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Comments: I am writing to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the High Uintas Wilderness Domestic Sheep Analysis. I ask you to adopt Alternative 1, the environmentally preferred alternative. This alternative would end domestic sheep grazing in the High Uintas Wilderness.

I have hiked through domestic sheep allotments here in southwest Colorado and observed the damage to habitat that has resulted from grazing. Especially in recent years, with increased temperatures and decreased precipitation, the effects of grazing on the vegetation is devastating. The willows are browsed nearly to the ground, and very little forage is available for wildlife. In my experience these areas become "wildlife deserts", where we see little to no wildlife. It is amazing to me that we will accept heavy sheep grazing in our watersheds.

The threat to bighorn sheep from diseases that domestic sheep carry is well documented, accepted science. There is no shortage of appropriate habitat for bighorn sheep, only a shortage of appropriate habitat that is ungrazed by domestic sheep. This results in small, isolated herds that suffer from a lack of genetic diversity and are unable to expand their range because of the presence of domestics.

I understand that sheep have been grazed on public lands for well over a century, but that does not mean that it should continue; either at the level it is done, or in all the places that it occurs. There exists the option of grazing allotment buyouts that will, in most cases, allow ranchers to continue with their business on private lands, leaving public lands to the wildlife that belongs there. Wilderness areas, especially, should no longer be used for livestock grazing. It will take decades (at least) for the landscape to heal from the overgrazing that has been allowed to continue for far too long. We know better now.

Domestic sheep grazing that destroys fragile alpine vegetation, causes erosion, fouls watersheds and endangers bighorn sheep in the High Uintas Wilderness should be discontinued. I urge you to adopt Alternative 1.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment.