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Comments: Please do not ban pack goats in GMUG forest management plan!

I am writing in reference to the proposed recreational pack goat ban in my local forest areas. There has not ever been a documented case of a backpacking goat transmitting a disease to wild sheep. The commonly-referenced studies have either pertained to domestic sheep grazing tracts on public lands or to a couple (2) studies of sheep or goats in adjoining pens in experiments in which infected domestic animals were isolated with isolated, captive wild sheep and a few animals became infected. The decline in wild sheep populations has been proven to be from two causes: loss of habitat and domestic sheep grazing. The majority of the area in question (Gunnison-Grand Mesa-Uncompaghre forest) has historically been -and still is-open for domestic sheep grazing leases. There is only a very tiny contingent of us who use packgoats in this area. I have only met a couple people over here besides myself who use pack goats. I only run up to 4 goats with me on overnight trips . Packgoats are vaccinated, fit, extraordinarily healthy and always within a few feet of the handler. I have never encountered wild sheep while using packgoats. Because of continuous human presence, perhaps, wild animals tend to stay away. Goats hate water and you can barely get them to cross streams or even go to the edge of a body of water. We transiently pass through areas with less environmental impact than larger pack animals, and carry no feed with us. The goats are tied on a line overnight in camp and cannot wander. This is standard practice. All scientific evidence used to demonstrate disease transmission is, as I reiterate, linked to large domestic herds of sheep with prolonged grazing rights on public lands at the habitat interface with wild sheep. There is absolutely NO evidence of a pack goat string ever transmitting disease to wild sheep/goats. If one was truly concerned with disease and loss of population , a ban of domestic sheep grazing on federal public lands would be the necessary and impactful way to avoid disease transmission in wild sheep. Banning pack goats would have no impact other than to punish/restrict those of us who use these animals to help carry our gear as we respectfully share the lands we support with our tax dollars. Surely, our small contingent of healthy, athletic animals does not harm wild sheep habitat to the extent motorized activity, hunting, and domestic , large-scale and loosely monitored grazing of sheep does. Please use science and reason when determining such regulation and do not prohibit pack goat activity in this region. Respectfully,

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