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First name: Brysen
Last name: Jansen
Organization: Muckleshoot Wildlife Committee
Title: Vice-Chair
Comments: August 11, 2025

Domestic Sheep and Goat Grazing

DEIS-NOA Comments

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Supervisor's Office

215 Melody Lane

Wenatchee, WA 98801

Dear Responsible Official:

The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe Wildlife Program and Committee is providing comments on the Forest Plan Amendments for Planning and Management of Domestic Sheep and Goat Grazing Within the Range of Bighorn Sheep Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe has treaty rights under the Point Elliott and Medicine Creek Treaties, as well as having proven traditional use and associated treaty rights that overlap with the Manastash, Naches, Nile, Rattlesnake, and Swauk domestic grazing allotments in this proposal. We therefore have a strong interest in ensuring treaty resources are sustainable.

Tribal members hunt bighorn sheep for cultural and ceremonial purposes. Muckleshoot bighorn sheep hunting was impacted by the pneumonia outbreak in the WDFW Tieton sheep unit, which resulted from suspected interaction of domestic sheep with wild bighorn sheep. Muckleshoot Tribal members also had limited permit-only hunts in the WDFW Selah Butte, Umtanum, and Cleman sheep units but now there are fewer permits issued. A pneumonia outbreak among bighorn sheep using the Yakima River canyon resulted in the Tribe closing sheep hunting in all areas except for the Cleman unit. Cleman sheep have the potential to explore the Manastash, Naches, and Nile allotments, and interact with domestic sheep if they are present. Pneumonia, a disease known to be transmitted by domestic sheep, has reduced Tribal hunting opportunity and we are worried what the future has in store for us.

Our interest is in seeing sustainable bighorn sheep numbers that may support hunting and that are free from disease. Therefore, we firmly state that the proposed action Alternative 4 is the best option to protect bighorn sheep from being infected by domestic sheep. Alternative 4 is the only logical choice that meets the purpose and need of the project. Furthermore, the risk of contact analysis is an objective and scientific approach to analyzing the effects of domestic sheep grazing on bighorn sheep and clearly showed the need for the actions proposed in Alternative 4. Specifically, we agree with closing all of the Naches, Rattlesnake, Nile, and Manastash central and south allotments to domestic sheep grazing on National Forest lands.

We applaud the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest for considering approaches to protect bighorn sheep, of which Alternative 4 helps to meet federal trust responsibility to Tribes. Bighorn sheep are special to Muckleshoot Tribal members, and as such, the USFS should do its part to ensure those resources are available in perpetuity.

for everyone to enjoy. Thank you for considering our comments. Feel free to reach out to me, or the Wildlife Program Director Melissa Calvert, if you have any questions or want to engage with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe.

Sincerely,

Brysen Jansen

Muckleshoot Wildlife Committee Vice-Chair

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