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Comments: Dear Forest Service:

I support the no grazing option in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement because it is best for the wildlife, watersheds, recreation, and the High Uintas Wilderness.

The High Uintas Wilderness contains about 455,000 acres in the Uinta Mountains in northeastern Utah. Unfortunately, the High Uintas has more livestock grazing than any other Wilderness in the country. Years of extensive grazing by domestic sheep has displaced native wildlife, marred the landscape, compromised water quality, and negatively impacted visitors seeking solitude in a wilderness setting. Furthermore, grazing is causing growing conflicts with a slowly recovering native bighorn sheep population.

The FS proposal to permit over 10,000 sheep and their lambs to graze for over two months every summer in the fragile, high elevation alpine basins of the Wilderness is wrong on so many levels. Already, livestock are allowed the graze on about 60 percent of the Wilderness. One of the 10 allotments being evaluated, Fall Creek, has not been grazed since 1977, which was before the area was designated as Wilderness, and should be kept in non-use status.

You also are wrongly alleging that closing these sheep allotments would not help native bighorn sheep despite the fact that bighorns spend almost all of their time on the National Forest (rather than nearby private or BLM-administered land). The recently reintroduced bighorn population is expanding into the area of domestic sheep allotments, which are all part of the bighorns' native range. Bighorns and domestic sheep cannot co-exist because domestic sheep transmit diseases for which bighorns have little defense.

The DEIS also fails to disclose how many 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 predators such as wolves and grizzlies.

Finally, I believe that grazing is inherently inimical to the goals of the Wilderness Act. Livestock have an adverse effect on the ecology of wilderness areas, in part due to trampling, water pollution, and conflict with native species. In addition, livestock grazing diminishes an area's "untrammeled" wilderness character and the opportunity for present and future generations to experience the unique benefits that authentic wilderness provides.

For all these reasons, I support the no grazing option in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement because it is best for the wildlife, watersheds, recreation and the High Uintas Wilderness.