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Comments: I am proud, given the political circumstances, that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has constructively moved forward on the mountain goat removal issue. Since 1977, when I harvested my once-in-a-lifetime mountain goat, the WDFW have constructively established a "Special Conflict Reduction Area" within Special Permit Area 6-1 in the East Olympic Mountains.

Within the entire State of Washington a total of twenty seven (27) goat special permits are issued annually, six (6) of which are allowed to be harvested in Area 6-1. That means that 29% of the state's goat harvest permit population is permitted to occur within the Eastern ridges of the Olympic Mountains. The other 21 goat hunting permits are "Special Permitted" within nine (9) other designated areas in the Cascade Mountain Range, an enormous north to south state boundary areas.

We are all aware of and respect these special animals, which live at and above the timberline elevations, normally 5,500 feet and above. In the earliest, non-native exploration days of the Olympics, in 1890, two very experienced North American adventuring party individuals: Barnes of the documented "Across the Olympic Mountains: the Press Expedition, 1889-90" a mountain goat sighting was reported in "Wildlife Encountered in the Olympic Mountains"; then again, a mountain goat sighting was documented by Keith Gunnar , published by "The Mountaineers" in Seattle. Then again goat sighting was reported in writings by The National Geographic. These sightings were not by amateurs, but experienced wilderness explorers, but their missions were to document through maps, land masses of mountains and rivers. In addition their mission was to report animals and plants, which included not only goats and extinct wolves, but bears, elk, cougars, bobcats. Keep in mind that these explorers were focused on river basins for possible routes through the Olympics, not focused on the much higher ranges inhabited by the goats. Any successful goat hunter will advise you that to gain a trophy animal sighting, one will seldom spot a goat from below, but must be at equal elevation, or above the animal.

Eradication of the goat by over harvesting by native Americans and other hunters after 1896, can be as easily explained as the eradication of the Gray Wolf, whose sightings were documented by these explorers by their naming places such as Gray Wolf Pass and Wolf Creek in our Olympics.

More than one forest fire or wildfire in the upper elevations of the national and state forests which are allowed to "burn out", has removed more than the annual fescue grazing feed for the goats -- yet they survive, which is to say that fescue is not, and has never been their sole food source.

RECOMENDATION:

The Eastern Olympic National Forest, Area 6-1 contains four large Wilderness Areas and is bounded by the Hood Canal mountains such as Mt Eleanor, Washington, Jupiter, The Brothers, Buckhorns, and so many others. Logic would conclude that it is time to expand the authorized goat harvest opportunities in the Olympics and establish additional new 6-X Areas for goat harvesting. The concept of harvesting to support lower numbers of goats, or deer, or elk is appropriate.

But the current Olympic National Park Service (ONPS) plan to shoot from the air, these sturdy animals, and allow them to rot where they die a possible slow, uncontrolled death is to me unfathomable. The ONPS proposal is to pay-to-kill contractors, utilizing \$250,000 of available federal funds for two years, or \$500,000 total by ONPS is inappropriate. In addition, the estimated \$350,000 for each of two years, totaling \$700,000 to have the WDFW relocate by helos to the other parts of our Washington State. Experience identifies that mountain goats threatened by loud rifle shots or by close-in helos will very often jump to their death rather than be shot or caught from air. This concept is unfathomable and cruel to any animal species!

It took me three pack-out trips, and well over fifteen hours to pack-out my goat's meat, hide, and head. Mountain Goat's meat is on the top-shelf for excellent game animal meat taste! The very most impressive experience to me was that in 1977 a WDFW Ranger, who was their game meat specialist came to my house, unannounced, in Bremerton two weeks after my harvest, and requested to do a piece-by-piece inspection of my, by then, frozen goat meat.

I was very impressed with that level of detailed control at that time, but now the ONPS proposes to allow the goat meat to rot-in-place in difficult to reach areas. The National Park Service (NPS) proposes that the contractors and NPS could shoot from above or across a canyon, killing or wounding from the air, and they would simply say "the meat / carcass is too inaccessible, let it rot!" I was not raised that way!

Big game hunters who are licensed and special permitted by the WDFW regulations, would insure harvest of 100% of the usable animal, the guts being consumed by large and small carnivorous creatures. Adoption of this recommendation to provide an additional Area 6-X controlled hunt in the northern areas of the Olympics, where R.H. Bordman bled to death in an inadvertent goat encounter. This area is currently not within the Special Conflict Reduction Area for the Olympics. It needs to be, and will achieve a "WIN-WIN situation for all!"