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First name: Dan and Mrs. Janet

Last name: Blair

Organization:

Title:

Comments: We submit these comments urging you to adopt Alternative 1 to your management plan for domestic sheep in the High Uintas Wilderness on the Utah-Wyoming border ("the High Uintas.") Our reasons for recommending Alternative 1 are as follows:

1. A 2020 scientific study of the alpine meadows of the High Uintas showed that they are so overgrazed, and have suffered such ecological damage as a result of domestic sheep grazing, that vegetation productivity is even lower today than it was in the 1960s. [Carter, J., Vasquez, E. and Jones, A. (2020) Spatial Analysis of Livestock Grazing and Forest Service Management in the High Uintas Wilderness, Utah. Journal of Geographic Information System, 12, 45-69. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jgis.2020.122003>]

In the 23 years since that study, it is extremely unlikely that there have been any improvements. It does not appear that your agency has made any further efforts to amplify or update this study.

2. Furthermore, domestic sheep are driven into alpine habitats occupied by bighorn sheep, amplifying the likelihood that wild bighorns will contract deadly livestock diseases that could wipe out the entire bighorn sheep population in the Uinta Mountains. We spent several years living just outside of Dubois, Wyoming, and are familiar with the issue of bighorn sheep of the Whiskey Mountain herd being threatened by domestic livestock grazing and the diseases they can introduce into the environment, including, but not limited to, pneumonia, to which the native bighorns have no natural immunity.

3. Your own agency has designated Alternative 1 as the Environmentally Preferred Alternative, which would end domestic sheep grazing in the High Uintas. The environmentally preferred solution recognizes that domestic sheep grazing is severely damaging the fragile alpine meadows of the High Uintas and threatens the survival of the native bighorn sheep.

Conclusion:

Grazing of domestic sheep is a totally unacceptable use of our (the public's) sensitive public/wilderness lands. We strongly support Alternative 1 as the only scientifically correct management plan. We ask that you give our concerns and recommendation your most serious and thoughtful consideration, and thank you for giving us the opportunity to submit these comments.