



June 13, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am a volunteer with the Northern San Juan chapter of Great Old Broads for Wilderness and an active participant in the Bighorn Sheep Monitoring Project coordinated by Mountain Studies Institute. I spend weeks every summer in and adjacent to the three allotment - American Flats, American Lake and Henson Creek - that pose a high risk to the Tier 1 RBS-21 bighorn herd.

Given that scientific data demonstrates the risk and history of transmission

Given that RBS-21 is a Tier 1 herd of great value

Given that CPW is managing the herd for a population that is only 25% of the carrying capacity of the habitat

Given that both the Ute Mtn Ute and the Southern Ute Tribe representatives have stated on behalf of Indigenous sovereign nations the desire for the bighorn population to be managed at 1000 individuals.

Given that currently there is no effective separation between bighorn core range and domestic sheep allotments and no means by which to achieve effective separation.

Given that I have personally witnessed bighorn within a few miles of bands of a 1000 or more domestic sheep and seen bighorn during the summer within allotment boundaries

Given that domestic sheep are spread out over vast distances and regularly out of sight of the herders

Given that communication from this remote landscape is extremely limited and that it would require hours of travel for CPW to reach these allotments

I wish to state what, to our organization, is the obvious: effective separation cannot be achieved while domestic sheep grazing exists in these three high risk allotments. There is no reasonable mitigation grounded in science; there is only avoidance and therefore the three high elevation allotments - American Flats, American Lake and Henson Creek - need to be closed to grazing. Collectively we must support livestock producers to utilize other private or public lands that pose less or no risk to Bighorn, to alter their business model to support their families and operations, and/or to consider buy-outs that provide financial benefits that eliminate the need to graze in these allotments.

In response to some of the conversation this morning, I would also like to share a few personal observations.

Last August while monitoring around American Lake, I observed the breakdown and removal of a herder's camp that was within 200 feet of the Ridge Stockway Trail and less than 100 yards from American Lake. I witnessed salt and dog food remaining at the site and sent those photos to Mr. Kaminskly.

Several summers ago, I witnessed a dead, bloated domestic sheep within a few feet of a tributary of N Fork Henson Creek in the Henson Creek allotment. I spoke with the shepherd who indicated he had no intention of removing the carcass and told me coyote would eat it.

In summary, given the science and the impossibility of effective separation, our organization urges the subRAC to encourage BLM to begin an amendment to the existing RMP as soon as possible and recommend closure of the three high elevation allotments

Thank you and I welcome questions.

Respectfully,

Robyn Cascade