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First name: Mike

Last name: Schlegel

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I'm representing the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation (ID WSF). We applaud your plan for classifying the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep as a species of conservation concern. We are, however, very concerned regarding the position you have taken regarding pack goats. It is well documented that domestic goats are host-specific carriers of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. The devastating impact on bighorn sheep populations resulting from *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* exposure is also well documented. Allowing the unrestricted use of pack goats in areas inhabited by bighorn sheep is not consistent with classifying bighorn sheep as a species of special concern. The justification for allowing pack goat use is very flawed; it only takes one exposure to have devastating results for bighorn sheep.

ID WSF, in conjunction with other bighorn sheep advocacy groups, plus the Idaho Department of Fish and Game have invested a significant amount of manpower and money towards clearing *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* from infected bighorn sheep populations throughout Idaho. During 2023, ID WSF alone contributed \$200,000. It is truly disheartening to learn the Forest Plan will allow an activity known to have such a harmful effect on bighorn sheep. It would be a tragedy to know these efforts to eliminate *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* may be forgone due to an errant decision.

ID WSF trusts you will reverse your decision to allow the use of pack goats in bighorn sheep habitat in the Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest.

Respectively.

Mike Schlegel

Board Member

Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation