

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/27/2021 11:00:00 AM

First name: Jeremy

Last name: Martin

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello,

I do want to echo what some others have said about the use of recreational pack goats in the forest management plan, or rather the ambiguity of what is/is not said. How are pack goats to be managed the same as domestic sheep grazing allotments? The two activities could not be more different.

Pack goats are stock animals, the same as horses, mules and llamas, and should be managed as such. There does seem to be a knee jerk response when it comes to pack goats and bighorn sheep. As stated in other letters, there has never been a documented case of a disease transferring from a pack goat to a wild bighorn sheep, even in captivity. As packers, our stock is not the same as someone's barnyard dairy goat. We train these animals rigorously, feed them the highest quality feed, and work tirelessly to keep our packing herd healthy. Think of it as the difference between a well trained pack horse, and a range cow.

The North American Pack Goat Association has a set of guidelines that could be easily mirrored in the new forest management plan. With those guidelines added to this plan, the USFS could make it a punishable offence to break these rules, thus ensuring compliance.

In addition to seconding the other letters on pack goats, I want to add another dimension. I am a 60% combat disabled veteran with mobility issues. I can still hike and backpack, and love to do it as often as time allows, which is usually several multi-day trips in the Uncompahgre and Gunnison NF's each year, and my goats make it possible for me to do so. I train my goats rigorously and often, they are under my total command at all times. And, they are also vastly less expensive than traditional stock animals. Mules, horses, and even llamas can cost many thousands of dollars in initial cost and thousands more in upkeep, feed, vet bills, and transportation. Not to mention, that these large animals require their own feed to be brought into the forest, whereas my goats are browsers, and no invasive weeds will ever be introduced through my or anyone else's goats. They do not cause stream erosion, their droppings are not hazardous and unsightly like those of a horse or mule, and they are vastly less destructive than range cattle in literally every aspect.

As mobility decreases for me, my ability to enjoy and experience my public lands will increase the need for me to use these goats in the backcountry. I am not alone in this area; many hunters, anglers, and hikers rely on these animals to experience the outdoors safely and ethically. I hope that you will take a closer look at the benefits of pack goats to public land users, and the nearly zero impact that they cause compared to other types of stock, grazing animals, and groups of Boy Scouts that are allowed in the forest.

Please refer to the North American Pack Goat Association for the guidelines for backcountry use that we rigorously follow, and that can easily be used in the new forest management plan.

-Jeremy Martin