

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/23/2023 3:08:32 AM

First name: Mary

Last name: Walker

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Years of extensive grazing by domestic sheep has displaced native wildlife, led to persecution of predators like bears, coyotes, and mountain lions, marred the landscape, compromised water quality, and negatively impacted visitors seeking solitude and an authentic Wilderness experience.

Over the past couple of decades, bighorns from a nearby reintroduction effort have found their way into the High Uintas Wilderness and a nascent herd is becoming reestablished on its eastern end where domestic sheep grazing ended years ago. But the future of the bighorn herd and its ability to recolonize its native range across the High Uintas is in doubt because much of the rest of the bighorn range is filled with domestic sheep that carry disease fatal to the bighorns.

The U.S. Forest Service has released a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) evaluating the future of 10 domestic sheep allotments-including one which has not been grazed in more than 40 years-covering about 144,000 acres in the High Uintas Wilderness. Unfortunately, the agency's proposed action is to continue the status quo, filling the High Uintas with more than 10,000 domestic sheep and their lambs for two months every summer to the exclusion of native wildlife. Why? Is this not "public land"? Why do special interests get to destroy it for their gain?

The SDEIS fails to disclose how many native predators-such as black bears, mountain lions, or coyotes-are killed in the High Uintas Wilderness to protect domestic sheep, nor the effects continued sheep grazing has on the potential for recovering native wildlife such as wolves and grizzly bears.

Rather than remove the threat of domestic sheep and allowing the bighorn population and other wildlife populations to expand, the Forest Service proposal essentially endorses the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' (UDWR) approach to maintain bighorn numbers by killing native predators, especially mountain lions, and augmenting the bighorn population with translocations and by constantly modifying the habitat.

The High Uintas Wilderness should be dedicated to its native wildlife. To the extent livestock grazing is allowed, it should be limited so as to not compete with wildlife for food or space or to spread disease to native species.

Grazing by domestic sheep and cows compromises the High Uintas watersheds, fouls the lakes and streams, and severely degrades the experience of visitors seeking a Wilderness experience. Grazing should be curtailed to meet the public's interest in protecting the High Uintas for wildlife and an authentic Wilderness experience for visitors.

Domestic sheep grazing is incompatible with recovering native bighorn sheep population. If domestic sheep grazing remains in the High Uintas, the native bighorn sheep are likely doomed.

Killing native predators to protect sheep or cows should be prohibited if domestic livestock grazing is allowed to continue. The SDEIS fails to disclose how many native predators-such as black bears, mountain lions, or coyotes-are killed in the High Uintas Wilderness to protect domestic sheep. The SDEIS also fails to disclose the effects continued sheep grazing has on the potential for recovering native wildlife such as wolves and grizzly bears.

Support the no grazing option as it is best for the wildlife, watersheds, recreation, and the Wilderness. At the very least, the Forest Service should close any sheep grazing allotment if the permit is waived back to the Forest Service.?