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Organization:

Title:

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We are writing to express our strong support for the continued use of federal lands for responsible agricultural production, specifically the sheep grazing allotments in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

The S. Martinez Livestock family has linked the past and present through nearly 100 years of a grazing partnerships with the federal lands. We proudly play a vital role in feeding our nation, sustaining rural economies, and stewarding our natural resources. Grazing access on federal lands remains a critical tool for maintaining both agricultural viability and environmental health, and S. Martinez Livestock has demonstrated this for nearly 10 decades.

The science of Bighorn die-offs is specious at best. Several bighorn pneumonia outbreaks have occurred in remote or high-elevation herds where there is no known recent or historical overlap with domestic sheep. A 2017 study by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) found that pneumonia persisted in some bighorn populations despite the absence of ongoing contact with domestic sheep. If you ask sheep producers how to improve Bighorn herds, they would reply: 1) Isolated herds lack genetic diversity, so the Bighorn rams are mating with their daughters, causing weak genetics; 2) Predator control during lambing could limit bighorn lamb mortality in small, demographically vulnerable populations.

Forest fire mitigation is the most cost effective and carbon friendly wildfire management strategy and managed sheep grazing provides targeted fine fuel reduction.. Sheep effectively reduce fine fuels such as grasses and shrubs that contribute to catastrophic wildfires. By grazing in fire-prone landscapes, they help lower wildfire risks, protect communities, and reduce the need for costly mechanical or chemical fuel treatments. There is more and more habitat, environment and air quality demise caused by extreme temperature forest fires fueled by excessive fine fuel build up.

Targeted sheep grazing is a natural and sustainable method for managing invasive plant species such as cheatgrass and knapweed. This supports native vegetation, improves biodiversity, and reduces reliance on herbicides.

Grazing helps maintain open understories in forested regions, encourages healthy nutrient cycling, and prevents overgrowth that can stress ecosystems. Properly managed grazing enhances soil health, water infiltration, and habitat diversity.

We are the only developing nation NOT prioritizing and securing a domestic food supply. All countries around the world recognize the strategic importance of domestic food and fiber production-not only for economic reasons, but for national security, rural stability, environmental stewardship, and food sovereignty. We produce the safest, cleanest, most efficient, and climate-friendly food supply here in the United States with lamb being a contributor to low-waste agricultural production.

Your record of decision on this matter will change the trajectory of our family and the domestic food and fiber supply of our nation, as no other summer grazing range exists within feasible trucking distance.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Martinez

Carol Martinez