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

I originally put off doing a newsletter on the basis of wanting to announce the outcome of the Shoshone NF FEIS. However, that news has still not been released, so we are playing a waiting game here. More comment in my article below.

!!Late breaking... after specifically querying the Shoshone NF: the FEIS is now scheduled to be released in January! (That is, provided there are no more government shutdowns.)

Well, as I noted in the September issue, summer had finally given us a break from the 100 degree days, and now, in November, we have more than a ‘break’, we have cold! 15 degree nights at this point.

As I also noted last issue, I got in precious little hiking this year since as I had to hang around home and wait for a potential fire evacuation that thankfully never came. We were lucky. Hailey and Sun Valley Idaho suffered through the Beaver Creek fire, lots of folks were evacuated, and homes were lost.

But we did have some spectacular fall weather, and I was able to get in a hike to one of our more glorious hot springs. I’m wondering if there is anything that feels better than sliding into 103 degree water when the temps outside are 40-50 degrees.

Regarding the Shoshone NF FEIS, we anticipated that the FEIS would be forthcoming by the end of October. At least that’s what they originally promised. However, that date came and went, and still no word on their website or elsewhere. I’m presuming that they would respond that its tardiness is due to the recent government shakedown shutdown.

After that action, as I have stated previously, we have 90 days to appeal their decision(s). Which I cannot believe won’t be necessary due to the lack of an acceptable option for us in the original EIS.

Then, finally, if the outcome is no more favorable than we expect, the only avenue left for us is to follow up with a court action. **Whether or not we can pursue that route will depend completely on our membership’s support, as no court action is possible without the application of great piles of money!**

It is my **absolute and express** belief that we simply MUST prevail here in the first of the national forests to attempt to discriminate against goatpackers, as 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.**

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.

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**Inyo National Forest Announces the Release of Draft Assessment Report**

**Release Date:** Nov 18, 2013

**Contact(s):** Deb Schweizer 760-873-2427

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*Inyo National Forest Announces the Release of Draft Assessment Report*

Bishop, Calif., November 18, 2013 - The Inyo National Forest has released the forest’s *Draft Assessment*
Report for public review. The assessment is the First-phase of the process to revise the 1988 Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan or plan).

The Draft Assessment Report summarizes the findings of the topic papers including forest resource conditions and trends, social and economic conditions, and recreation opportunities and access. The assessment will frame the NF as the forest develops a revised plan and evaluates the environmental effects of the proposed plan as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Inyo National Forest is one of three National Forests in California revising its Forest Plan using the 2012 National Forest System Planning Rule. The forests will complete plan revision through a joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) starting in 2013.

The Draft Assessment Report is available for review through December 16, 2013 on the forest's webpage: [http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=40601](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=40601). Input can be provided via or email (comments-pacificsouthwest-inyo@fs.fed.us) or by snail mail to: (Forest Plan Revision, Inyo National Forest, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200, Bishop, CA 93514).

A public meeting to review the Draft Assessment Report is scheduled for 6:00 pm, December 5, 2013 at the Supervisor's Office, 351 Pacu Lane, Bishop, CA. A webinar is also scheduled for December 11 at 2:00 pm. Please call or email Deb Schweizer (debraaschweizer@fs.fed.us), 760-873-2427 to sign up for the webinar.


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The Delayed SOLVE Beach Clean-Up

The Oregon SOLVE Beach Clean-up was held on October 26th after having been cancelled in September because of stormy weather. The Powell’s, Kline’s and myself enjoyed a beautiful day on the beach. There was not much trash as there was a Boy Scout troop in front of us! Later is a photo of my Zeus crossing a stream, plus another of the Boy Scout troop meeting our club.

The scout-boys thought it was an AWESOME idea that the goats could carry our packs for us! (Ha! I’ll just bet they did. Weren’t no goats handy when I was a boy scout. Larry)

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Beach Clean Up Pictures

Jan Privratsky’s boy, Zeus, crossing a stream that runs into the Pacific ocean. (Point of note: At the Carson rendezvous, Zeus took an immediate dislike to, and wanted nothing further to do with, who else, but me. HA! Just shows that goats are a far better judge of people that we are! :-)))

Jan & friends gladhandling the boy scouts about the usefulness of our goats. I’ll just bet the scouts were were wishing that they had a goat, or even maybe two of them!

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A Goat Cam


Although this one changes now and then, it still is a goat cam, wherever it ends up! (Ooops. I forgot to mention that in order to see the cam you gotta wade through a bloody advertisement. I hate that!)
NAPgA’s Purpose statement, in part, (from the website…)

The By-laws of the North American Packgoat Association (NAPgA) state that NAPgA seeks to further the pursuit of goatpacking by sharing the knowledge, ideas, and experiences of its members, by promoting the use of packgoats to the public as a means of low impact wilderness transportation and recreation, by serving as an advisory group on local and national land use issues, and to engage in other activities related to educating the public about goat packing.

However, in that light, now consider this opinion from one of our erstwhile, and well-meaning, but (now, sadly) ex-members.

“When NAPgA ceases to be a political group and becomes a group about the goats, I will possibly rejoin. I believe this is a futile waste of money to try to fight the rulings on goats in the Bighorn environment. It is not only goats being kept out, it is the domestic sheep as well. There are plenty of places to hike without going in to Bighorn areas, I think the membership needs to sit down, calm down and be realistic. I have not been a member in a few years, and I was there at the very start. That first meeting discussing setting up this group. I am sad to see the direction that NAPgA has taken.”

So, where do the facts and realities lie in this discussion.

I suppose that the first question, is, what are the limitations being proposed here, and what does it mean to goatpackers.

At first blush, the areas inhabited by Bighorn Sheep are not extremely large. But is that the only issue?

Absolutely not. In the first place, the areas that Bighorn sheep currently inhabit, unfortunately cover the very areas that we would most like to hike. And when one of the NFs makes the statement as a part of their forest plan re-write, ‘No goats, in, or adjacent to, BHS habitat’, now you are talking about a whole lot more territory. In fact, in this case, the entirety of the wilderness in that area.

So why do we come in conflict with BHS? Because Bighorn Sheep are denizens of the ‘high country’. In Idaho, and most other areas, that is where we hike. Anywhere from 8000’ to 10,000+ feet.

OK. So are the areas where BHS currently inhabit the only areas were we stand the potential of being restricted out of?

Sadly, in reality, NO. It just isn’t that simple.

The FS in conjunction with Fish & Game in the various states, have three primary objectives where it concerns the care of BHS:

1) To protect the BHS in the areas they currently inhabit.
2) To reintroduce BHS into areas they previously inhabited but are not now,
3) & finally, to introduce them into areas where they were absolutely never native!

Unfortunately, when you compile all of these areas together, they encompass a very LARGE part of the forest, and leave precious little area left for the goatpacker.

In Arizona, a long-time goat-packing guide has been restricted out of some of his traditional areas to take groups – and where he has ‘goatpacked’ for the last 20 years. Because? Because they are introducing BHS in the Coronado NF, in areas where they never were native in the first place!

So, will this still leave us with ‘plenty of places to hike’, as our member said? One way you can determine that, is by looking at the areas where BHS are now native, then extrapolate that to include the other two areas they have designs on, and remember the statement: ‘no goats, in, or adjacent to’ Bighorn Sheep habitat. That ‘adjacent to’ statement pretty much will take out the lion’s share of the hiking in the western half of the United States.

And another very relevant question that needs to be asked: Why now are so many of the NFs, all during virtually the same time period, re-accomplishing their forest plans? And why are so many of them specifically targeting goats? Is this an accident? I hardly think so.

And are BHS really at risk from our animals? While admitting that there can be no 100% risk-free promise, no matter what issue you are considering, that risk verges on nonexistent when you are considering
that risk to BHS from our goats. In my experiences with BHS, when you get within ¼ mile of them, they began to show signs of apprehension. Any closer and they began to move off and away. When you couple that with the fact, as any goatpacker knows, our goats want to be with us, not running off and mingling with any other animal, be it BHS or whatever.

Now, finally, just one more aspect of this to consider, and that is: is the protection of BHS the actual agenda in the first place? Or is there possibly something else afoot?

The attention-getter was when the Shoshone NF completely blew-off the Best Management Practices (BMPs) that we (NAPgA) put together in anticipation of, and in an attempt to prevent, the Wind River range closure (These can be found in their entirety on the NAPgA website [www.napga.org] under ‘Issues’).

Per the BMPs, if you can prove, through testing, that your animals don’t have the pathogens of interest, are radio-collared so that your whereabouts are known, and high-lined at night, what possible threat do you pose to BHS anyway?? (Remembering that there are 10 other BMPs that we were willing to comply with in addition to those listed.)

And remember also, that they are still allowing permit hunting for the biggest and best genetics in these herds. So are we really so concerned about the genetic health of these animals? How can we be if we are weakening their genetic structure by removing the best animals?

Time to put on the ‘ol thinking, logic & reasoning cap.

One of the more well-reasoned and articulate responses comes from a NAPgA member in Montana

My impression of the packgoat/bighorn sheep conversation is that we are/were discussing the extreme perspectives. I did contribute to the first request for help funding a response to the Shoshone closure, though I do not believe we packgoaters have a right to access all National Forest or BLM lands. Robin’s comment regarding the politicizing of NAPgA addresses the anti-government tone sometimes used in recruiting for comments to the Shoshone issue.

It’s not a simple “the government is against packgoaters” argument.

I have not participated in the conversation because, with other priorities in my life the past few years, I had not taken the time to read NAPgA’s 30-page response to the Shoshone NF’s land management plan.

This morning I read NAPgA’s response and I am very impressed. In this singular case, the FS has acted extremely and capriciously (yay, I get to use that fun word!!) in closing the Shoshone NF to packgoats. NAPgA has thoroughly addressed the weaknesses in the Land Management Plan with logical and case law arguments. (As an aside, I disagree with Point 14 – Environmental Justice argument.)

But what has impressed me the most is NAPgA’s Exhibit A – proposed BMPs for the Shoshone NF.

After providing strong arguments adequate to force the Shoshone to rewrite portions of the DEIS, NAPgA goes the extra mile and offers practices by packgoaters that will mitigate concerns of the Shoshone land managers. The proposed mitigations restrict packgoaters’ behavior to be subordinate to that of bighorn sheep and to the core habitat of bighorn sheep.

Then the proposed NAPgA BMPs walk the talk by providing GPS collars on the lead goat, which will support the packgoater’s mitigating behavior in bighorn sheep country.

The GPS information is offered as educational information to land managers within the USFS and the BLM. It is like calling their (USFS) bluff.

It is because of these proposed restrictive BMPs that I am willing to jump off the fence and send in my contribution to help with the Shoshone case. We risk poor public relations if we insist we should be able to access all public lands. We don’t need to be in bighorn sheep country with our packgoats, but we do need to force the land management agencies to back up their extreme positions, now and in the future.

Thanks to all who have spent so much time and effort with the Shoshone Land Management Plan.

Meggen Ryan
Evaro, Montana

A much expanded coverage will be in Goat Tracks magazine, due out in a week or so.

www.goattracksmagazine.org