

Mr. Martin Weimer
BLM Colorado NEPA Coordinator
Project Manager
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October 25, 2019

RE: DOI-BLM-CO-S060-2014-0001-EIS

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIS re: Domestic Sheep Grazing Permit Renewals. I request that this letter replace my comments submitted electronically on August 5, 2019 (ID# SHEEP-1-500000503.)

I am a resident of Ouray County. I backpack in the Uncompahgre Wilderness frequently from the multiple forks of the Cimarron to Wildhorse Peak from Cutler Creek to Big Blue Basin. I have also spent time camping and hiking in the BLM American Flats area as well as in the Bear Creek drainage on and off trail. These areas are prime Bighorn Sheep habitat for RBS-21, and to my dismay, I frequently encounter domestic sheep in and around this territory. Reports evince that grazing allotments overlap spatially with Bighorn habitat as you note in the DEIS. I have also witnessed presence of wild and domestic sheep in very close time proximity in the same location on more than one occasion. For example, I saw two Bighorn ewes south of Wetterhorn Peak along the Ridge Stockway where domestic sheep recently grazed as evidenced by the fresh feces, cropped forage and proximity of domestic sheep in the area.

This overlap of habitat and the temporal proximity of domestic and Bighorn causes great concern regarding disease transmission given that the best available science recommends a 9-15 mile buffer between domestics and Bighorn. Given your reference to the Diamond and Banulis study (2012) on page 33 of the DEIS regarding RBS-21 – the herd’s vulnerability and declining population, its Tier 1 status, its uniqueness as “one of the few remaining indigenous bighorn herds in Colorado,” and overlapping ranges with domestic sheep allotments – BLM must, in collaboration with CPW, protect this herd.

Therefore, I urge you to adopt Alternative E – No Grazing - to provide the maximum protection for RBS-21. The elimination of domestic grazing within quality Bighorn habitat will also improve the forage for Bighorn on public lands thereby supporting the health and sustainability of the herd.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please adopt Alternative E in your final EIS.

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