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Comments: Hello Folks- I understand that the sheep allotments in the High Uintas are up for renewal. Having backpacked there several times and having detailed knowledge of some sheep grazing practices here in the Bear River Range, I have some comments.

First, as your wildlife people can tell you, blue tongue disease carried by domestic sheep will kill any populations of big-horned sheep in the same locale. That is established science over the past 40 years, and common experience in other western states. The USFS and Utah DWR will have to decide which they want where.

Second, too many ranchers demand the killing of black bear, mountain lion and coyote on public lands in our state. That is DWR policy with heavy influence by hacks in the state legislature. The average age of mountain lions in the state is 16 months, and it is the inexperienced hungry lions that sometimes turn to lambs and calves. A fourth generation sheep grazer that I know here would like Utah to stop unregulated hunting of mountain lions, as older experienced cats defend large territories and rarely turn to killing his stock.

Lastly, if you will have sheep grazing, then ranchers should be held to best grazing practices. That means a sheepherder with flocks at all times who move the bands daily. Ideally, they should have 3-4 different routes to rotate among on different years, as the sheepman I mentioned practices here. In the off years, the native vegetation in his allotment that I've been monitoring for 23 years rebounds in prime condition with little or no weed introduction. I'd also encourage requiring a cowboy with any cattle to keep them from fouling springs and streams, which sheep rarely do.

I appreciate the fact that this is a politically charged decision for you, with the risk of angry or threatening calls from from senators and headquarters. As a former USDA scientist myself, I've felt that firsthand.

yours, jim