BLM Idaho Falls District – Resource Advisory Council
June 6-7, 2016

Upper Snake Field Office
1405 Hollipark Drive
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83402

Meeting Minutes – Day 1
June 6, 2016

New Member Orientation

The morning agenda was devoted to new member orientation. New members appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to the Idaho Falls District RAC are:

- Morris Christensen, Rexburg (Outdoor Recreation)
- Adam Beaupre, Challis (Commercial Recreation)
- Becky Smith, Georgetown (Archaeological/Historical)
- David Radford, Ammon (Elected Official)
- William "Bill" Schutte, Idaho Falls (Public-at-Large)

Opening

The meeting of the BLM Idaho Falls District Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was called to order at 1:00 p.m. in the BLM Idaho Falls District Office conference room by RAC chairman Matt Woodard.

Present

Garth Blanchard, Jon Goode, Jerald Raymond, Sarah Wheeler, Coby Tigert, Linda Price, Matt Woodard, Dave Pacioretty, Jeremy Casterson, Todd Kuck, Mary D'Aversa, Beth Waterbury, Adam Beaupre, Becky Smith, Dave Radford, Bill Schutte, Morris Christensen, Ken Wixom, Steve Bauchman, Kevin Poor, Mike Foster, Kevin Hurley, Kit Fischer, Janna Coulter, Blaine Newman, Hollie Miyasaki, Maggie Highland, Justin Fry, Rob Mickelson

Welcome and Introductions
Matt Woodard and Mary D'Aversa, Idaho Falls District Manager

The meeting began with introductions and a brief discussion of the agenda. Matt opened the floor for nominations to fill the RAC secretary position. Beth Waterbury offered to take minutes for the current meeting, but declined the position, as her term is expiring. The decision to appoint a RAC secretary was postponed until the September 2016 meeting.

Chairman Woodard called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 26-27, 2016 meeting. Jerald Raymond moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Jon Goode and was unanimously approved.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Sage-grouse Focal Area Withdrawals

This agenda item was moved to Tuesday, June 7, at 8:30 a.m.

Bighorn Sheep/Domestic Sheep Separation Strategies – Presentations & Panel Discussion

Mary D'Aversa introduced and welcomed presenters/panelists Hollie Miyasaki, Dr. Maggie Highland, and Justin Frye and thanked them for attending the RAC meeting (see panelist biographies attachment). Mary stated that this was the first informational panel discussion scheduled for an Idaho Falls District RAC meeting.

Bighorn Sheep Ecology, Status, and Management in Idaho
Hollie Miyasaki — Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goat, Pronghorn Staff Biologist, IDFG

History/Ecology – Pre-1870, bighorn sheep (BHS) were one of the most abundant big game animals in Idaho. Large and rapid population declines occurred from 1870-1945, with BHS extirpated from Hells Canyon in 1925 and East Fork Owyhee River in 1939. California and Rocky Mountain BHS are the same species, but have been managed as separate and unique populations in Idaho since 1976. Suitable BHS habitats are patches ≥193 square miles. Stable populations typically have an average adult mortality rate of about 10% and 30:100 lamb:ewe ratio. Low lamb recruitment influences population size over time. Based on productivity potential, BHS populations could theoretically double in 2.5 years. BHS utilize multiple home ranges (rutting, winter, summer, lambing, etc.) and size of home ranges varies seasonally. Home range fidelity is high in ewes (90%); less so in rams (75%). BHS limiting factors include disease, low lamb recruitment, and predation. Wolves are not an effective predator of BHS; however, mountain lions are capable of causing population-level impacts to BHS.

New Projects – New BHS research projects are underway in the East Fork Salmon River and Owyhee River population management units (PMU). These projects are investigating additional limiting factors on BHS populations, including pneumonia factors.

BHS Management – There are more laws in Idaho Code for BHS than any other wildlife species in Idaho. BHS is the only species in which a state statute mandates a management plan (https://idfg.idaho.gov/old-web/docs/wildlife/planBighorn.pdf). Idaho Fish & Game also addresses BHS management in its Strategic Plan, Emergency Response Plans, and *Interim Strategy for Managing Separation between BHS and Domestic Sheep (DS) in Idaho* (https://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/wildlife/planBighornDomesticSheep.pdf). The first BHS management plan in 1954 addressed perpetuation of the species, data collection, census, harvest, predator control, salting, trapping/transplanting, and preservation of Wilderness. The 1986-1990 BHS Plan emphasized establishing viable BHS populations in as many suitable unoccupied historic habitats as possible. Disease issues figured more prominently in the 1991-1995 BHS Plan. The 2010 (current) BHS Management Plan addressed BHS/DS separation in detail, BHS health, habitat mapping, population monitoring, and human uses/impacts.

Separation between Bighorn and Domestic Sheep and Goats – Over the past decade, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has advocated to land management agencies, government officials, and others the need to develop and "implement spatial and/or temporal separation strategies for BHS and DS while continuing to collaboratively support and pursue vaccine research and other

management tools as they become available." There are numerous BLM and USFS DS and goat (DG) allotments in Idaho, several of which have potential for Best Management Practices agreements. When proactive separation techniques fail and contact between BHS and DS is observed or likely to have occurred, response protocols include capture and radio collaring the BHS, lethal or non-lethal removal, and, if lethally removed or captured, collection of samples for testing.

BHS Distribution & Abundance – There is approximately 28,000 square kilometers (~11,000 square miles) of BHS habitat in Idaho based on the Payette summer habitat model. About 33% of modeled potential habitat is occupied by BHS, an area equivalent to about 15% of Idaho. About 31.5% of BHS distribution is in Wilderness; Wilderness comprises only 8.4% of Idaho's land area. Most BHS in Idaho are in rugged, remote areas and Wilderness. In 1920, the BHS population in Idaho was estimated to be 1,000 animals. In 1990, estimates were ~5,000 animals, but declines were underway. Population estimates in 2011 and 2015 were 2,900 and 3,100, respectively. The predicted ("pie in the sky") population of BHS in Idaho is 15,880 animals based on (1.9 BHS/square km) – (modeled habitat on private land) – (DS grazing/trailing allotments) X (remainder of modeled BHS habitat).

Beaverhead and Lemhi Mountains Project 2011-2014 – The study area overlaps BHS distribution and BLM and USFS DS and DG allotments. Project objectives: place satellite/GPS collars on BHS to collect health data, validate habitat models, monitor productivity, improve population estimates, and delineate seasonal distributions. In monitoring 61 BHS over the 4-year period, 84% of locations occurred in predicted habitat; model is now being reassessed. Movements of BHS in the South Beaverhead Mountains showed clustered ewe locations; rams were wider ranging.

Domestic–Bighorn Sheep Interface Problem Overview and Research

Dr. Maggie Highland, DVM, PhDc, Dipl. ACVP, Animal Disease Research Unit, ARS-USDA, Pullman, WA

In the early 1900s, there were an estimated 60 million Domestic Sheep (DS) in the West. Numbers shrank to 40 million in the 1940s; current, 2015 estimate of 5.25 million DS. There were broad estimates of 500,000 to 2 million BHS in western North American in the early 19th century. By 1960, BHS numbers declined to ~15,000-18,000 due to combined factors of hunting, habitat loss, domestic competition, and disease. BHS populations rebounded somewhat in decades since to 2014 estimate of 85,000 through reintroductions, management efforts, and controlled grazing.

Field reports and captive enclosure studies revealed that BHS/DS (interspecies) contact leads to BHS respiratory disease and sometimes fatal pneumonia. Captive inoculation studies showed that BHS were more susceptible than DS, Domestic Goats (DG), and other domestic livestock to respiratory bacterial pathogens. Based on research results, absolute separation of BHS and DS was proposed as solution. Separation policies cause various socio-economic and ecological impacts, including:

- ~48% of DS in the US spend time on public lands;
- $800 million annual economic impact (2011 estimate)
- 25% of the DS on USFS lands have "BHS habitat overlap"
- Pressures placed on private landowners (producers & hobbyists)
- New proposals to ban use of packgoats on shared use public lands because they "may/can" carry pathogens that cause BHS disease
- Population-limiting pneumonia continues to impact BHS
- Intense management efforts/removal of shared use permits/privileges (rights?) for DS/DG
- Overall BHS populations have been increasing

What we know about BHS pneumonia:

- More than 1 bacteria involved (polymicrobial)
- Presence of bacteria in BHS alone does NOT guarantee disease/death (multifactorial)
- BHS pneumonia is an incompletely understood disease phenomenon

DS and BHS pneumonia-associated bacteria:

- *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* ("Movi") is the primary bacterial agent of respiratory disease in BHS.
- Three different strains of Pasteurellas; no evidence to support these as primary agents of pneumonia in BHS but were historically most reported
- Anaerobic bacteria – *Fusobacterium necrophorum* (*Fn*)
- Other aerobic bacteria (i.e., *Truperella pyogenes*)

Movi has a high association with pneumonia in wild BHS and is a primary respiratory pathogen specific to the Caprinae family (sheep and goats). Movi can lead to otitis media, an ear infection that discourages suckling in young BHS. Confounding factor is that outbreaks of BHS pneumonia have occurred in which no known or "possible" contact with DS or DG is documented or known.

Current and proposed research at ADRU-ARS-USDA includes:

- Identification of host factors in DS and BHS associated with respiratory disease and shedding of respiratory pathogens
- Comparative immune system analyses to understand the difference in susceptibility to pneumonia between and among DS and BHS
- Stress/environmental component in BHS pneumonia (known in domestics)
- Do other wild ungulates (elk, deer, pronghorn) carry Movi?
- What is the prevalence of Movi in packgoats?

In conclusion, Dr. Highland spoke to the importance of broadening perspectives so that research and understanding of BHS/DS disease issues can move forward. She further advocated for the development of a central database for information sharing among agencies and research institutions.

Contact Risk Analysis and BLM Policy

Justin Frye, Upper Snake Wildlife Biologist, BLM Idaho Falls District

Justin provided an overview of *MS (Manual Transmission Sheet) 1730—Management of Domestic Sheep and Goats to Sustain Wild Sheep* policy for public lands administered by BLM (http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/blm_manual.Par.40213.File.dat/MS%201730.pdf). The policy provides guidance for the management of BLM lands where the presence of domestic sheep or goats may lead to: 1) interaction with wild sheep, and 2) the potential for disease transmission between the species. Policy objectives are to support multiple use, promote sound management of DS/DG to sustain wild sheep, and provide bureau-wide consistency to reduce the potential for disease transmission between DS/DG and wild sheep.

The policy directs "risk of contact analyses" be conducted when DS/DG authorizations (i.e., trailing, grazing permits, pack animals) are considered in NEPA review (i.e., land-use planning, grazing permit issuance or renewal, and when risk has not yet been assessed or when new information is available). Risk analysis considerations include BHS habitat distribution, connectivity, BHS occurrence and

population numbers, proximity between BHS and DS/DG, allotment boundaries and season of use, and livestock operational needs. If a risk of contact is identified, BLM officers will evaluate the level of risk and determine the most effective separation practices. Depending on the level of risk, management practices may need to be incorporated into decisions to achieve effective separation. Examples include adjusting timing/duration of DS/DG grazing, distribution, stocking levels, livestock type conversion, and not authorizing DS/DG grazing or other uses. MS-1730 also directs BLM to consult and coordinate with federal/state agencies, Tribes, local governments, partner organizations, and permittees to accomplish mutually-compatible goals and objectives for the management of DS/DG to sustain wild sheep on public lands.

The Upper Snake Field Office encompasses 3 BHS PMUs (South Beaverhead, South Lemhi, Lost River) and includes 8 active DS grazing allotments. BLM utilizes the Bighorn Sheep Risk of Contact Tool (RCT), a model created by the Payette National Forest in 2010, to identify areas of potential overlap between BHS-occupied habitat and DS grazing allotments (http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Planning_and_Renewable_Resources/fish__wildlife_and/sheepmaps.Par.14976.File.dat/BighornSheep_ID_26x34_v10.pdf).The RCT identifies core BHS herd range through telemetry and observational data and determines probability and rate of contact between BHS and DS/DG. The RCT is not a decision document, rather, it is a tool used with other factors for evaluating risk of contact using best available science. USFS Region 4, which abuts most Idaho BLM Districts, is currently working on a BHS/DS risk assessment. The Upper Snake Field Office has identified the Crooked Creek, Mahogany Butte, and Bernice DS allotments to be high risk of contact allotments due to spatial and temporal overlap with BHS populations and range. The MOU with the US Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois was cancelled in 2012.

Panel/Q&A

Jon Goode asked if BLM has the ability to modify 10-year grazing permits due to risk assessment. Jeremy Casterson responded yes. Follow up questions: are DS allotments shifted to cattle allotments and, if so, where do ranchers move their sheep? Jeremy explained that fences and infrastructure are needed with a shift from sheep to cattle; limits possibilities, as not all ranchers run cattle. Ken Wixom said that if a sheep producer loses an allotment, BLM will try to locate a replacement. He said the Idaho Falls District is one of the best in working with the sheep industry. Kevin Hurley, conservation director for the Wild Sheep Foundation, stated that collaboration is the path forward. Parties need to sit down, talk options, and address conflicts; give sheep producers options while identifying the most effective separation practices.

Steve Bauchman commented on IDFG's policy on separation fencing. He asked if IDFG will fund separation fencing and if fencing will be built on public or private land. Hollie responded that private land/4-H lot situations are challenging and require site-specific approaches. "Free fence" is a slippery slope and could create incentive for increased DS numbers in high risk areas. In some situations, separation fencing is a good solution. *Where* a separation fence is built is a policy-level question best answered by IDFG leadership.

How do you identify other potential animal hosts of Movi? Dr. Highland said researchers take nasal swabs of various mammals to identify DNA. Rabbits have been documented to transmit Movi between DS pens. Kevin Hurley cited research suggesting that double-fencing may not be effective; transmission agent may be aerosol or via insects. Can DS flocks be immunized against Movi? Dr. Highland stated that there currently are no effective vaccines. Ken Wixom suspects there is some level of genetic resistance

to Movi in DS. He advocated for researchers to lay down sponsor/funder biases and conduct collaborative research on subject to move the ball down the court.

Kit Fischer with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) asked if BLM's Risk of Contact process is separate from USFS's analysis. Jeremy responded that it is a separate process and BLM is waiting on USFS Region 4's document. Mike Foster, recently retired wildlife biologist on the Salmon-Challis National Forest (SCNF), worked on this document and provided some context. He said the Risk of Contact assessment was step 1 of 3 steps. Steps 2-3 were: understanding BHS population use on the forest; and identifying conflict areas, other grazing options, and the level of separation needed. Mike stated that there are no "cookbook" answers to the separation issue; solutions will be local.

Garth Blanchard asked about DS industry trends. Numbers of DS in the western US are dropping, with small-flock increases in the eastern US. How many of the 5.2 million DS in US pose a potential disease risk to wild sheep? Ken Wixom estimated about half of the 5.2 million DS are in the West and half of those have potential for BHS/DS contact. Further reductions will start impacting packing plants and industry infrastructure, affecting ranch profitability and possibly leading to loss of ranches, conversion to subdivision, and loss of wildlife habitat. Ken has statistics on effects to sheep industry and will provide these to Mary D'Aversa.

Kevin Hurley said he and the Wild Sheep Foundation have worked with numerous DS permittees on allotment retirement incentives—a viable tool to achieve mutual objectives. Kit Fischer said NWF has incentivized producers to shift DS allotments to more risk-averse areas or to a different class of livestock. Kevin stated that there is room on the landscape for both BHS and DS, just not together.

Beth Waterbury noted Dr. Highland's comments of no confirmed positives of Movi in pack goats, but has there been any disease testing in weed-eating goats, which are often utilized by the USFS? Dr. Highland responded that she wasn't aware of any Movi testing in weed-eating goat herds.

Adam Beaupre asked Hollie about BHS population objectives. Hollie said population objectives are set in the BHS Management Plan by PMU (e.g., South Beaverhead ≈ 300 BHS). Limiting factors are not known in all PMUs, thus, the research emphasis in the Beaverheads, Lemhis, East Fork Salmon, and Owyhees. Coby Tigert said it is important to recognize the value of BHS to the recreational economy of Idaho.

Becky Smith asked if there has been any investigation into strengthening the immune systems of both DS and BHS. Dr. Highland was aware of this type of research in DS. Kevin Hurley reported on research conducted by Dr. Sri Srikumaran at Washington State University to develop a vaccine to make BHS resistant to Movi.

Mary D'Aversa and the RAC thanked the panel speakers for an interesting and enlightening session.

Meeting adjourned

With no other business, Matt adjourned the meeting at 4:30.

BLM Idaho Falls District – Resource Advisory Council
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June 7, 2016

Sage-grouse Focal Area Withdrawals
Mary D'Aversa

The US Fish and Wildlife Service identified habitat disturbance and fragmentation caused by certain hardrock mining operations as a threat to sage-grouse habitat. As a result, BLM is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze and disclose the potential effects of a proposal to withdraw approximately 10 million acres of public and National Forest System lands from the operation of the hardrock mining law. The process seeks to ensure that the Sagebrush Focal Areas that anchor the range-wide conservation strategy for the greater sage-grouse are protected from the threat of hardrock mining. The withdrawals only apply to locatable minerals, defined as metallic, nonmetallic, and certain uncommon variety minerals. If you have a valid existing claim, you will be grandfathered in.

States affected by the withdrawal are Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. Idaho Falls District has about 1.4 million acres included in the withdrawal (600,000 ac in Upper Snake Field Office, 500,000 ac in Challis Field Office, 80,000 ac in Salmon Field Office). Several public meetings were held to discuss the withdrawal and 8 counties signed on as cooperating agencies. The Draft EIS will be issued in January 2017; the Final EIS and signed Record of Decision are anticipated in September 2017.

Jon Goode asked about alternatives and what that will entail. Mary said it would center on what should be withdrawn. Kevin asked if there is only one EIS for all the states, Mary said yes.

A discussion ensued on segregation and how lands can no longer be used. Garth asked what happens when there is no Secretary of the Interior during the administration change (we didn't have an answer for that). Adam asked if the withdrawal would really help sage-grouse. Mary said her read is that fire and invasive plants are the biggest threats to sage-grouse habitat, but these are reactive measures and we need to show conservation progress. While its impact is limited, the withdrawal shows we are working towards that progress.

Stephen Bauchman noted that about 50% of the Focal Area withdrawals are in the Challis Field Office. Given current BLM workloads related to the new wilderness designations, FOIAs, litigation, etc., how does BLM propose to take on the Focal Area withdrawal EIS with existing resources? Todd Kuck said this EIS is a priority issue for BLM. The EIS is multi-state funded and some workload will be shared with USFS. Process has a separate Interdisciplinary Team assigned. Challis Field Office staff will respond to data calls, but otherwise local impact is anticipated to be low.

Ken Wixom asked what input the State of Idaho has had thus far; expects that the state would have economic concerns. Beth thought Idaho Department of Lands might have concerns given their directive to maximize long-term financial returns to a number of state institutions, mainly public schools. She guessed that IDL or the Governor's Office of Species Conservation may be leads for Idaho. She'll look into it. Jeremy added that a reading of Governor Otter's lawsuit challenging the sage-grouse listing would give a good indication of the State's perspective. Governor Otter has the option to litigate the Focal Area withdrawal decision in January 2017.

Depart to Medicine Lodge for Field Tour

Crooked Creek/Mahogany Butte Grazing Allotments Tour and Discussion

The tour group met up with Robert Ball, Lance Moss, and Glen Guenther (Ball Brothers Sheep Company), permittees/operators of the Mahogany Butte and Crooked Creek grazing allotments. Mahogany Butte is exclusively a sheep allotment; Crooked Creek is a combined cattle and sheep allotment. Season of use on Mahogany Butte is March 1–June 30 and October–February 28. The 50,000-acre allotment is not partitioned into pastures. Crooked Creek has 12-15 pastures and intricate grazing patterns. Robert Ball said the allotments have little free water; water is largely hauled by permittees to livestock. Saltbush (*Atriplex* spp.) and perennial grasses are favored browse of DS in these allotments.

The group discussed BHS distribution in the Beaverhead and Centennial mountains. Robert Ball said he hasn't ever seen BHS in the Mahogany Butte allotment; DS grazing is restricted to ≤5,700 ft. elevation after March to avoid comingling. Cody asked where BHS winter from the where the group is standing; 10 miles as the bird flies. Ken Wixom asked about the history of BHS and DS in the area. Justin said BHS were translocated to the area in the 1980s. They died out but rebounded to a current herd of 30-40 animals. Robert Ball estimated 12,000 head of DS in the 1920s. Steve Bauchman asked how IDFG BHS monitoring data will be used in the allotment risk assessment. Beth stated that all telemetry/monitoring data collected for the Beaverhead and Lemhi Mountain Project will be shared with BLM to inform their analysis. BLM will consider concentration and temporal aspects of telemetry points, not necessarily outlier movements of individual BHS. Jeremy said BLM needs to keep permittees involved and make transparent decisions; "we owe it to" the permittees to make every effort to avoid litigation.

Medicine Lodge – Lands with Wilderness Characteristics
Jeremy Casterson, Upper Snake Field Manager

Managing the wilderness resource is part of the BLM's multiple-use mission. BLM evaluates "Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)" through the land use planning process, and examines options for managing these lands. LWCs are inventoried based on 4 criteria:

1. Size (>5,000 acres of roadless, contiguous BLM-managed lands)
2. Naturalness
3. Opportunities for solitude or primitive, unconfined recreation
4. Supplemental values (ecological, geological, scientific, educational, scenic, or historical values)

The Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) nominated 17 LWC units in the Upper Snake Field Office. GYC recently updated land inventories conducted by BLM in 1984. BLM is now ready to conduct formal scoping. Alternatives for management will be proposed as part of the process. Janna Coulter of GYC said their organization considered wildlife habitat and connectivity corridors in nominating these LWCs, but focused their nominations on the regulatory criteria listed above. GYC supports existing uses (e.g., livestock grazing) on nominated LWCs. Steve Bauchman asked Janna if GYC officially stated their support of existing uses in their nomination letter. Janna said not that she was aware, but GYC engaged BLM in conversations early on in the nomination process. Linda Price pointed to the benefits of open, collaborative processes before lines are drawn on a map.

Idaho Falls District Planning 2.0 Update

Field Office Managers provided a brief update on the status of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision. The Planning 2.0 initiative aims to increase public involvement and incorporate the most current data and technology into the land use planning process. BLM is conducting pre-scoping at present. Management Planning is also underway on the SCNF, but the agencies will conduct 2 separate processes with necessary collaboration. Linda Price and Gloria Jakovac will be closely involved in the SCNF Forest Plan revision. Jeremy wants more stakeholders involved in Planning 2.0; reduces risk of litigation. Ken Wixom appealed to managers to resist changing the RMP once it's approved; follow through and hold to the public's trust. Coby asked about opportunities for the RAC in the planning process. Jeremy stated that participation is at the discretion of each RAC member. The RAC may wish to form a RMP revision subcommittee. Linda said there are 2 citizen collaboratives in the Salmon/Challis area; get RAC members involved with these pre-scoping groups. Todd Koch said it would be valuable to have RAC members attend public scoping meetings.

Meeting Adjourned

There being no further business, Chairman Woodard adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m. and the group returned to the Idaho Falls District Office.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the RAC will be September 20-21 in Salmon.

Minutes submitted by: Beth Waterbury, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Salmon Region
Sarah Wheeler, BLM Idaho Falls District RAC Coordinator

Approved by: RAC – September 2016