Something Presidential... 😊

To Hike With Our Goats... or Not

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is ultimately the question. Are we going to be able to take our animals anywhere? Or are they just going to be pets, playful barnyard decorations?

The answer to that question, is that if you live in the western half of the United States… wait a minute, did you understand that? If you live in the western half of the United States; you have been targeted for elimination.

The ultimate goal of the FS, in conjunction with G & F is to return Bighorn Sheep (BHS) to the entirety of their original home range. Take a look at the graphic I have placed here.

Does their 1850’s range cover the entirety of the mountain west? If you don’t see that, look again! And, since they have taken the position that we and our goats, must be kept miles away from their precious BHS, that means NO hiking anywhere they are found.

However, and I have said this before, I/we, do not seem to be getting the attention of the goatpackers of the US at large. Why do I say that? Well, NAPgA’s membership, is at an all-time low. Since NAPgA is the only one fighting this classic government overreach, what is the message here? That we should just holster our guns and let nature take its course? If ‘we the people’ had done that with Hitler in the 1940s, I can assure you that it would be a VERY DIFFERENT world today.

In reality, the few active NAPgA members are shouldering the monetary responsibility of at least 2100 (and I believe that the numbers are much higher) folks that are at least interested in goatpacking. How do I know that? Because I know that from at least one, and that is only ONE of the several equipment providers, at least that many folks have purchased equipment. What are they doing with that equipment? Using it to create ambiance in their apartment? I hardly think so.

Another graphic. Please take a look at this one.

The area of BHS habitat below Enterprise, OR (the grey shade) takes in the lion’s share of Hells Canyon, and the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Now, if you add the ‘adjacent to BHS habitat’ distance (which has yet to be determined, in spite of the fact that this is supposed to be an eventual ‘controlling document’), is there anywhere in this entire area that you would be able to take your goats? Hardly!

I am telling you point blank! If we don’t defeat this stuff in the Shoshone NF, which very well might take litigation, which at its root means MONEY, lots of money, we might as well plan on hanging it up.

The Shoshone is absolutely key. A win there is big ammunition to use against the other NFs, of which the Blue Mountains is only ONE of the others planning our expulsion. A loss in the Shoshone is more or less the end of the argument, it IS just THAT simple (and that statement is corroborated by our legal guy as well).

And, yes, I know that there are those out there that are getting tired of hearing me harangue about this issue. But it boils down to, that if I can’t hike with my goats, I can’t hike at all. And that concerns, and angers, me. This entire scenario is blatantly WRONG, and it is impossibly wrong to throw one class of user out of the forest! You know, the PUBLIC land???
Our 'Fat' Has Jumped from the 'Fire' --- Directly into the 'BONFIRE'

Although I have been saying this, ad nauseam, for a couple of years, this 'NO GOATs in OUR BACKYARD BS, is absolutely NOT going to go away!

Case in point: Although I knew that a DEIS was coming from the Wallowa-Whitman NF (actually, the Blue Mountains, a conglomerate of three NFs), and I pretty much knew, at least in part, what was going to be in it, when the DEIS actually came out last Friday (14 March), I am afraid that I descended into a deep blue funk and remained there for the rest of the day!

Why? Because I thought that we would have to fight this one essentially the same playing field as the one created by the Shoshone NF.

NO, they have upped the ante exponentially, and in their DEIS, out of the 5 alternatives listed, there is NO alternative that allows packgoats. Alternative B states, “The use of recreational pack goats shall not be authorized, or allowed within, or adjacent to, source habitat for bighorn sheep”. And that same verbiage is carried across all of the rest of the Alternatives. Alternatives??! What the h--- does Alternative mean, anyway?

**alternative**

[awl-tur-nuh-tiv]

**noun**

1. a choice limited to one of two or more possibilities, as of things, propositions, or courses of action, the selection of which precludes any other possibility: You have the alternative of riding or walking.
2. one of the things, propositions, or courses of action that can be chosen: The alternative to riding is walking.
3. a possible or remaining course or choice: There was no alternative but to walk.

**adjective**

4. affording a choice of two or more things, propositions, or courses of action.
5. (of two things, propositions, or courses) mutually exclusive so that if one is chosen the other must be rejected: The alternative possibilities are neutrality and war.
6. employing or following nontraditional or unconventional ideas, methods, etc.; existing outside the establishment: an alternative newspaper; alternative lifestyles.
7. Logic: (of a proposition) asserting two or more choices, at least one of which is true.

What it essentially boils down to, and is listed in #7, and that is that 'Alternative', is the 'asserting of two or more choices at least one of which is true'.

A list of Alternatives, in which there is absolutely no alternative, is fallacious at its root. How do you 'comment' on this DEIS, when the one area that applies to you, has no differentiation of alternatives to choose between?

Highlining, a Practical Necessity

Goatpacking and the 'goatpacking ethic' has changed considerably in the 10 or so years I have been associated with it. The Rendezvous used to be pretty much arranged around the idea that the goats would be free to roam from campsite to campsite, and be enjoyed by all. In the last few years, we have in many cases transitioned to a more restricted environment, where animals have had to be highlined much of the time.

Highlining:

Highlining has been a focus of some of those changes, going from, at least in the minds of some, from, “Why would anyone want to do that?” To a more conservative approach, due to wanting to know where our guys are at night. This, in large part, has occurred as there have been some clear losses where goats disappeared during the night never to be seen again.

It happened a few years back to George Bogdan, who clearly noted that he never highlined at night. However after losing all of Wade Steele’s goats on a trip into Jungle Lake, George then noted that he would always highline in the future. Losing all your best friends, in a flash overnight, has a way of prioritizing this particular issue.

However, now there is a much more insistent issue to consider. In the last couple of years, we and especially, our goats, have come under intense scrutiny by land managers as a potential threat to their blessed Bighorn Sheep. Whether or not we are, or we are not, is not the issue in the slightest, at least at this point.

The most important issue is that we have been catapulted into an extremely uncomfortable and high visibility situation, and quite frankly, it will only take one incident of losing our goats, to sink our ship as effectively as the iceberg that sank the Titanic. Complacency sank the Titanic, and complacency will sink us, you can certainly be sure of that.

The end result, whether or not you like highlining, it has become an absolute necessity. None of us has the freedom to jeopardize the access of anyone else to the wilderness. And just ONE loss of our animals will do exactly that.
George Bogdan

An update:

It has been quite awhile since I brought George into this newsletter, but it seems like the ‘father of Idaho goat-packing’ should have a little visibility now and again.

It has now been around 2 years I believe since George got an update on his lease to the backcountry, vis-à-vis his heart operation that put him back in excellent hiking condition, and a little less than 2 years since the stroke that put a very clear and definite end to his outdoor exploits.

As I see him around every two weeks or so, it is certainly clear that George has made some vast improvements in his ability to talk clearly and do other things. However, he is still wheelchair-bound, and the ’improvement distance’ he has traveled so far, as compared with the distance he currently has left to travel, is so very great, that I will be very gratified, but also very surprised if he ever regains the use of his legs. It is a sad end to an active and vibrant life.

If you are one of the ones who lives within visiting distance, he desperately needs the company. It would be much easier to visualize what I have written here if you had actually been there and observed George first-hand. He noted one time that he felt like he was in prison. As I told him later, “yes, George, are, but the prison is your body, not this facility. And, sadly, it is.

George on his next to last trip with me. Into a lake with 21” fish or better. This one he netted on his 5th cast. He was in heaven.

And here we have George waiting on the next big one.

And finally, here is George struggling to get into Lynx Creek Lakes. He had always wanted to get into this area, but had never made it. It is one of the most brutal hikes that I am aware of... 3000’ of altitude, and mostly granite.

And on top of that, George, unknownst to him at the time, was struggling with a heart issue. He later learned that every time that he began to exercise, his oxygen level went into the bottom of the well.

But, amazingly, after a lot of ‘rest’ stops, read here: re-oxygenation stops, he made it!

We fished some, talked some and ate some. It was a wonderful trip.

I had no idea that it would sadly be the last one.