



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is fall, tags have been drawn and purchased, and folks have been busy scouting. Looking for that once in a lifetime animal we all dream of. It is an exciting time of the year, we know where we are going to be hunting, many of us already have been.

2020 has been a crazy year for all of us, OR-FNAWS is no exception. The COVID-19 pandemic has put everything into turmoil. We did get to participate and have a booth at the Wild Sheep Show in Reno, that was before COVID. We had a wonderful banquet planned at Eagle Crest Resort, your board members put a lot of time and energy into this new, larger venue, but of course you all got the letter, we had to put it off for a year. This included our spring meeting and annual tailgate party, before and after.

OR-FNAWS had worked with Sierra El Alamo in Sonora, Mexico for a Desert Bighorn Sheep hunt that we were going to raffle off, we were going to pull the ticket at our banquet. We also had an Oregon Governor's State-wide deer tag from the Access and Habitat Board that we were going to auction that evening as well. Obviously, with no banquet, we had to regroup and find other venues and dates to make both events happen.

You saw in our Summer Newsletter that The Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) worked with us and On-Line auctions and the State-wide Deer tag sold for a record \$55,000!

We decided to move the draw for the Desert Bighorn Sheep raffle to July 18th and hold it in conjunction with the Annual Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain Goat Orientation. This was scheduled in The Dalles, surely this would be beyond the reach of COVID-19 and things would have settled back to normal by then. This was not to be the case. Three days before our planned orientation, the State adjusted the rules for COVID-19 and we had to scramble to an online option. Thankfully, we had a contingency plan prepared for just such a case. We held the orientation on Facebook, contacted all the bighorn sheep and Rocky Mountain Goat tag holders with instructions on how to participate and that morning drew live the Desert Bighorn Sheep raffle ticket. All the allotted tickets for this raffle were sold which did allow us to turn this into a good fundraiser for OR-FNAWS. We want to thank all of you for your support in making this happen.

COVID-19 and the associated changing landscape caused a lot of issues in 2020 but OR-FNAWS still did fairly well financially thanks to the support and hard work of our members and friends. We did not get to do many of our planned work projects, we did not have the opportunity to see each other at our many functions, but we still did participate and provide our input to many projects and areas of interest for bighorn sheep and rocky mountain goat management across the State. See the article on Government and Legislative Affairs work by OR-FNAWS included in this newsletter, I think you will be impressed with all the things OR-FNAWS is engaged in.

For 2021, OR-FNAWS has been selected by ODFW to auction the Oregon Governor's Rocky Mountain Goat tag! We will be looking to auction this tag at next year's Annual OR-FNAWS Banquet on May 1st at the Eagle Crest Resort in Redmond, Oregon. On the next day, May 2nd, we will plan on having our Spring Board meeting. Please plan on joining all your friends with OR-FNAWS for the weekend.

In closing, let me urge you to get out and enjoy Oregon's great outdoors. Get with your family and friends and enjoy this wonderful time of year. Think about taking someone new to hunting or fishing and show them what it means to be a hunter conservationist. Let us finish 2020 enjoying the amazing wild places we are so blessed to have doing the things that we love.

Good luck and stay safe,

Kevin Martin

President, Oregon FNAWS

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Project Updates

As we navigate our way through a global pandemic, we have been responding to all guidelines and restrictions in order to abide by our local and state governments.

For now, any hands on projects are to be determined. We will be updating information, as projects get closer.

We are hopeful that we will be able to host and assist in guzzler maintenance, annual juniper cut, and the Youth Outdoors Day.

If you would like to participate in any of our volunteer projects please email info@oregonFNAWS.org



BIGHORN SHEEP & MOUNTAIN GOAT ORIENTATION 2020

COVID-19 could not stop us this year in our efforts to spend time educating the lucky Bighorn Sheep & Mountain Goat tag holders. We hosted a virtual orientation, which was live streamed through our Facebook page. We had roughly 85% turnout and followed up with those who were not able to make it.

Many thanks to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for allowing us to use the Dalles Screen Shop to present the event.

Speakers this year consisted of our current President Kevin Martin, Past President Walter Chuck, Wild Sheep Foundation Secretary Larry Jacobs, ODF&W District Biologist Jeremy Thompson, and ODF&W Biologist Shane Talley.

We are actively working on 2021 workshop and will be prepared for either in person orientation or the possibility of another virtual event.

DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP HUNT RAFFLE WINNER

The drawing for the Desert Bighorn Sheep hunt with Sierra El Alamo was held at the beginning of the 2020 Orientation. The lucky winner Brian Ayala was drawn and accepted the prize.

We were fortunate enough to sell out all 600 tickets and raise money to put and keep sheep on the mountain. The lucky winner of the Desert Bighorn Sheep hunt found his lucky through purchasing only 1 ticket!

Brian will be going on the Desert Sheep hunt this upcoming season and we are thrilled to provide his first opportunity at harvesting his first wild sheep.

Thank you everyone who participated in the raffle and Sierra El Alamo for hosting the hunt, as we could not have raised the funds we did without your support.

We are working on another raffle coming up and that information will be shared in the winter newsletter as well as on our website and social media outlets.



Upcoming Dates:

January 2021:

Winter Board Meeting

Date and Location TBD

January 11-16:

The Sheep Show

Virtual Event, More Info To Come

March 11-14 2021:

Central Oregon Sportsman Show

Redmond, Oregon

May 1nd 2021:

22st Annual Oregon FNAWS Banquet

Eagle Crest Resort, Redmond, OR

May 2nd 2021:

Spring Board Meeting

Eagle Crest Resort, Redmond, OR

June 24-27 2021

Chapter & Affiliates/Tri-State Meeting

Lewiston, ID

July 2021 TBD

Bighorn Sheep & Mountain Goat Orientation

The Dalles, OR

Projects

Juniper Cut: TBD

Guzzler Maintenance: TBD

Youth Outdoors Show: TBD

2020 Hells Canyon Sheep Capture

A cooperative bighorn sheep capture involving the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Idaho Fish and Game (IFG), took place January 5-7th in Hells Canyon. Quicksilver Air based out of Fairbanks, Alaska, was contracted to capture the sheep using a helicopter and net gun. Jet boats operated by Oregon State Police and IFG were used to transport bighorn sheep processing crews up and down the Snake River. Bighorn sheep were captured from 6 different herds including 3 herds in the upper Hells Canyon wilderness and 3 herds in lower Hells Canyon. A total of 50 animals were captured, blood and biological samples collected, adult sheep were fitted with radio collars and then released back into the local area. The cooperative capture is part of the Tri-State Hells Canyon Initiative's ongoing research to better understand the presence of bacterial pneumonia and the role it plays with respect to population growth within each of these herds. Radio collaring provides a useful means of monitoring mortality, movements of individuals within the herds, and survival of lambs born to collared ewes. As additional information is acquired the agencies will share the results with the Chapter. Oregon Chapter Foundation for North American Wild Sheep continues to be an active supporter of the Hells Canyon Initiative and projects such as this one. Both Oregon and Idaho Fish and Wildlife Agencies greatly appreciate our support.



2020 GOVERNMENT & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Clear Lake Ridge Preserve

Oregon Chapter, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (OR-FNAWS) expressed concern through a letter in January about The Nature Conservancy (TNC) plans to sell the Clear Lake Ridge Preserve and we wanted to explore other options with them.

The Clear Lake Ridge area was historical habitat for Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep. OR-FNAWS has been working for many years to restore bighorn sheep populations in the greater Hells Canyon Area. -OR-FNAWS, through the Hells Canyon Initiative (HCI) and together with our partners, has spent millions of dollars to reestablish Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep populations in the area and establish a showcase for bighorn sheep management and research. It would be a tragedy if Clear Lake Preserve was purchased and grazed by domestic sheep or goats, resulting in a die-off in the Hells Canyon area.

We wanted the opportunity to work with TNC and other interested partners to explore options that will assure that this amazing and treasured piece of property is protected and accessible to the public.

Jim Akenson, Conservation Director of Oregon Hunters Association (OHA), Vic Coggins, OR-FNAWS Director and OHA NE Oregon Director, and Kevin Martin, OR-FNAWS President, met with Justin Jones, Eastern Region Stewardship Manager of The Nature Conservancy, on February 27th in Enterprise, Oregon.

We meet in February to discuss the future of the Clear Lake Ridge Preserve as TNC is in the process of selling this preserve. We were interested in why and how they were going to do this and if there might be an opportunity to work together to explore options that will assure the property is protected and accessible to the public.

During our discussions we found out that although TNC was planning on selling the Clear Lake Ridge Preserve, they indicated that they were going to continue to be engaged and was including a conservation easement with the sale of the property.

Although our preference would be that TNC retain this property, seeing that this Conservation Easement was going to go with the purchase of the property made us feel somewhat better. In our conversations we made it clear that we were still interested in seeing the domestic livestock section include the language that no domestic sheep or goats would be allowed on the property, including pack goats or the use of domestic sheep and goats for the use of weed control. Justin indicated that he was comfortable with this and was going to include it in the conservation easement language.

We also had a long discussion related to access for hunting and the potential loss if this was sold to a private entity and included discussions on the potential conflicts with the number of wintering elk. There are enough elk winter range conflicts in Northeastern Oregon without potentially adding another.

We did discuss the possibility of OR-FNAWS and OHA working with TNC to see if we could assist them in finding a buyer that would meet everyone's desires for protection and access. TNC was interested in this but was still going to move forward with the sale.

Desert National Wildlife Refuge

The US Air Force was interested in expanding their training area in Nevada on the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. This could have negative effects on the Refuge and the existing bighorn sheep populations, including access to hunt. The Wild Sheep Foundation and OR-FNAWS provided input in January that supported the continued management by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Nevada, including continued support for hunting and habitat for desert bighorn sheep. Under the proposed expansion we were concerned with the potential loss of opportunities under the Department of Defense, which is what had been experienced under an earlier withdrawal. On June 20th, the US Armed Services Committee refused the proposal to expand military use of the refuge. This is a win for bighorn sheep, wildlife and the public to continue to enjoy and experience these special lands in the State of Nevada.

Bureau of Land Management Grazing

Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) sent a letter in February to the BLM with issues, ideas and concerns on the proposal related to proposed changes to the BLM national grazing regulations. OR-FNAWS was one of multiple Chapters and Affiliates who signed on to the letter. This is just the beginning of the process, that will be ongoing.

Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act and the Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition – (new partnership)

OR-FNAWS, along with six other conservation organizations, sent a letter in February to Senator's Wyden and Merkley with our thoughts, concerns and ideas on legislation they are working on for southeast Oregon, the Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act (S.2828). We were interested in assuring that the public lands in this important part of the state, were going to be managed with fish and wildlife populations in mind. This would include the California bighorn sheep herds and habitat.

As an outcome of this coalition, several of the organizations decided there was continued value in working together in partnership in the Owyhee country thus the Owyhee sportsman Coalition was born. The Sportsmen for the Owyhee Coalition is comprised of Trout Unlimited, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Oregon Hunters Association and the Oregon Chapter, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep. As organizations, we are leaders in the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat and in promoting the value of hunting and fishing. The collective voices of hunters and anglers will be key to conservation and protection of the area. We can assure that science-based decision-making is applied to ensure appropriate policy and management for fish and wildlife.

Governor Brown Letter

In early April, as the COVID-19 pandemic was causing the closure of many activities and the State of Oregon had issued a stay at home order in late March. OR-FNAWS sent a letter to Governor Brown supporting she leave hunting and fishing open during this time and that the educational, recreational, mental, and physical health values of excursions outdoors are an asset for hope for many of us. We thought that access to the outdoors and wide-open spaces was critical to Oregonians during this challenging time.

Potential Property Acquisition

We were approached early this year by a private landowner who would like to have his property, within the range of the Potamus bighorn sheep herd, eventually end up with an organization that is interested and supportive of bighorn sheep management. He was interested in OR-FNAWS potentially getting this property. The COVID-19 situation has not allowed us to follow up, but we will continue exploring potential opportunities with the landowner.

Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge

Waterfowl and California Quail hunting

OR FNAWS and the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) sent a letter in April expressing support for opening Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge (Hart Mountain NAR) to waterfowl hunting and re-opening the refuge to California quail hunting. We have reviewed the draft hunting plan, Environmental Assessment and compatibility determination, and supported the action as proposed. We did have some concerns with wording in the documents referencing hunting of California bighorn sheep and we shared those concerns.

This also gave us an opportunity to share our thoughts on bighorn sheep management, including hunting, and has allowed us to continue to ask Hart Mountain NAR to review bighorn sheep management, including the management of cougars and the impact on bighorns. We did share that we are aware that, due to steadily declining California bighorn sheep numbers, no hunting tags were authorized for the 2020 season. We shared that we would be concerned that the USFWS would take any action to close California bighorn sheep hunting on Hart Mountain NAR, rather than coordinating with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and not authorizing any bighorn sheep tags due to the current population status. OR-FNAWS and the WSF prefers that the hunting of bighorn sheep remain authorized by the refuge.

Bighorn Sheep Management Plan

In May, OR FNAWS had the opportunity to express support for the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge's (Hart Mountain NAR) development of a Bighorn Sheep Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to identify and evaluate short and long-term actions that can restore a self-sustaining population of California bighorn sheep on Hart Mountain NAR. The Oregon Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (OR FNAWS) and the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) have expressed concern regarding the steep decline in bighorn sheep numbers the last couple of years and believe that a thorough analysis is long overdue. Observations by ODFW have indicated that cougar predation has resulted in population-level impacts on bighorn sheep for years.

California bighorn sheep were extirpated from Oregon by 1912. In 1954 California bighorns were successfully reintroduced to Hart Mountain NAR when 22 sheep were trans-located from Williams Lake, British Columbia. Population growth rates were nominally and consistently positive until the population reached an estimated peak of approximately 600 sheep by 1992. During this period of rapid population growth, Hart Mountain NAR served as the primary source herd for California bighorn in Oregon, as well as portions of Idaho and Nevada. A total of 673 bighorn sheep were removed from Hart Mountain NAR for translocation purposes between 1969 – 2003. Additionally, 385 rams were legally harvested during the same time period.

By 1996 the herd was in decline and by 2004 the population was estimated at approximately 300 individuals. During the period of decline, observed lamb ratios indicated the population should be increasing if adult mortality was compensatory to population growth. As a result of these observations, Hart Mountain NAR and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) initiated a research project to evaluate adult survival and the cause of mortalities from 2004-2008. Twelve rams and 37 ewes were captured and fitted with VHF radio transmitters and monitored. Bighorn health assessments were initiated in 2012 which included techniques sufficient to detect *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* exposure, with negative results observed. Hunter harvested samples collected and evaluated since 2014 have also indicated negative results. In addition, an adult ewe was euthanized and sampled by Hart Mountain NAR staff and ODFW also tested negative. Disease sampling revealed no exposure to diseases of concern, and further sampling efforts have continued to indicate no exposure to pathogens. Nineteen bighorn sheep died during the study resulting in annual survival rates of 83% and 89% for adult males and females, respectively. Cougar predation accounted for 63.2% of all mortalities.

Research on Hart Mountain NAR prior to 1998 indicated no cougar predation related bighorn mortalities. However, research after 2000 confirmed cougar predation to be the primary factor causing the bighorn population decline. OR-FNAWS has expressed concern about Cougar predation on Hart Mountain NAR going back to 2006 and has provided funding for monitoring prior to that. It seems reasonable that the refuge would institute a hunting opportunity for cougars as part of their management actions, as well as the use of administrative removal when needed to maintain California Bighorn Sheep populations at a level appropriate for the available habitat.

Managed in coordination with the ODFW, the bighorn sheep-hunting season has been an important and highly desired hunting opportunity. Hunting for bighorn has been allowed in Hart Mountain NAR since 1965. In 2016, the ODFW issued 3 resident and 1 non-resident bighorn sheep tags in Hart Mountain Refuge. In 2020 the sheep season on the Refuge was closed due to declining sheep numbers.

OR FNAWS and the WSF are opposed to any action to close California bighorn sheep hunting on Hart Mountain NAR. We would prefer that Hart Mountain NAR continue to coordinate with ODFW to provide this iconic hunting opportunity. However, we support having no tags authorized until such time as the populations increase to a huntable level.

OR FNAWS and WSF urges refuge staff to also develop a hunting plan for cougars, on Hart Mountain NAR.

Nez Perce – Clearwater NF Forest Plan

OR-FNAWS, together with Idaho, Washington, and National Wild Sheep Foundations, sent a letter in April. We were all generally happy with the Final Plan. We supported and thanked the Forest Service for closing a domestic sheep grazing allotment that put BHS at risk. The bighorn sheep herds in the lower Salmon River Canyon are one of the few remaining herds that were not extirpated in Idaho and represent the last remaining native populations in Idaho. This unique native genetic stock represents a heightened conservation need. This allotment was located within the heart of the lower Salmon River bighorn sheep herd home range. The Forest Service used the risk of contact (ROC) analysis developed with support from the Wild Sheep Foundation, which recommended closure. The Forest also developed a standard for future, potential domestic sheep allotments to maintain separation from bighorn sheep.

We have also been asking the Forest Service across the west to identify bighorn sheep as a Species of Conservation Concern, which both the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests and the Regional Office of the Forest Service for the Northern Rockies did.

We did express concern with the use of pack goats near bighorn sheep herds and suggested solutions for the plan. Solutions that have been worked on nationally, so management is consistent across the west.

Barren Valley Complex Population Management Plan

OR-FNAWS and WSF in May sent a letter to the Vale BLM responding to the proposal on feral horse management. We are concerned and asked the BLM to address degradation of bighorn sheep habitat by the expanding populations of feral horses. We believe that healthy rangelands are essential and that the over population by feral horses threatens the health of these rangelands and thus the bighorns. We asked that BLM explore the full suite of management tools as they look for ways to manage the horse populations. This analysis is just getting started, and we expect to continue to be involved.

Stop Poaching Campaign – (new Oregon State Coalition)

The Oregon Legislators asked three agencies to develop an anti-poaching campaign. The Oregon State Police (OSP), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) has launched a three-pronged statewide anti-poaching effort that unifies hunters and non-hunters. The goal is to reduce illegal killing of fish and wildlife. This legislation creates new opportunities to combine efforts with our law enforcement and judicial partners to reduce fish and wildlife crimes.

This is a program with a dedicated ODFW position that is supported and currently funded. There are currently three prongs associated with this program, (1) additional OSP Troopers, (2) additional focused district attorney and (3) an increased education and awareness campaign. ODFW reached out to over 28 organizations, including OR-FNAWS to participate.

OR-FNAWS and other partners have donated \$10,500 towards a reward for a poached ram in the Troy area of northeast Oregon.

Members & Membership Renewal

Navigating through many trying times we want to take a moment to thank all of our current annual and life members. Without your support we would not be able to assist and advocate for wild sheep in the state of Oregon. As most of you may know we have changed the way we accept new memberships and renew annual members. If you are an annual member and you have not renewed through our website we would urge you to go through the renewal process there. We are working away from paper renewals and increasing our active members through the website. Online renewals ensures we have up to date information for all members and assists in the ability to contact members to inform them on upcoming events, newsletters, and our annual banquet.

Board Members and Volunteers

President: Kevin Martin

Vice President: Tom Peterson

Vice President: Dave Geelan

Secretary: Robert Welsh

Treasurer: Zach Peterson

Past President: Walter Chuck

Membership: Marcus Gores

Government Affairs: Larry Jacobs

Banquet: Shane Byerly

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