

\*\*\* Montana \*\*\*  
**WILD SHEEP**  
FOUNDATION  
KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN

# Wild Sheep

Fall 2019 | Volume 27, Issue 3

*7th World Mountain  
Ungulate Conference*

Cover: Casey Nichols  
Unlimited Montana Ram

*page 6*

## THIS ISSUE

President's Message.....	3
Montana Wild Sheep Annual Banquet & Life Member Raffle.....	4
Casey and Shane Austin African Safari Photos.....	5
7th World Mountain Ungulate Conference.....	6
Replica of the world-record bighorn sheep ram skull.....	10
Casey Nichols Unlimited Montana Ram Photos...11	
Petty Creek Project Report.....	12
Photos for Swag.....	15

All contributed material will be published at the discretion of the Editorial Board of the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation (MTWSF). The Editorial Board consists of the editor of the newsletter, the executive director of the chapter, and the president of the chapter.

**Cover photo details** - Casey Nichols Unlimited Montana Ram

## CONNECT with Montana WSF


Visit us online at [www.montanawsf.org](http://www.montanawsf.org)!

While there, visit the **Photo Gallery** page. If you would like to have a picture posted, email ([photos@montanawsf.org](mailto:photos@montanawsf.org)) your name, the photo (jpeg format preferred) along with a brief one to two sentence description of the hunt.



The Montana Wild Sheep Foundation will give a reward of up to \$1000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of cases involving the illegal taking of bighorn sheep in the State of Montana. If you have information of any illegal act, contact 1-800-TIP-MONT (1-800-847-6668).

## HAVE YOU LIKED US ON FACEBOOK?

 Besides our newsletter, you can stay up to date on news, activities & current events by visiting our Facebook page:

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# President's Message

*Hunting season is once again upon us and fall is rapidly setting in. As the mountains begin to show colors of rust and golden it makes me reflect back on the past 12 months of our organization. I am honored and thankful to serve on the board as your President once again. It is humbling to be elected by peers for whom I have so much respect. MTWSF has an extremely talented and dedicated board of volunteers that keep the organization moving forward without any paid staff. That is remarkable and I am proud to be a part of it.*

MTWSF has funded some great restoration projects and dealt with some great challenges. Our spring fundraiser in Billings was a smashing success breaking attendance and financial records. Those funds raised are helping us push for more wild sheep transplants into suitable areas of Montana. To my knowledge Montana hasn't made a wild sheep transplant in over a decade and it is time for us to be more aggressive about giving wild sheep a chance to proliferate in more suitable areas throughout the state. MTWSF continues to collaborate with many organizations to improve habitat in many parts of the state such as the Petty creek project and area 270 where there are several BHS tags awarded each year. There are also some potential buy outs that will preserve habitat in perpetuity if we are able to make the deal. If you know of a project or any wild sheep need throughout Montana please make sure to let one of our board members know so we can look into helping out with the project.

The disease issue is still the top challenge to wild sheep and continues to frustrate scientists and BHS conservationists alike. One positive about the m. ovi pathogen is that it brings so many like minded people together in a conservation community to try to work to restore a majestic species of concern. It is with great resolve that we continue to promote research in hopes that one day a solution will be found.

Please mark your calendars for next **February 28-29, 2020**. The MTWSF annual fundraiser will be held in Billings. Friday night events are free to attend for those of you that don't wish to pay for a banquet ticket. The event looks to sell out so keep in mind that you'll want to sign up as soon as the tickets are released. I wish you great hunting this fall and most of all great memories.

*Shane Clouse*

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation President

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(406) 370-4487



# 2020 MT WILD SHEEP ANNUAL BANQUET & LIFE MEMBER RAFFLE

JOIN US FOR  
THE EXPO ON  
FEBRUARY 28!

**WHEN:**  
FEBRUARY 29, 2020  
6PM - 12PM

**WHERE:**  
BILLINGS  
CONVENTION CENTER

**RAFFLE:**  
All LIFE MEMBERS of MT Wild Sheep Foundation are included in drawing. You **MUST BE PRESENT** at the ANNUAL BANQUET in Billings, February 29, 2020 to win. Transferrable **ONLY** to another LIFE MEMBER that is also **PRESENT**. *This is a DALL SHEEP HUNT with a very successful outfitter.*



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Casey and Shane Austin (Montana Wild Sheep Foundation Life Members) just returned from an African Safari with Numazaan Safaris. The hunt was purchased at The Montana Wild Sheep Annual Expo and Fundraising Banquet.

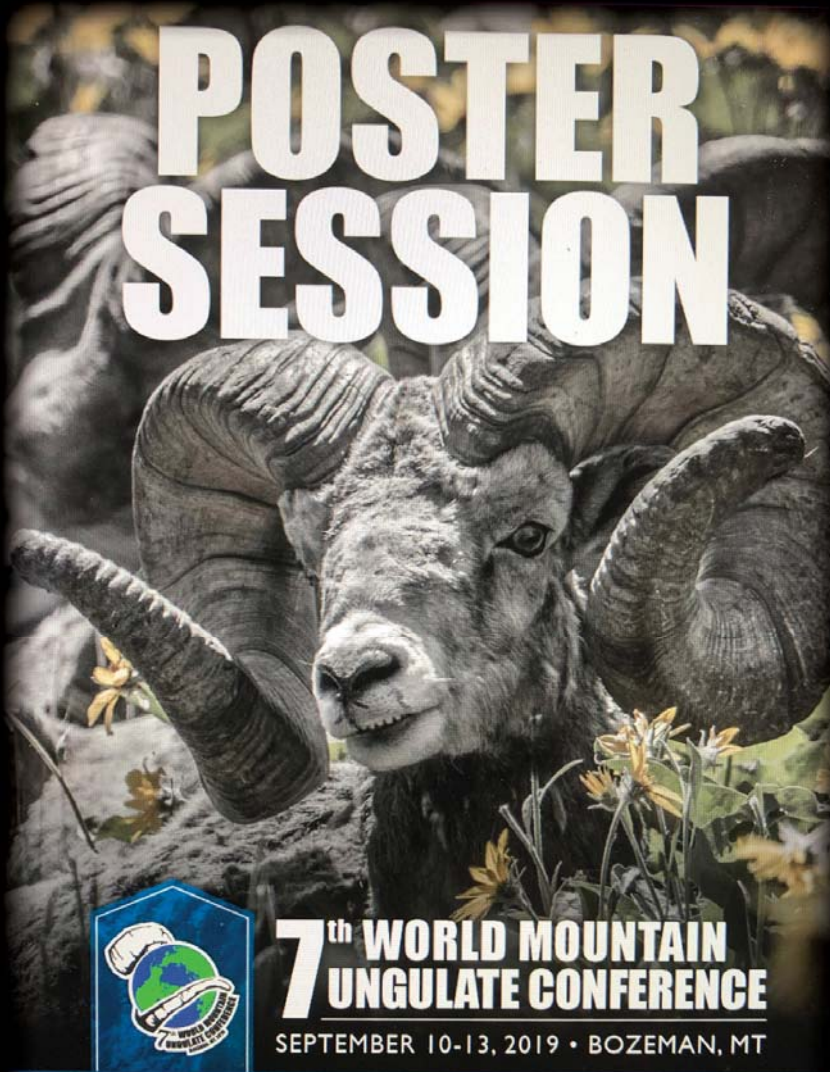


## Montana State Employees Charitable Giving Campaign

MTWSF is registered with the Montana States Employees Charitable Giving Campaign! If you are employed by the great state of Montana we invite you to give generously to wild sheep. Our SECGC number is **5617**.

*7th World Mountain Ungulate Conference  
finds its way to the home of Wild Sheep  
Foundation's World Headquarters,  
Bozeman, Montana*

**POSTER  
SESSION**



**7<sup>th</sup> WORLD MOUNTAIN  
UNGULATE CONFERENCE**

SEPTEMBER 10-13, 2019 • BOZEMAN, MT



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Report by:

Kurt Alt, Conservation Director,  
Montana and International  
Programs, Wild Sheep  
Foundation & Montana Wild  
Sheep Foundation

*On September 10-13, 2019, the world's wild sheep and wild goat scientific expertise traveled to Bozeman, Montana to participate in the 7th World Mountain Ungulate Conference (WMUC). This is the first time the world conference has been held in North America! Hosted by the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) near the home of their World Headquarters in Bozeman, the event was co-sponsored by WSF and Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF). This conference was also endorsed by the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Caprinae Specialist Group.*

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation, together with the Southwest Montana

Chapter of Safari Club International and Map Brewing, sponsored our evening poster presentations and receptions. Because breaks were short over the three days of presentations, receptions were critical to the success of the conference by allowing us to keep the delegates together facilitating discussions and capacity building.

During the welcoming address, **Gray Thornton**, WSF's President & CEO, emphasized WSF's purpose of "*Putting and Keeping Wild Sheep on the Mountain®*" and highlighted the importance of bringing together world-wide scientific expertise in the management and conservation of wild sheep and wild goats. **Martha Williams**, Director of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MTFWP) described conservation challenges facing Montanans and the importance of hunting, angling and outdoor recreation in developing and maintaining conservation programs.

**Dr. Valerius Geist**, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, gave the opening keynote address by challenging wildlife managers and researchers to re-think impacts that predation can have on ungulate populations. Known through his 1971 book, "*Mountain Sheep: a Study in Behavior and Evolution*," Dr. Geist is one of the most knowledgeable, productive, and respected wildlife biologists in North America.

This was truly a worldwide conference, with 213 participants attending, representing 20 countries. Fifty-one oral presentations and 19 posters relative to research conducted in 24 countries were offered, covering 23 species of wild sheep and wild goats, 9 cervids, 1 antelope and 3 carnivores.

Following Dr. Geist's key-note address, sessions were held on taxonomy and genetics, and ecology and behavior. Taxonomy of snow sheep in Siberia, evolutionary history of North American wild sheep and Rocky Mountain goats, Balkan chamois population connectivity, and human settlement impacts on gene flow in Nubian Ibex were explored in the first session. The second session provided a broad and diverse glimpse of individual variations in migratory ungulates, movement and use patterns, co-occurrence of multiple ungulates, weather and climate change implications, impacts from human visitation, nutrition, etc. within a diversity of geographic areas including the Yellowstone area, U.S. southwest deserts, Italy, Spain, Russian Far East, Pakistan, and Mexico.

In addition to Dr. Geist, 6 other well-published wildlife scientists known worldwide led the Wednesday and Thursday sessions.

From the University of Alberta and Universite' de Sherbooke, Canada, **Dr. Mark Boyce** and **Dr. Marco Festa-Bianchet**, respectively, led Wednesday's "Population and Harvest" session. This session explored impacts from hunting, nutrition and population demographics in determining horn size, cougar predation on bighorn sheep, and restoration projects from Rocky Mountain goats and bighorn sheep to Arabian tahr. The day ended with a special panel on the effects of harvest.

**Dr. Vern Bleich**, retired from California Department of Fish & Wildlife, led the "Habitat Session" with a passionate call to elevate wildlife populations and wildlife conservation objectives to the same level of value accorded to other attributes of wilderness designated on U.S. federal lands. Topics covered 3 continents, ranging from impacts related to land-use designations, forage quality, weather, human disturbance and cover attributes related to habitat features.

**Dr. Peregrine Wolff**, DVM, Nevada Department of Wildlife State Wildlife Veterinarian, Executive Manager, Wildlife Disease Association, and Wildlife Committee Co-chair, U.S. Animal Health Association, led the "Disease Session." Dr. Wolff focused on the importance and relevance of disease research and monitoring on both wildlife and



## **7th World Mountain Ungulate Conference** *continued from page 7*

livestock in areas where use overlaps. Results of bacterial and viral work in countries from Central Asia, Europe and North America were presented. This was the first-time disease was highlighted with its own session during a World Mountain Ungulate Conference.

**Shane Mahoney**, President of Conservation Visions, Deputy-Chair for the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi) of IUCN, and Deputy President for the Policy and Law Commission of the International Council for Wildlife Conservation led the session, “Role of Sustainable Use in Conservation Today.” Shane highlighted the importance of sustainable use in conservation and provided the history behind the rise of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. In addition, he emphasized the important role of indigenous people to conservation. The role of hunting in providing reliable funding to support conservation and the role of sustainable use in community conservation was emphasized through presentations from the U.S., Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

Panel discussions were conducted on Wednesday and Thursday. Comprised of Drs. Marco Festa-Bianchet, Mark Boyce and Kevin Monteith, the Wednesday panel focused on understanding the effects of harvest on bighorn sheep populations. Because of interest by attendees, the discussion, moderated by **Quentin Kujala**, Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (MFWP), went nearly an hour beyond our scheduled time.

Moderated by Shane Mahoney, the Thursday panel focused on understanding the role of sustainable use in conservation today. The panel included **Manzoor Qureshi** and **Athar Khan**, Pakistan; **Orynassar Shaimkhanbetov**, Kazakhstan; **Khalil Karimov**, (SULi Central Asia Chair) Tajikistan; and **Nicole Tatman**, New Mexico. Once again, discussion exceeded the allotted hour due to attendee engagement. Discussion centered on the messaging of the role of hunting in conservation, transparency in where and how funding is allocated to local communities for use in conservation, and hunting’s role in managing introduced/invasive species.

**Dr. Jon Swenson**, Professor Emeritus, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Editor-in-Chief of the scientific journal *Ursus*, Co-chairman of the Expert Team for the Brown Bear in Europe, part of the IUCN Bear Specialist Group, was Thursday night’s banquet speaker. A Montanan, and former MFWP wildlife biologist, Dr. Swenson provided a comprehensive summary of “take homes” from the 3-day conference.

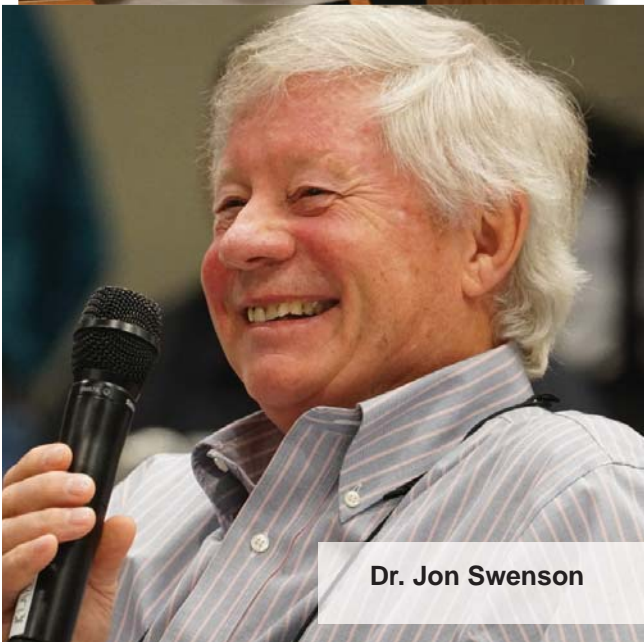
The conference concluded with a field trip to Yellowstone National Park on Friday. The trip was conducted by MFWP Wildlife Manager **Howard Burt** and Yellowstone National Park Resource Specialist **Travis White**. MFWP Wildlife Manager Kevin Rose also attended. Natural resource is-



Shane Mahoney



Quentin Kujala



Dr. Jon Swenson



sues surrounding the Yellowstone Northern Range were discussed, and participants were given the opportunity to observe Rocky Mountain goats, many for the first time.

Take home messages from the conference included: Changes in migration patterns, composition of ungulate communities, and habitat use should be expected with augmented/reintroduced populations. Trying to obtain special legal protection based on genetic differentiation of very small populations could preclude the use of augmentation. In other words, do we want to preserve a doomed unique population or maintain a population that has mixed genetics due to augmentation? Climate change models allow us to look forward to predict the loss (mostly) of suitable mountain ungulate habitat, but there are still many other factors that threaten these populations in concert with climate change.

Why does all hell break loose when a disease is transmitted from the public's wildlife to private livestock, but not when a disease is transmitted from private livestock to the public's wildlife? Could it not be possible to develop a program for domestic sheep producers, subsidized with public dollars, to use effective methods to minimize co-mingling of domestic and wild sheep on public and private lands?



Due to effectiveness of cougar predation, managers should be prepared to quickly remove cougars that are threatening small wild sheep populations. We know that predation can cause selection and we are predators. We have a responsibility as wildlife biologists/managers to consider our regulation impacts on a species through management and further research. The public also wants to see big rams. This subject will become more important in the future!

Developing ownership in conserving species by local communities and a country's citizenry must be included when developing sustainable-use funding models. Governance in where the money goes from the sale of trophy permits must be transparent.

We thank our core of session moderators, including: **Dr. P.J. White**, Chief of Wildlife & Aquatic Resources, YNP; **Dr. Kelly Proffitt**, Wildlife Research Biologist, MFWP; **Dr. Juan Herrero**, University of Zaragoza, Spain; **Clay Brewer**, Bighorn Sheep Conservation Director, WSF; **Julie Cunningham**, Wildlife Biologist, MFWP; **Dr. Emily Almborg**, Disease Ecologist, MFWP; **Kevin Hurley**, WSF Vice-President for Conservation Operations, and **Joseph Goergen**, SCIF Manager of Conservation Programs. We also want to thank Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP), Yellowstone National Park (YNP) and Conservation Adventures Travel for supporting and helping sponsor the field trip. Because the event was held in Montana, MFWP was able to participate and was well represented by 14 wildlife professionals from MFWP.

The scientific quality of this conference is reflected by the diversity and quality of scientific presentations and efforts by the Conference Chairs: **Kurt Alt**, Conservation Director, Montana and International Projects, Wild Sheep Foundation; **Dr. Raul Valdez**, Research Affiliate, New Mexico State University (member of IUCN Caprinae Specialist Group); **Dr. Juan Herrero**, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Technical School of Huesca, University of Zaragoza, Spain (Co-chair of IUCN Caprinae Specialist Group); and **Prof. Sandro Lovari**, U.R. Ecologia comportamentale, Etologia e Gestione della fauna, Dipartimento di Scienze della Vita, Università di Siena, Italy (Co-chair of IUCN Caprinae Specialist Group).

***Conference outcomes exceeded expectations. Diverse perspectives, sharing of information, and a willingness of attendees to plunge into controversial subjects made the conference a success. WSF's role in hosting and co-sponsoring this scientific event with SCIF has raised our joint conservation profile, worldwide. The bar has been raised for future World Mountain Ungulate Conferences to meet both the diversity in worldwide representation, species and topics covered.*** 🍷



216 3/8" B&C

**WORLD RECORD**  
**ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIGHORN SHEEP**  
**WILD HORSE ISLAND, MONTANA**



PRESENTED TO:  
**STEVE BULLOCK • GOVERNOR OF MONTANA**  
SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

The Wild Sheep Foundation presented Gov. Steve Bullock with a replica of the world-record bighorn sheep ram skull found on Wild Horse Island to display in the governor's office permanently. **Read full coverage of the story at:** [https://helenair.com/news/local/replica-of-world-record-ram-skull-to-grace-governor-s/article\\_a5ee9db8-afec-5dea-adb2-d35441ab7e69.html](https://helenair.com/news/local/replica-of-world-record-ram-skull-to-grace-governor-s/article_a5ee9db8-afec-5dea-adb2-d35441ab7e69.html)



Left to right: DJ Berg, Garrett Long, Brian Solan, Governor Steve Bullock, Gray Thornton, Kurt Alt.

# Casey Nichols

## Unlimited Montana Ram



**What is an Unlimited Montana Ram?** Montana has several units that are open to unlimited number of permits and are managed on a quota basis. For instance, unit 501 is open until two (2) rams are killed then the unit closes. A very unique opportunity but very low success rate.

Congratulations Casey Nichols!



# *Petty Creek Project Report*

Report Documents Provided by: Jeffrey Hayes

Assistant Fire Management Officer-Fuels

Forest Service, Ninemile Ranger District, Lolo National Forest

## French Gulch Pre and Post Treatment Photo Monitoring



French Gulch Pre-thin



French Gulch Post-thin/pile



French Gulch Post Burn

## Ed's Ridge 2 Pre & Post Burn Photo Monitoring



Ed's Ridge 2 Pre-thin



Ed's Ridge 2 Post-thin

# Ninemile Ranger District, Lolo National Forest 2018-2019 Collaborative Accomplishments with the Montana Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF).

## FS Agreement 18-C0-11011600-082

In the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019, the Montana WSF Chapter funded several units in the Petty Creek Big Game Ecosystem Maintenance Burning (EMB) project on the Ninemile Ranger District, Lolo National Forest. In partnership with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the Forest Service identified the Petty Creek Big Game EMB Project area for prescribed burning and thinning treatments to provide forage opportunities for big game habitat, including elk, bighorn sheep, mule deer, whitetail deer, wild turkey, and upland game birds. The Petty Creek bighorn sheep herd currently consists of about 150 sheep, which is at or slightly over the objectives set forth in the 2005 Bighorn Sheep Management Plan (MT FWP). The herd is experiencing positive growth, with moderate to high lamb recruitment (roughly 35-55 lambs: 100 ewes over the last 10 years).

The Ed's Creek and French Gulch Units received aerial and hand ignition prescribed burning treatments to provide excellent habitat for bighorn sheep and other multitude of species on public lands for the long-term health of the herds, for continuing to provide excellent hunting opportunities on public lands in Petty Creek, and for reducing the need for sheep to seek forage on private lands in the valley bottom where interactions with domestic sheep could be a concern.

The prescribed burning increased both habitat availability and suitability for the Petty Creek bighorn sheep herd. The treatments maintained and enhanced the growth of grasses, forbs, and shrubs in steep, rocky terrain to provide more nutritious bighorn sheep forage, reduced conifer encroachment in foraging locations, and provided increased sight distances which allows bighorn sheep to be alerted to potential predators. French Gulch, in particular, is an important lambing location for the bighorn sheep herd and the prescribed burning treatments were key in providing habitat and sight distances for the herd.

Personnel from the Ninemile Ranger District fire/fuels crew, Lolo Interagency Hotshot Crew, Frenchtown Rural Fire Department, and Minuteman Aviation were all key members to the success of implementing both of these units. A media release was sent to the Missoulian Newspaper describing our combined efforts with the WSF on these units.

**Table 1: 2018-2019 Petty Creek Big Game Ecosystem Maintenance Burning Project Summary**

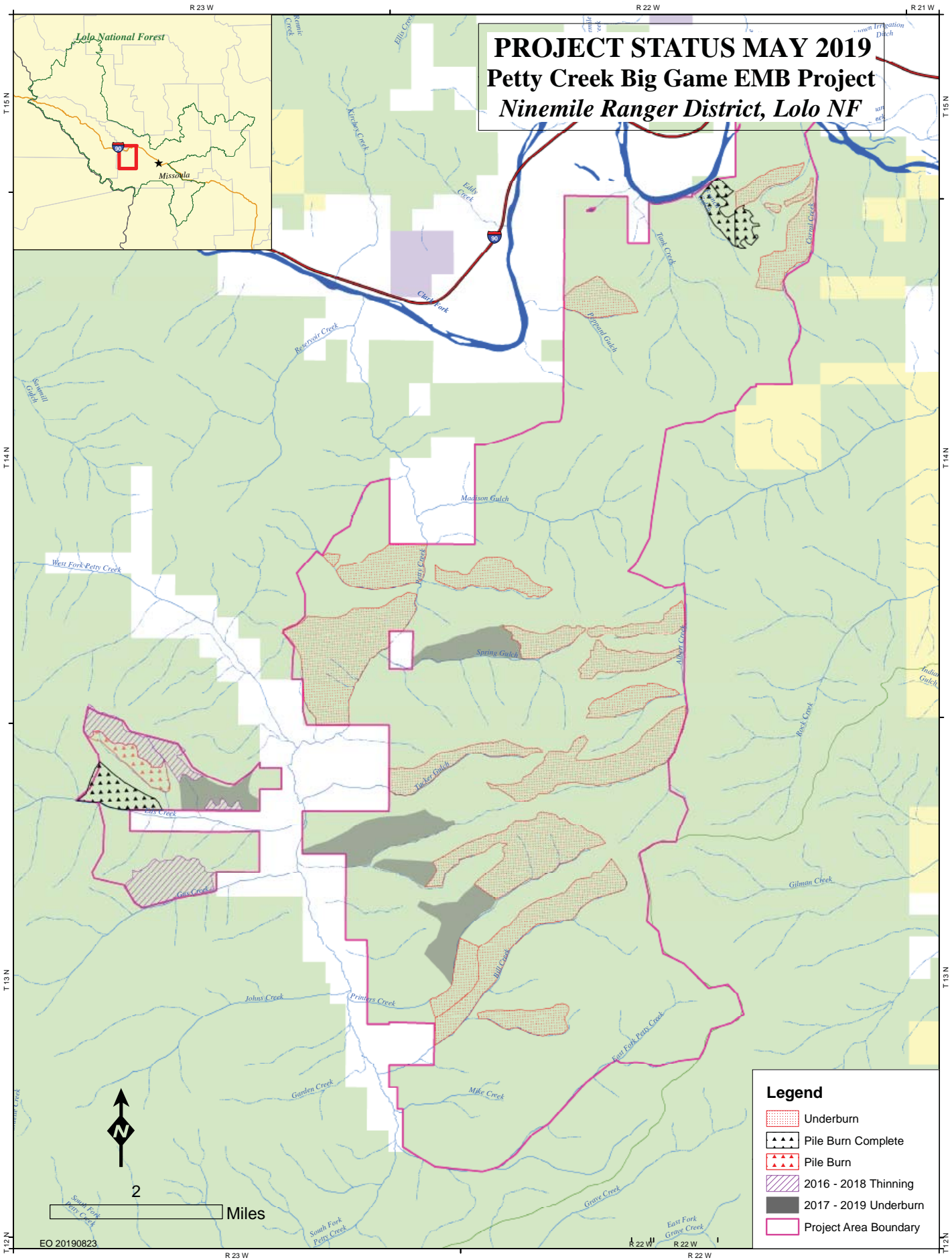
UNIT	LOCATION	COMPLETED	ACRES	COST	COST/ACRE
Ed's Ridge 2 Prescribed Burning	Ed's Creek	5/1-5/2019	160 Acres	\$36,910.69	\$231/Acre
French Gulch Hand Pile Burning	French Gulch	10/9,10,& 29/2018	151 Acres	\$5,100.89	\$34/Acre
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>		<b>TOTAL DAYS</b>	<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>COMBINED COST/ACRE</b>
<b>2</b>		<b>8 Days</b>	<b>311 Acres</b>	<b>\$42,011.58</b>	<b>\$135/Acre</b>

In summary, the prescribed burning treatments have maintained and improved bighorn sheep habitat in the Petty Creek bighorn sheep herd's range. Open sight distances near areas of escape terrain, providing vigorous native grasses and shrubs for forage on south-facing slopes, and providing areas of suitable hiding and thermal cover on north-facing slopes are some of the achieved objectives. This habitat improvement optimally will allow the herd to continue to thrive and grow, to utilize public lands, and to provide wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities for the public. See following page for map of project. 🔥

# PROJECT STATUS MAY 2019

## Petty Creek Big Game EMB Project

### Ninemile Ranger District, Lolo NF



Legend	
[Light Green Box]	Underburn
[Dark Green Box with Triangles]	Pile Burn Complete
[Light Green Box with Triangles]	Pile Burn
[Hatched Box]	2016 - 2018 Thinning
[Solid Dark Green Box]	2017 - 2019 Underburn
[Pink Outline Box]	Project Area Boundary

# *Photos for Swag!*

## Montana Wild Sheep License Plates

The state of Montana has mandated new rules for custom license plates. Each organization wanting to sell custom license plates must sustain sales of at least 400 plates annually to keep the plate. Montana Wild Sheep benefits greatly from the license plate sales. Please consider purchasing a Montana Wild Sheep license plate for your Montana vehicles and tell your friends to buy one as well!

**Photos for Swag!!** E-mail us a fun photo of you, your vehicle, and the license plate for the newsletter and we'll send you some Montana Wild Sheep Foundation swag.





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  - 3 year - \$35.00
- Regular
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  - 3 year - \$80.00
- Family
  - 1 year - \$50.00
  - 3 year - \$120.00
- Life - \$500.00

Mail this form and dues to:

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