**Something Presidential...** *(how I address my HOA newsletters...[meant to be tongue-in-cheek]*)

Well, here we are again, and as a result, I am up against a deadline for another newsletter. And unlike what I put in the last one, we in Idaho are definitely NOT up to our earlobes in 100-degree days, and in fact, I am fairly certain that this entire geographical region has been transported and planted into the San Francisco bay region. As fog and inversions seem to be the order of the day. But then I digress...

The Shoshone FS has finally ‘delivered’ and the news is just exactly what we expected... BAD. But then, as I said, that is exactly what we expected. The real point here is to get past the bureaucratic nonsense, so we can finally begin to drag the dispute around to somewhere that more represents ‘our playing field’.

The most interesting part here, is that they are not even doing what they are required to do by law (knowing what I know about our 2014 government, that isn’t exactly what I would describe as a heart stopper). In point of fact, after the brilliant response that our legal guy put together, their responses were definitely inadequate and certainly not fulfilling the intent of the law, if not the letter.

In fact, they talk out of one side of their mouths about 'minimizing risk', but out of the other side come policies that at the very least, promote, or suggest an agenda that is as near as possible to 'No Risk at All'. Unfortunately, in this universe there is always some risk. As a point of fact, Wild mtn. goats have recently inserted themselves in the equation, and they have the potential to carry exactly the same pathogens that the FS and G&F are worried about. And since the FS is incapable of 'ordering the moun-

There was a communication from an interested user, but he declined to have his comments printed here, so we will just say that he was in agreement with our concerns.

**The Record of Decision URL:**
http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/shoshone/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5379153

**Interesting, but Unrelated Links:**
- http://www.bighorndiseaseinfo.org
- http://www.huck.psu.edu/about/news-archive/plowright-bighorn/sheep-pneumonia
- http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/bhsheep/disease.shtml

**My Thoughts Regarding Restrictions on Pack Animals Due to Disease Occurrence in Bighorn Sheep**

The following are some random, but relevant, thoughts that I have been writing down as I have been musing over all of this...

1) Almost all research is exclusive to domestic sheep. If you Google 'Bighorn Sheep Diseases', you get a multiplicity of responses. In all, the research, and the data is concerned with domestic sheep. However at some point at the last of many of these articles, there is this magical leap of logic, and somehow, the previously documented research all of a sudden includes domestic goats. *Huh?* There is almost no research to implicate goats as there has been for sheep. If goats, especially packgoats, are to be included in this ‘danger to BHS’ scenario, then the research of necessity needs to specifically apply to goats... not sheep! And not just 'domestic goats' but packgoats... because they *ARE* different!

2) Unfortunately, we have to get into an exercise in semantics here. Officially, Bighorn sheep are not, 'endangered' or 'threatened'. In the government's verbage, they are a 'sensitive species', a 'species of concern' or 'imperiled'. So what does all that mean?

Essentially, what it means is that "we are going to go to
great lengths to protect their numbers" even if they are not, 'endangered' or 'threatened'. OK, with the linguistics gyrations out of the way, if they are: either a 'sensitive species', a 'species of concern' or 'imperilled', why then are they still hunted? Why are the strongest and best genetics taken out of the herd each year?

If they are a 'sensitive species', a 'species of concern' or 'imperilled', then in a rational universe, they would certainly be protected to some degree. However, if you are going to be instituting some sort of 'protections', wouldn't hunting the best and strongest specimens of the animal, taking them from the gene pool, be the first thing to be curtailed??

So in spite of the fact that BHS need to be 'protected', we are still going to allow them to be hunted?? Either 'protected' means what we think it does, or there is a very large and major disconnect here.

3) And even if they are not technically listed as an endangered species, the assumptions we can draw from the protections and status that they are currently being given, is that someone, somewhere, certainly seems to think that they need protection. So, in view of that, if they are so concerned with the long-term viability of this animal species, why would they, as I have said before, allow the taking the very biggest and strongest genetics out of the gene pool. Which is what they are doing by hunting.

4) Why when the land managers talk out of one side of their mouths, that they are concerned with minimizing the risk to BHS, are they, in fact, really saying, by means of the implementation of policies that restrict goats from anywhere near BHS, complete elimination of risk? There is no such thing as complete minimization of ‘risk’. It doesn’t occur anywhere in nature. And it won't here.

5) And how can you accomplish ‘complete elimination of risk’, when it is well known that wild Mtn. Goats also can carry the same pathogens as our packgoats, and are well-documented as currently migrating into BHS habitat?

6) And how about llamas? And horses? Are we to believe that these pathogens are unknown to these other breeds??

7) And also, when the actual presence of goatpackers in any large ecosystem is virtually miniscule, possibly between 2 and 4 visits per year by goatpackers in any given location, can they be considered a significant risk to BHS? In reality, due to the bonding that our goats have with us, and their desire to be joined at the hip with us, when we are in BHS habitat, that is about as close to ‘no risk’ as it is possible to get.

8) And why in the EIS action, were our packgoats lumped in with ‘domestic goats’, when it is patently clear that a packgoat, imprinted on humans at an early age, and socialized to look to humans for their leadership and security, cannot be confused in any way with a ‘field or domestic’ goat. Their brains are wired completely different. The field goat wants nothing to do with a human, while the packgoat wants to be wherever ‘his human’ is located. Quite simply, the packgoat CANNOT be considered in the same aspect as a domestic goat because they are NOT. Their brains are wired differently, and that is due to their imprinting and socialization. Nowhere is this more clear than in an attempt to make a 'packgoat' out of a field goat. Those of us that have tried, can tell you with unequivocal certainty, IT DOESN'T WORK!

Don't even think about telling me I can't go there!

Proposed Goat Closure Map for the Shoshone NF
We will naturally be preparing a response. We met with our legal guy on Tuesday, 29 January. Although I have to admit that not everyone is in agreement on this, it is still my absolute and express belief that we simply MUST prevail here in the first of the national forests to attempt to discriminate against goatpackers. And that analysis is shared as well by our legal guy. The reason for prevailing here in the first of the forests to attempt to throw us out, is that there are a number of other national forests reaccomplishing their forest plans, and anywhere there are Big Horn sheep, goats find themselves solidly in the crosshairs of the forest’s elimination actions. Without prevailing in the Shoshone, there isn’t much chance of preventing this action in other locations.

Why? Because the FS agencies will use the Shoshone decision as a benchmark, or precedent, to base their own decisions on. And since there is so much anti-goat sentiment popping up everywhere, it is academic that a loss in the Shoshone will progress down the chain like dominoes.

As it now stands: Most of the Wind River range is closed to goatpackers, as is some of the Inyo NF in CA. Further in CA, there are two other NF’s reaccomplishing their land use plans, the Sierra and Sequoia (As of this date, I am not aware just what their exact plans are concerning goats). In Oregon the Wallowa-Whitman is progressing with their land use rewrite, and in that NF, their operative statement is, ‘No goats in, or adjacent to Big Horn sheep habitat’. That pretty much takes in the entirety of the Eagle Cap wilderness.

In Arizona, Tom & Teri DiMaggio, long-time goat packing outfitters, have been summarily locked out of one of their traditional guiding areas, and could potentially lose more of their normal and traditional forest access.

In Idaho, the Clearwater NF is also reaccomplishing their forest plan, but it remains to be seen in that one where goats will fit in... if at all.

But PLEASE don't forget, as more than one source has indicated, the move to eliminate Packgoats has originated at high levels of this administration. Formulated by individuals who know nothing about the environs they are dictating to, nor anything whatsoever about the animals that are the object of their decisions. It's just plain WRONG!

The Future of Goatpacking

In pure technical terms, none of the Shoshone is actually closed right now as the closure order expired on the 31st of December, 2013 (Remembering that the proposed 'closed' territory would be impossible to get into now, unless by helicopter).

In reality, their proposed actions will not be effective until the end of the public input period. In my opinion, they will make sure that unless we are able somehow to formulate some sort of a comprise, these areas will be closed as they desire.

Looking at the above map, we do not now have a clear reading on this, but I am suspecting that we will also be restricted out of the 'buffer' area as well.

And I'm guessing that more closures will follow.

We will naturally be preparing a response. We met with our legal guy on Tuesday, 29 January.

And the outcome of that meeting was that we will prepare a response that outlines the shortcomings in their reasoning, and the areas in their plan where they are short on science, and where they have missed noting the differences in packgoats vs. 'domestic goats' and where they overlooked the lengths that we were willing to go in order to keep this area open.

The current NAPgA Rendezvous is scheduled for 26-30 June near Bend, Oregon (Preliminary Info & Pictures) (Coordinates 43.729817, -121.418241) (Google Earth URL)