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Organization:

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Comments: Dear GMUG Planning Team,

I am filing this objection to the GMUG National Forests Plan.

The responsible official for this plan is Forest Supervisor Chad Stewart.

My objection applies to this statement on page 38:

"FW-MA-IVSP-13: To increase awareness, educate partners and visitors of the potential risk of pathogen transmission to native plants and animals (e.g., recreation pack goats and bighorn sheep, the need to decontaminate wading boots to reduce spread of chytrid fungus or whirling disease)."

It is important for the Forest Service to recognize that there is not one single recorded example of packgoats spreading disease to bighorn sheep anywhere at any time. This statement is based on pure speculation and should be replaced with a real world example rather than a hypothetical one. We believe that physical separation is important for a variety of reasons (among them, keeping wildlife wild!), but using packgoats as an example of pathogen transmission when they have never once been implicated in any such event leads to misinformation and unfounded prejudice. As the North American Packgoat Association continues to battle such prejudice all over the west, we would encourage the GMUG team to remove this statement. Examples should always be based on reality rather than conjecture. Examples should also apply more universally.

A better example would be dogs spreading Parvo to foxes, coyotes, wolves, raccoons, and bobcats. This is a more relevant example because dogs are more likely to carry Parvo than packgoats are to carry M.ovi or other diseases. Since 2020 there has been an increase in vaccine hesitancy among the public, including for pet vaccines, combined with increased difficulty in obtaining veterinary appointments. These problems have led to decreased vaccination resulting in Parvo outbreaks all over the country. Unlike packgoats, dogs have an innate tendency to investigate wildlife so disease transmission is far more likely. A significant percentage of recreationists have dogs while only a tiny fraction have packgoats. The packgoat example is not applicable to most recreationists and it perpetuates the myth that packgoats have transmitted disease to bighorns. I believe the packgoat example should be replaced with one that is based in fact and is relevant to more users.

I have been objecting to this example ever since the first draft of the plan came out and I hope that it can be resolved in this final step. Thank you for your time and consideration. I have no objection to the actual rules in the final plan concerning packgoats on the GMUG. You have done a good job there.

-Nan Hassey