



President's Message

Winter has arrived in Oregon. If you are like me, you are thinking about last year's hunts and your friends and family who enjoyed the time afield together. It was a wonderful break from all the restrictions and stresses associated with the COVID 19 pandemic. Time spent hunting, fishing, and camping are the ultimate in social distancing and a welcome respite from the everyday issues and losses of 2020.

The winter is when I spend time looking back and being thankful for the wonderful times together and the adventures the new year will bring. We start looking at our points, we begin thinking about the units, about that animal you saw that got away. Is it still out there, did someone else harvest it? What hunts are we going to put in for? Are there new hunt areas we would like to try? Always the optimist, I have already put the 2021 hunts on my calendars.

I start making plans for the tasks to do this coming year. On January 3rd we had our winter board meeting. We elected several OR FNAWS Board member positions, discussed and voted on our 2021 budget, and talked about how we could update our roles and better get information out to members. Our three new OR FNAWS Board members are Craig Foster (Lakeview), Marcus Gores (Portland) and Scott Peckham (Pendleton). Welcome to the Board. I would like to especially thank our retiring board members; Richard Weir, Brian Tinker and Tom Van Grunsven for their years of service to wild sheep and goat management and hunting.

The "Sheep Show" in Reno was adjusted this year due to COVID, so there was no going to Reno and meeting with our Wild Sheep buddies. This year we had "Sheep Week" which was entirely virtual (on-line) and quite different to bring together than the "Sheep Show" in Reno. On the flip side it was easy to attend and the attendance numbers did show that there is a lot of interest in sheep and sheep hunting. I hope you had a chance to attend and took the time to visit your OR FNAWS booth. The Oregon Sheep Tag sold for \$210,000, which ties the record; it appears "Sheep Week" was a successful event! We did miss the comradery and time together with friends, new and old, that the "Sheep Show" provides and will look forward to attending next year. Please think about joining us next year, we are always looking for more help, getting to know new friends, and having a great time.

We are always looking for stories and pictures to share of members hunting experiences, so please share your stories, we will get them in the Newsletter or share online.

Thank you everyone for your continued support. I hope we see you at one or more of our events this year.

Kevin Martin

President, Oregon FNAWS

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2021 Hunt Raffle

OREGON FNAWS 2021 HUNT RAFFLE



Mountain Goat & Grizzly Bear Raffle



2021 MOUNTAIN GOAT/GRIZZLY BEAR/BLACK BEAR/WOLF HUNT

10 DAY HUNT WITH ULTIMA THULE OUTFITTER FOR MOUNTAIN GOAT, GRIZZLY BEAR, BLACK BEAR, AND WOLF. HUNT DATES: SEPT 23RD – OCT 4TH 2021. HUNT CAN BE TRANSFERABLE TO NEXT OF KIN ONLY. CANNOT UPGRADE HUNT TO DALL SHEEP.

TICKETS \$50 EACH PURCHASE ONLINE: OREGONFNAWS.ORG

Drawing on May 1ST, 2021 at 8pm

For more information please visit our website www.oregonfnaws.org
Or email info@oregonfnaws.org

2021 ANNUAL BANQUET UPDATE

As you know by now, a lot of uncertainties come with planning a banquet during the middle of a pandemic. Our banquet chair Shane Byerly and the banquet committee have been working on planning a banquet for May 1st 2021 at Eagle Crest Resort in Redmond, OR. Oregon FNAWS board and banquet committee will be meeting regularly to determine if the banquet will take place in person on May 1st or work on alternate options for the banquet.

We are truly hoping we get to see all of you this year and raise some funds for wild sheep in the state of Oregon.

If you would like to keep updated on the banquet please subscribe to our email list through our website and we will be sending out emails to keep all members informed.



Upcoming Events:

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 17th 2021:

Bighorn Sheep & Mountain Goat Orientation

The Dalles, OR

July 18th 2021

Summer Board Meeting

Deschutes River State Park, The Dalles, OR

January 8th 2022

Tentative 2022 Winter Board Meeting

Projects

Juniper Cut: TBD

Guzzler Maintenance: TBD

Youth Outdoors Show: TBD

Update on Southeast Oregon Disease Research

Written By: Craig Foster

Pneumonia related disease events are unfortunately all too common in bighorn herds across their range. Disease outbreaks in Oregon have occurred mostly in the Rocky Mountain herds associated with Hells Canyon. Extensive disease research in Hells Canyon have finally attributed these outbreaks to infections of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (MOVI), most likely transmitted by contact with domestic sheep or goats.

In 2003 Nevada had an outbreak in California bighorn found in the Sawtooth herd which is the southern part of the Santa Rosa Mountains in Washoe County. Prior to, and after that outbreak biologists in both states suspected there was movement of rams between the bighorn herds in southern Malheur County in Oregon and northern Washoe County. In 2012 biologists from both states started a radio marking project to measure that movement. In 2015 a radio marked ram died in Oregon and initially that death was attributed to predation. Due to the presence of MOVI in northern Nevada a PCR test was completed, which indicated the ram died of an MOVI infection from the strain found in the Sawtooth's. The 2003 disease event in the Sawtooth's was attributed to contact with domestic sheep, but the PCR test on the 2015 ram and subsequent disease testing attribute the spread of the MOVI infection to movement of bighorn between Oregon and Nevada.

The two states hired Phd student Rob Spaan to investigate the disease events in southeast Oregon and northern Nevada. OR FNAWS has supported Rob's work through our grant-in-aide program. Rob has been working since 2016 and is starting to publish the results.

The severity of disease events can be highly variable and there is some indication that low genetic diversity and/or poor nutrition can affect that severity. Most of the southeast Oregon and northern Nevada herds were started from stock translocated from Hart Mt. and past research has shown that generally they have low genetic diversity. Most of these herds also live in very dry habitats and lamb recruitment between years can be highly variable irrespective of a disease outbreak.

Rob first looked at how lamb survival is affected by exposure to MOVI and the effect of low genetic diversity and nutrition. In the herds exposed to MOVI lamb survival averaged 2%. In the herds without MOVI but with low genetic diversity and/or poor forage quality lamb survival was 44 %. (If you want to read his findings go to: (Spaan RS, Epps CW, Crowhurst R, Whittaker D, Cox M, Duarte A. 2021. Impact of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* on juvenile bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) survival in the northern Basin and Range ecosystem. PeerJ 9:e10710. <http://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.10710>)).

Unfortunately, these results don't indicate that genetic diversity or nutrition has no influence on disease severity. Persistence of MOVI in a herd is affected by adult bighorns, which survive the initial die off and continue to carry and spread the disease in following years. These individuals are referred to as "chronic carriers". The occurrence of chronic carriers may be affected by genetics and nutrition. Rob is currently working on the analysis to measure the severity and persistence of MOVI in adult bighorns and how that persistence is affected by genetic diversity and nutrition. If time and money allow, he also will be completing a risk of contact model for the southeast Oregon/northern Nevada herds. We will continue to report on Rob's work and in a future article we will explain the process and reasoning behind Risk of Contact Modeling and the justification behind identifying and removing chronic carriers as part of managing MOVI outbreaks.

Bighorns are about the only North American big game species where disease management must be an integral part of their management strategy. Across bighorn range there are a substantial number of biologists dedicated to understanding and managing healthy bighorn herds. OR FNAWS will continue to support these folks any way we can.

2020-2021 GOVERNMENT & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

June 27, 2020 - Letter of Support from OR FNAWS, Idaho WSF and Washington WSF to WSF to Update the Risk of Contact Model: The greatest issue limiting recovery remains the potential for contact and disease transmission between domestic sheep or goats and bighorn sheep. Creating and maintaining separation between the species is critical to reducing the risk of interspecies transmission of disease. The science-based Risk of Contact tool was developed to provide the information needed to determine where separation is needed. There has been a lot learned since the initial development and implementation of this tool and we feel it is time to update it based on this experience. Updates to the tool that would make it more user friendly, increase functionality and use and be more stable would be welcomed improvements.

Even with congressional and national direction the last 5 years for the Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to complete a Risk of Contact analysis west wide there are still units that have not done so.

We support improvements to the functionality of this important tool that provides the needed science-based information for sound management decisions to maintain separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats.

June 30, 2020 - Letter of Support to WSF for Larry Jacobs to run for another term on the WSF Board of Directors - OR FNAWS sent a letter of supporting OR FNAWS Board Member and Past President, Larry Jacobs as a candidate for the Board of Directors of the Wild Sheep Foundation.

July 31, 2020 - Letter of Support from OR FNAWS, Idaho WSF and Washington WSF to WSF for Optimizing Mycoplasma Ovipneumoniae Test and Remove management at Lookout Mountain, Lower Salmon River and Yakima Canyon bighorn herds - Pneumonia remains one of the greatest obstacles to recovering bighorn sheep populations in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae (Movi) has been identified as the primary pathogen responsible for triggering pneumonia outbreaks in bighorn sheep. Previous research in Hells Canyon indicates that to date the most promising way to clear Movi is a Test and Remove technique.

Oregon FNAWS is contributing to this project and has approved \$15,000 for the Lookout Mountain portion of this proposal. We are also looking at a funding request for the Lostine portion of the proposal. The Lookout Mountain and Lostine are two iconic bighorn sheep populations within the State of Oregon. These herds are part of the Hells Canyon Initiative and have provided considerable opportunities and interest for viewing, harvest, and research.

The Lower Salmon River bighorn sheep herd in Idaho is also part of the Hells Canyon Initiative.

These bighorn sheep are some of the few native sheep in this part of the tri-state area and are thus important to maintain and protect. We have spent considerable time and resources working with the land management, State and Tribal agencies in the management of these sheep.

The bighorn sheep in the Yakima Canyon are a herd we are in ongoing communications and negotiations with the State of Washington, the US Forest Service, and domestic sheep permittees to maintain and protect these bighorn sheep herds.

We fully support and look forward to the removal of chronic carriers in these herds. This is a multi-jurisdictional adaptive management project that builds on previous research and management techniques. The project will allow for further testing of management techniques among multiple, bighorn sheep herds in the tri-state area. In addition, gaining a better understanding of the patterns and determinants of health and disease in these populations would benefit bighorn sheep west wide.

August 8, 2020 - Letter to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife related to the proposed changes in the Oregon big game hunting regulations

The primary purpose of the Oregon Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (OR-FNAWS) is to promote and enhance populations of indigenous wild sheep in Oregon and across North America. OR-FNAWS supports scientific solutions to resource management challenges and we heavily invest the funds we raise in disease research, bighorn sheep transplants, habitat management, population management, predator management, and conservation education.

OR-FNAWS strongly recommends that the December 2003 Oregon Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain Goat Plan (OS&G) Plan be updated. We suggest that funds from the sale of the Auction Tag (Mountain Sheep Sub Account) be designated for this task. The plan is 17 years old and there has been a lot of new and additional information available since it was written. We would like to suggest that Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) consider contracting out the update to the OS&G Plan to ensure that it is done in a timely manner and does not affect other ongoing programs. We would like to see this accomplished to assure all potential bighorn sheep habitat has been classified with potential conflicts, concerns and opportunities identified. A new OS&G plan would assure we are making the best state-wide population management decisions with herds that have strong numbers and maybe in need of additional population management. It would also assist in the assurance that our limited resources are focused on the State's highest priorities.

OR-FNAWS does understand that favorable environmental factors and management success can result in bighorn sheep populations that exceeds local carrying capacity. Active management of bighorn sheep populations can reduce dispersal and potential forays into areas containing domestic sheep or goats. To maintain bighorn sheep populations and keep populations sustainable within existing conditions, it is the policy of OR-FNAWS to encourage translocations to suitable vacant habitats or augment existing populations, as determined by wildlife agency personnel. However, when suitable areas are not available, population reduction may be desirable. In such cases, our policy would be to support harvest of female sheep by hunting as a tool for bringing population numbers in line with the management capacities of the area in question.

OR-FNAWS acknowledges that hunting of females will be viewed by some as philosophically at odds with the traditions and practices of male-only harvest, which have been successful in maintaining or re-establishing wild sheep populations in North America. However, population management has always been integral to successful, sound wildlife management. Whether by translocations or harvest, when bighorn sheep populations are not sustainable based on local conditions, scientific management is warranted. If hunting ewes is allowed, we feel that the successful draw of an ewe tag, should not preclude that hunter from pursuing a "once in a lifetime" ram tag.

Additionally, topics that we believe need to be explored in the new plan are: (1) allowing license holders to apply for both California and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep; (2) a plan for disposal of surplus pick-up heads to conservation organizations for fundraisers; and (3) the establishment of management objectives (MOs) for all existing and proposed bighorn sheep herds."

OR-FNAWS is appreciative of the extension of time for Sheep and Goat hunts in the latest regulation update. We would like to strongly suggest a change for the draw for these hunts be moved to the earlier February draw. The earlier draw would allow tag recipients to have additional time to plan for their "Once in a Lifetime Hunt". This would be especially helpful for applicants who might be applying for Limited Entry Hunts with their preference points. OR-FNAWS understands that this earlier time frame could cause last minute adjustments to seasons due to disease or other populations reductions. There would be a need for hunters to understand that this potential adjustment could occur, and information should be displayed in the section of the synopsis under bighorn sheep.

August 28th Letter of Condolence to the Texas Bighorn Sheep Society - We were saddened to hear of the loss of three members of our wild sheep family in a helicopter accident in Texas and sent a letter and donation to the Texas Bighorn Sheep Society from OR FNAWS in support.

Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition - December 8th Meeting with Congressmen Walden's Staffer. OR FNAWS along with multiple members of the Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition had a call with Nick Strader, Central Oregon Office Director, of Congressmen Walden's office to discuss Senate Bill 2828 and if the Congressman was working on a companion bill for the House. Nick shared that while the Congressmen supported the bill and the work of the collaborative, it was unlikely that there would be a companion bill in the House this session. We did discuss the retirement of Congressmen Walden and incoming Congressmen Cliff Bentz. Nick shared that he would be continuing work with Congressmen Bentz. We shared that we would like to schedule a meeting the Congressmen Bentz in the New Year.

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Domestic Sheep Grazing EIS - OR FNAWS was one of the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) Chapters and Affiliates that signed on in June of 2019 to the scoping letter for the Domestic Sheep Grazing EIS on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest in Washington State. We have continued to directly participate, with the WSF and the Washington Chapter, as this analysis continues, including in the ongoing conversations and negotiations with the grazing permittees. In our view, it is critically important to pro-actively manage for and achieve effective spatial and/or temporal separation between domestic sheep and wild sheep, to minimize the risk of pathogen transfer and subsequent respiratory disease (e.g., pneumonia).

Stop Poaching Stakeholders - Due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, there has been a reduction related to the activities of ODFW and the Stakeholders. During this time the budget has been uncertain, and meetings have been sporadic. There has only been a few shared emails and phone calls. I do expect activity of this stakeholder group to increase once these uncertainties work out.

Small Domestic flock volunteer program - we are involved in conversations with our neighboring WSF Chapters about the potential to expand the ongoing small domestic flock work to a larger scale using volunteers. This would allow additional information, education, and Movi testing of small domestic flocks of sheep and goats.



December 23rd Meeting with Senator Merkley's Staffers - OR FNAWS was asked to participate in a conference call with Jessica Keys (Natural Resources Liaison and Field Representative) and Anja Makawi (Congressional Science Fellow on Energy and the Environment in Washington DC) both of Senator Jeff Merkley's Staff. The ask was from the Wildlife Program Manager of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, CTUIR. The focus would be primarily CTUIR ceded lands and bighorn sheep, if time allowed, we would discuss the larger Oregon landscape and bighorn sheep issues. The background and issues associated with Bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats were discussed as well as CTUIR's interest, concerns, and treaty rights. The discussion went into potential solutions. That being an integrated management approach and that separation was needed. Education, legislation, and assistance were three items that the Senator could potentially help with. There was a discussion about the Bighorn Sheep Advocates, who they are, and what they do from a National scale. We discussed the Hells Canyon Initiative and what it is about, including how multiple partners and researchers were working closely together to find solutions. We focused of the diversity of partners and the local, regional, and national implications of the work.

Issues shared:

- (1) We discussed the small flock Initiative, working with Asotin County and others as a way for working with the small private landowners of domestic sheep/goats. We discussed that this may be a way of increasing the education and reducing the conflicts. Increasing the footprint of this work across a larger landscape would be a benefit.
- (2) Discussed the concerns with pack goats and that we have been providing input to National Forest and BLM Unit planning processes on the need to manage and separate.
- (3) Talked about National Forest Plans and BLM Resource Management Plans and developing strategies for management of wild sheep and domestic sheep within them. Always coming back to the need for separation.
- (4) Talked about the need to update the Risk of Contact Model and associated Federal and State agency training needs. Discussed the need to identify existing and potential bighorn sheep habitat and then use the Risk of Contact model to determine the level of risk and needed actions.
- (5) Shared and discussed the success of the Test and Remove Management in Hells Canyon and that we were supporting the use in the Lower Salmon River, Lookout Mtn., Burnt River, Lostine and Yakima River bighorn sheep herds. We did share the document developed by Frances Cassirer (IDFG) and the Hells Canyon Initiative on the success of this work in Hells Canyon.
- (6) Did not get to go into detail about Senate Bill 2828, but again shared our earlier letter to the Senators with our (Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition) suggested adjustments.
- (7) Discussed the need for refilling the Forest Service's Full Curl Coordinator position.
- (8) Shared the sheep hunting opportunity losses in Lookout Mountain and Burnt River due to the recent disease episodes.
- (9) The CTUIR talked about the Federal grant they received to work with partners on bighorn sheep issues in CTUIR tribal lands.
- (10) We discussed the need for the Forest Service to continue to address bighorn sheep as a species of conservation concern in the forest planning process and why this is important. We did share that this analysis and identification was inconsistent between Regions.
- (11) We also shared how the WSF and OR FNAWS work with multiple partners on issues and landscapes. We shared that we bring funds to the plate for projects in Oregon and across the west. That we try to look for those win-win opportunities when possible, but that sometimes one cannot be found.
- (12) Shared the Oregon Map that includes the existing Bighorn Sheep herds and domestic allotments (FS and BLM).

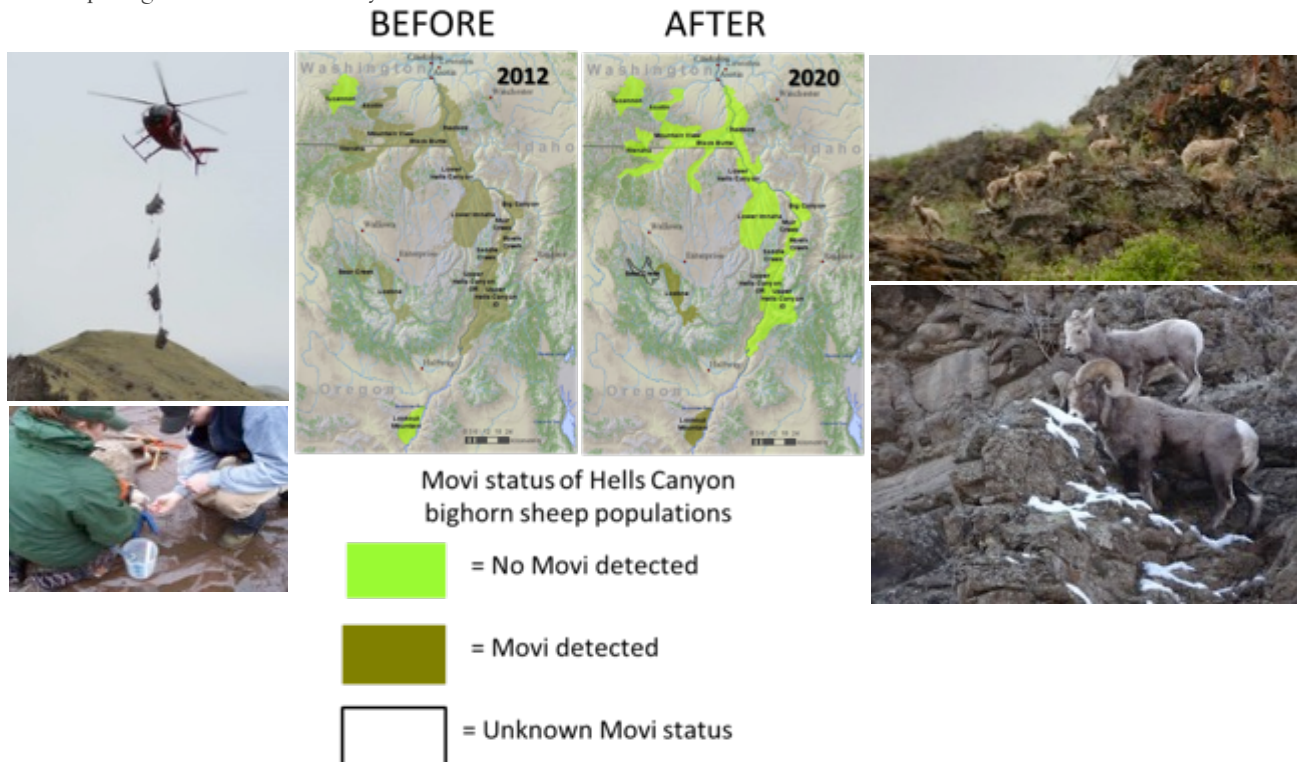
OR FNAWS did commit that we would get back together with the Senator's Staff in the new year to continue the discussions.

Healthy Sheep in Hell's Canyon

Written By: Frances Cassirer

The [Hells Canyon Initiative](#) (HCI) is a state, federal, tribal, and private partnership to restore bighorn sheep in the greater Hells Canyon area of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Hells Canyon is also a “natural laboratory” for testing ideas and learning about restoring bighorn sheep populations. Pneumonia has impacted bighorn sheep restoration in Hells Canyon from the start in 1971, and this has led to a long term partnership to find a solution to the problem with nearby [Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine](#), including, since 2005, the Rocky Crate/ Wild Sheep Foundation Endowed Chair in Wild Sheep Diseases. Together with the [Bighorn Sheep Disease Research Consortium](#) and other partners, the HCI has focused on the respiratory disease that has limited the success of bighorn sheep restoration in Hells Canyon and many other places. Numerous management strategies aimed at reducing the impact of pneumonia have been developed or tested in Hells Canyon.

In 2013, HCI and partners started an experiment to clear the pneumonia pathogen *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi) from bighorn sheep in Hells Canyon. At the beginning, every population was infected and was experiencing respiratory disease (mostly in lambs) except the Tucannon, Washington population at the north end of Hells Canyon and the Lookout Mountain, Oregon population at the south end. Over 800 captures and 7 years later, most of the sheep in 16 populations that were infected have been tested. Fewer than 20 were classified as chronic carriers of Movi, and were removed. As of 2020, nearly every population that had been infected is healthy except the Lostine in Oregon. Work is continuing in the Lostine and Lookout Mountain populations over the winter of 2020 – 2021. The “test and remove” technique is now being refined and is also being used in to combat respiratory disease in bighorn sheep ranges outside Hells Canyon.



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

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Vice President: Tom Peterson

Vice President: Dave Geelan

Secretary: Robert Welsh

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Past President: Walter Chuck

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Successful 2020 Sheep & Mountain Goat Hunters

