Something Presidential... 😊
"Another Pleasant Valley Sunday..." with apologies to the Monkees, it is not another pleasant valley sunday, but it is another newsletter from Larry, and more chatter about Bighorn Sheep. I can virtually assure you that by the time we have fought our last on this issue, you'll be sick to death hearing about BHS. But there has never been such a threat to our recreational way-of-life as these animals, and it would be hard to picture another threat so severe.

Some of the more perceptive out there will note that this NL says 'March'... and anyone can plainly see that it is STILL February! Right you are! But this editor/writer has a NL to do, and a magazine to get out, all by the 1st of March. Sooo... it is either a very early NL, or a very late NL. I chose the former.

As a FYI, our legal guy, Andy Irvine has already begun our appeal, and since we only have 60 days from the date of the ROD, we will not have long to wait before it is submitted. How long after that it will be before the FS gets its groove back is anyone's guess.

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

Meanwhile get out the maps and begin planning! Summer hiking is only a few months away. Better that, than sitting in front of the window wishing the snow would go away!

Bighorn Sheep

1) Why has this animal suddenly taken center stage in the west, and 2) why are goatpackers so incensed at being eliminated from the forests where the BHS still survive?

Some of us concern ourselves with possible other 'agendas', but... without solid evidence to the contrary, we have to continue to play on the field they have built, and their presumptions are: 1) BHS are highly susceptible to certain diseases, and 2) our goats possibly could carry those diseases, and therefore are a threat to BHS long-term survivability.

Well, the core answer to the first question in the subtitle above, is 'Who knows??'

In other words, why, after all this time, since the BHS die-offs began in the mid-1800s, are we, almost overnight, in 2014, being threatened with expulsion from the forests, in order to protect this animal that: 1) Is not listed as 'threatened'; 2) Is not listed as 'endangered'; and 3) according to all currently available information, well into substantial recovery in their original range?

Hard questions, no reasonable answers. And that because there is no real substantive rationale for the current pogrom in the first place, and virtually no science to support it, which leads naturally to the next question...

Regarding the second question in the subtitle, that one is a bit easier to deal with.

In the first place, the first location that the powers-that-be decided to use as a test case, is probably one of the most beautiful environs in the US, if not the world. Why would they not begin with a somewhat less-desirable location that would not generate such a lot of emotion? You decide.

And in the second place, what actual science do they have that says, "Keep those goats away from our BHS!" Unfortunately for their case, virtually none. Interestingly, when you research this stuff, you find that there is a plethora of research on domestic sheep, who do represent some level of hazard, and at the very end of these documents, you find the implied statement that, 'We better throw goats into this mix because they are 'bout the same size as the sheep'. Sorry, I'm being facetious, but there is no actual research on goats vs. BHS to indicate an elevated risk of the communication these diseases. Goats just seem to be added to the mix, 'because', and 'we doan particularly like goats anyway!'
From the Cascade Packgoat Club

Hello Everyone, the Cascade Packgoat Club will be having our annual Harness Goat Clinic on March 8th from 10 am to 1 pm. Again this year the clinic will be held at a covered horse arena in Beavercreek, OR. This arena has a kitchen so we are having a potluck. Coffee and tableware will be provided by the club. Bring food to share.

This clinic is free to members who have paid their dues for this year. Otherwise it’s just $5 for an individual or family to attend. We will have handouts, carts, harness, and goats available and you can also bring your own and we will have knowledgeable folks to help you figure it all out!

Directions to the clinic are: From I-205 take Exit 10 which is Hwy. 213 S. Continue on Hwy 213 for 3.2 miles to S. Beavercreek Rd., turn left at S. Beavercreek Rd. and go 3.7 miles. Turn right at S. Kamrath Rd. and go 0.5 miles. Turn right at S. Beaver Glen Dr. and go 0.1 miles. Take the 1st left to stay on S. Beaver Glen Dr. and go 0.4 miles. The arena is at the end of a dead end road. If you want to use Mapquest or your GPS the address is 15630 S. Beaverglen Dr., Oregon City, OR 97045

Other upcoming events are the SOLV Beach Clean-up on March 22nd and then OSU Pet Day will be May 3rd.

If you have any questions about this email you can call me at 541-258-8304 or email me at pjbullygoat@centurytel.net

Jan Privratsky
Lebanon, OR

Life’s an adventure... especially with goats!

What Can We Do to Help NAPgA?

It seems like the goatpacking community is slowly recognizing that we have a major problem with these closures and potential closures, and is beginning to ask the question, “What now?”.

In the Shoshone NF, at this point it is in the hands of our legal guy. Where we are now, is in the appeals process, and they DO NOT take public comments at this point. So it is up to whoever wants to file an appeal to adhere to their very strict guidelines.

On the other hand, it will undoubtedly take more money than we currently have in our account to cover the appeal, and so one of the things that will help is donations towards this current need.

However, there are other areas accomplishing their forest plans, and they are not near as far along in the process as the Shoshone. So what I am saying here, is that there will be other chances to have a say in the input, ‘public comment’ process. I believe there will be a lot of them!

What Our Legal Rep Said Regarding Member Input During the Appeals Process

Your membership is certainly welcome to write letters to the Forest Service and voice their concern, but at this stage in the process the Forest Service will only consider more formal objections that meet the legal requirements below. If you have members willing to comply with the requirements below, they can file their own objections. But, they will be subject to a formal appeal-type process (name on the FS website, responses from other parties, potential meeting with the FS). Certainly, let your members know that we, on behalf of NAPgA, will be providing a formal objection. We’ll need financial support for that and both financial support and manpower (for document review) if we move beyond that into litigation.

-- Andy

What Our Legal Rep Said Regarding Member Input During the Appeals Process

It is the objector’s responsibility to provide sufficient evidence and rationale for why an independent Forest Service review and resolution of issues should be conducted. The objection must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 219.54, and include the following information:

- The objector’s name and address, along with telephone number or email address, if available;
- A signature, or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the objection);
- When multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector and verification of the lead objector upon request;
- The name of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision being objected to, and the name and title of the responsible official;
- A statement of the issues and/or the parts of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision to which the objection applies;
- A concise statement explaining the objection and suggestion of how the proposed plan decision may be improved. If applicable, the objector should identify how the objector believes that the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is inconsistent with law, regulation, or policy; and
- A statement that demonstrates the link between prior substantive formal comments submitted by the objector and the content of the objections, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunity for formal comment.
A Meeting with Andy Irvine, Our Legal Rep

It is always much nicer to meet face to face with folks that you have to deal with on a regular basis, in contrast to only having in mind a telephone voice!

So, by virtue of the fact that Andy was going back and forth through Boise on his way to Baker, OR, he suggested we meet together on Sunday the 9th of Feb.

It was fun, and it was informative. We discussed strategy in the Shoshone NF, and a number of other issues that have to do with goats, and their potential elimination from the forest.

It turns out that he is an avid outdoors enthusiast, and has done extensive backpacking in the Winds. So he has a great degree of understanding why we who need our boys to get us there, do not want to be summarily eliminated from the forest.

If you haven’t read the Response Andy put together to the Shoshone NF during their comment period, please do. It is a beautiful piece of work. We are lucky to have found someone not only competent, but in concert with where we want to go with this.

NAPgA Dues

NAPgA’s dues are about as low any organization I am aware of. Our dues structure is as much based on the need to keep in touch with goat folks, as it is for cash flow.

However, in spite of the fact that we send out letters at the first of the year, reminding folks to update their dues, we frequently don’t hear from folks for two or three years... or more!

Generally, I update to the current year regardless of any arrears, but I can't help but wonder how fair that is to the folks that are regular and punctual with their updates.

We need to keep in touch with folks that can help with whatever issue is current at the time, but at some point we must of necessity go to a more business-like format and stick to updating whatever the last year an individual was current for.

Pls remember, the website will not let you sign in after 1 March if your dues are not current!

Larry Robinson
NAPgA

NAPgA’s Website is Interactive!!

I suppose that there are many out there that are saying, “So what does that mean??”

‘Interactivity’ when applied to a website, simply means that you can interact with the website itself. And so now what does that mean?

What that means, is that when I originally laid out the parameters for the new website, I specifically wanted our members to be able to go into the website and change/update whatever information that had changed since they originally signed up.

Such as:
eMail Address:
Password:
Address:
Phone #:

In other words, almost everything except ‘Renewal Date’ 😊

The fly in this particular ointment, is that virtually nobody actually uses it as such. Either they write me and say, “Please change this for me!” or I eventually find out about eMail, address and other changes by default.

When you log into the website, the first place you are taken is your information. PLEASE look it over and change anything that is out-of-date, and be sure to click on ‘Submit’ at the bottom of the page to make the change permanent!

You will certainly in doing so make life so much easier for the guy that has to maintain the DB. And we all know who that is, eh? 😊
In addition to the lack of substantive research to connect our goats with BHS die-offs, there is also the issue of just how many folks are dragging goats into a given wilderness in a particular year? Because of the small number of us that are doing this kind of intense packing, precious few! If there are just a few goats in the wilderness, there is a ‘small’ risk and that is also because...

In the face of reality, and plenty of documentation to challenge their assumptions, these land managers, insist on lumping our packgoats together with domestic goats, or in other words, goats that have NOT BEEN imprinted on humans, and HAVE NOT been socialized to be with humans, and therefore NOT taught to look to humans as their 1) security; and 2) as their leader, or in other words, the ‘Alpha Goat’. As I said in the last newsletter, the packgoat’s brain is wired completely different than a ‘domestic’ goat. 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 the same! They are imprinted and socialized to relate to humans. Relatively early in their development it is very difficult to change that, because their little brains have been wired differently than a field goat. That DOES NOT change with age.

And so, in answer to the second question, if there is no science, no indication of essential risk, if we have bent over backwards in our attempts to mitigate the small risk that is there, as we have, why are we still facing expulsion. **It is maddening... and we are.**

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**Bighorn Sheep Range, Then & Now**

Bighorn Sheep are a sort of bellwether indicator of the effects of our incursion into the wilderness, and what has been the impact it has had on somewhat more fragile wildlife.

Bighorn Sheep have without question suffered at the hands of our western progress, and as a consequence their numbers have declined substantially from what they were before we arrived. *OK. So in 2014, where are we in insuring that this animal doesn’t completely disappear? And what do we need to do to insure its long-term survival?*

Well, what you would assume from listening to the F&G guys, and what you can determine from looking at the actual statistics, are unquestionably two wildly different conclusions.

Did BHS reach a very low point in their population? Yes, in 1955.

Are they still at that point in 2014? Hardly.

So where are we in terms of restoration, and where do we need to go?

If you carefully examine the graphics below, it is obvious that in the mid-1800s, there were a great and populous society of BHS in the west.

But in 1955, it is also clear, that this population had declined to very small numbers.

However, looking at the 2012 map, it is also as clear that there are resurgent populations of BHS in their full pre-human-incursion range, not to the degree that they were in the mid-1850s, but on the other hand, it certainly it would be very difficult to make a case that they are threatened to the degree that they need the most extreme protections to insure their survival.

That is: pure, unmitigated, nonsense!

Where do we need to go? My belief is that we need to continue to let this animal repopulate its original range, and do what is necessary, to protect its ability to do that. And not do any more than necessary to achieve those goals.

*Throwing our packgoats out of the forest far exceeds what is necessary to achieve that result.*

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*Please look over the graphics on Page 5*
What their range looked like in 1850

What their range looked like in 1955. Obviously significantly reduced. Did they need some level of protection then? Undoubtedly so.

What their range looks like in 2012. Have the situation improved? Certainly looks like to me!