

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/23/2023 7:51:34 AM

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Comments: To whom it may concern:

I am writing to urge you to protect native wildlife and the fragile, high elevation alpine basins in the High Uintas Wilderness from domestic sheep grazing.

The 455,000-acre High Uintas Wilderness forms the core of the Uinta Mountains in northeastern Utah. This massive mountain range is the highest in Utah. It was named for the Uintah Native Americans, early relatives of the modern Ute First Nation. The High Uintas contain the largest contiguous alpine tundra in the central Rockies, with lower slopes blanketed by forests of lodgepole pine, spruce, and subalpine fir.

The High Uintas, with its massive alpine terrain separated by 13,000-foot peaks, should be a haven for native Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep except for one simple reason - the High Uintas has more domestic sheep grazing than any other Wilderness in the United States of America.

The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) which was released by the U.S. Forest Service evaluates 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 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.

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 SDEIS considers two alternatives: maintain the status quo and no grazing. The choice is simple: the decision should be to end grazing in the High Uintas Wilderness in order to protect native wildlife, restore the degraded watershed, and enhance opportunities for an increasingly rare Wilderness experience.

To mitigate impacts to the few affected ranchers, the Forest Service should decide to retire grazing permits that are voluntarily waived back to the agency, giving the ranchers the opportunity to seek compensation from conservation interests before the allotments are permanently closed.

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, bighorn sheep 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. If domestic sheep grazing remains in the High Uintas, the native bighorn sheep are

likely doomed.

Grazing by domestic sheep and cows is incompatible with recovering native bighorn sheep population because it 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.

Natural areas and native animals, fungi and plants have an intrinsic value and should be protected and allowed to live as they have for millions of years. Humans are just one of millions of species but human activities, especially animal farming, take up more than 70% of the land in the United States of America and around the world whereas all the other species are left with the remainder, which is getting smaller over the years because humans keep taking more and more land. It is necessary to allow those areas that are still in their natural state to remain that way. Natural areas and native species are an important part of Native American heritage. Humans have killed more than 50% of all wild animals in the past 50 years.

I lived in Australia from 1970 to 1992. Since I did not wish to be part of a country in which the large-scale destruction of natural habitats, logging of forests and extermination of native animals continue to take place and which is the result of genocide against indigenous peoples, I returned to my country of origin, Croatia, and encourage others to do the same. Croatia is a relatively good European example of humans coexisting with native animals such as deer, bears and wolves and over 47% of the country is covered with natural and nature-identical forests. To further reduce my impact on animals and the environment, I am vegan and live in high-density housing that is planned around public transport.

Thank you for taking these concerns into consideration. Please protect the native inhabitants of the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Simon Validzic