check on wild horse areas as potential domestic sheep re-entry areas (Fig. 4?). The statement was made that new water projects for domestic sheep on BLM can't be left on because of horses. This sounds strange - check on this.]*
 - *[The “3 year non-use and lose rule” only applies where there is total non-use. As long as “substantial” use occurs (i.e., 51% on BLM?), this rule should not be a problem. This can be incorporated in a management agreement. There was discussion about changing the 3 year period to 5 yrs. Also a discussion about grazing non-operator owned livestock on a government allotment. Ninety percent (90%) of total use is required on FS?]*
 - *[Eliminate the requirement for 2 years “rest” after a prescribed burn (need specifics?). This needs to apply to wildlife, also. Elk are now part of the “rest” period. This whole concept of “rest” needs revisiting.]*
 - *Work with domestic sheep permittees, private land owners, and agencies [on habitat enhancement which results in...] making additional AUMs available in areas where possibility of contact between domestic and wild sheep is non-existent, [and where able to avoid other resource conflicts].*
 - *Non-use AUMs reserved for wild horses on BLM allotments*
 - *Water developments to increase available AUMs, both NF and BLM allotments*
 - *Increase available AUMs through vegetative manipulations (e.g., prescribed burning, herbicide, etc.)*
 - *Exchange/conversion of cattle allotments to sheep, on a “willing permittee” basis*
 - *[Aggressive conduct of weed control efforts. Discussion of Wyethia problems on FS, and the use of 2,4-D herbicide. May be able to use domestic sheep for weed control.]*

Disease Intervention / Monitoring

- *Prompt two-way notification when co-mingling occurs. Sign trailheads, etc. to alert hunters, skiers, etc. to notify agencies with sightings of strays.*
- *Prompt removal (i.e., alive first, dead if necessary) of either domestic or wild “strays”. Agencies get together with permittees to develop common sense protocol for removing stray domestic sheep after “off dates” on NF grazing allotments*
- *Routine Pasteurella sampling (and banking of samples) from domestic and/or wild sheep. Better disease monitoring of our wild sheep herds; also monitor herds that will be augmented. [Do we have a Pasteurella vaccine yet? Bryce says still 1-2 years down the road.]*

Research

- *WY Wildlife/Livestock Disease Partnership; pasteurellosis is a high priority disease for study; vaccine testing/development*

- Continue research at Sybille into minimum nutritional requirements of bighorn sheep

Communication/Education

- *[Utilize the] “hold harmless” clause/[concept in all dealings between agencies and landowners].*
- Commit to work together to dispel misinformation.
- *[Develop] articles/press releases/interpretive signs to explain/show benefits of prescribed burning for bighorn sheep habitat, particularly in wilderness; could also focus on noxious weed management/control*
- *[Develop a brochure to capture all the agreements reached by the BHS-DS working group.]*
- *[Signs to address the cooperative efforts of wildlife and livestock interests should be made and placed on some of the bighorn sheep / domestic sheep “exchange” areas and trailheads. FNAWS role in these efforts needs to be mentioned on the signs (possibly on the upper Green River). Ecological interpretive signs explaining fire should be placed in the Wind River Canyon. Also, interpretive signs explaining the benefits of grazing should be placed. Pursue all this with the FS and the BIA.]*
- *[Bryce Reese presented a handout with sheep industry and allotment statistics.]*