

★ ★ ★ *Montana* ★ ★ ★

WILD SHEEP

F O U N D A T I O N

KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN

Spring 2024 | Volume 32, Issue 1



THIS ISSUE

President's Message.....	2
Executive Director's Message.....	3
A FNAWS Quest.....	5
A Season for Firsts.....	9
Conservation Corner.....	11
MTWSF Conservation Committee.....	13
Friday Night Bubbles & Bighorns.....	15
Another Amazing Banquet Weekend.....	17

Photo Credits: Cover photo by Darryn Epp

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.

SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLES AND PHOTOS!

Have a photo from a great sheep hunt or hunt story you would like to have published in our newsletter? Submit your photos (in .jpeg format and with a short description) and your articles to ty@montanawsf.org.

CONNECT with MTWSF

Visit us online at www.montanawsf.org! Besides our newsletter, you can stay up to date on news, activities & current events by liking our Facebook page and following us on Instagram:



[www.facebook.com/
MontanaWildSheepFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/MontanaWildSheepFoundation)



[@montanawildsheep](https://www.instagram.com/montanawildsheep)

Board of Directors

D.J. Berg, President

dj@montanawsf.org

Alex Russell, Vice President

alex@montanawsf.org

Erika Putnam, Secretary

erika@montanawsf.org

Mark Westfall, Treasurer

mark@montanawsf.org

Levi Bowler

levi@montanawsf.org

Kirk Russell

kirk@montanawsf.org

Ray Vinkey

ray@montanawsf.org

Don Patterson

d5357mt@gmail.com

Grant Winn II

g.winn@nm.com

Ty Stubblefield, Executive Director

ty@montanawsf.org

Kurt Alt, Conservation Director

kurt@montanawsf.org

Brian Solan, Legislative Director

brian@montanawsf.org

Contact us at:

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation

PO Box 17731

Missoula, MT 59808

Visit us at montanawsf.org.



Reward

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).

President's Message

Hello friends! I wish you a warm welcome as we break from the grip of winter. We have a lot to talk about in this issue of the MTWSF's newsletter. I'd first like to thank all of you that attended our 32nd Annual Banquet and Fundraiser. It was another successful event that most importantly brought together our family of wild sheep conservationists to enjoy each other's company. I hope you enjoyed the seminars, visits with vendors, raffles, food, and drink. The board of directors is incredibly grateful for the participation of our membership and of course the sponsors of the event. None of this is possible without your dedication to bighorn sheep.

The big news for the coming year is that we will be holding the 33rd Annual Banquet & Fundraiser in Bozeman, Montana. We are still ironing out the details on the event and are excited to bring you a new format for the event. Stay tuned for more information!

We have so much to look forward to this year as we continue to make progress on bighorn sheep conservation in Montana. Before I share the excitement of the new year with you, I'd like to reflect on this past year to recognize the accomplishments we made.

As I've mentioned in previous letters to you, we had two formative events this past year that will have a lasting impact on this organization. In July 2023, the board of directors established a strategic vision for the next five years. In August, the conservation committee had its first meeting, which has been a catalyst for several opportunities for wild sheep advocacy this fall.

We also had a membership milestone after our banquet by exceeding 750 members. Please join me in welcoming all of our new members who've joined over the past year! The strength of this organization is growing, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact on our wild sheep populations and ultimately our opportunities to interact with them.

The impact we make is directly proportional to the level of volunteerism and the funds we raise. MTWSF has been working to expand our fundraising efforts, several of which will be detailed in this newsletter. Executive Director Stubblefield has been bringing some fresh ideas to the table in this regard and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all of his efforts.

I wish you all the very best. Take care and be well.

D.J. Berg

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation
President

**MONTANA
MTWSF**

**MONTANA
WILD SHEEP
FOUNDATION**

**TIME TO RENEW YOUR LICENSE PLATES?
THINK SHEEP!**

*Support the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation
and renew your vehicles' plates today!*

**MONTANA
MTWSF**

MONTANA WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION

MONTANAWSF.ORG

Executive Director's Message

Montana is growing at a lightning fast pace. Most of us are not ready for change at all, let alone this seemingly out of control development we are seeing right now. As an organization we are preparing ourselves for change and what that looks like for the future of bighorn sheep conservation in Montana. Our preparedness started with the development of the strategic plan back in July, 2023. A five year plan broke down into one, three and five year goals.

As we execute this strategic plan we will become more effective and efficient at accomplishing our mission. Our number one goal is putting and keeping sheep on the mountain. In order to do that we must expand our fundraising and conservation efforts. We're working to make that happen by moving our banquet fundraiser to a location which will allow us to grow and be more inclusive of our membership. We're excited to announce that the 2025 Banquet weekend will be in Bozeman, March 7th and 8th at the Best Western Plus GranTree Inn (room block and seminars) and at MSU's Strand Union Building (Banquet). You can call 406-587-5261 and mention group 4289 to take advantage of our discounted room rates. They are surprisingly affordable for the growing metropolis that is Bozeman. You can expect the Friday night of conservation and Saturday seminars to take place at the hotel with the banquet being held at MSU's SUB. We will have shuttle services available to keep all our banquet goers safe and sound. More to come as we iron out the details.

I also hope you saw the newly released MTWSF conservation license plate design. The conservation plate is a steady source of income for the organization. With \$30 from the sale of each plate coming back to MTWSF. While the original plate consistently brought in \$20,000 a year, Montana's number one selling plate raises over \$400,000 annually. With that we identified this as an opportunity to increase the fundraising potential of our conservation plate. In the early spring of 2023 we went to the drawing board to craft a new design. After a ton of research and comparing the top ten selling plates we landed on the new design. Our conservation plate has the potential to raise a lot of money for Montana's Bighorn sheep! So please keep it in mind when you're renewing or getting new plates for your hunting rig or pavement pounder. Our wild sheep will thank you for it!



Our conservation efforts are ramping up as well. In just a few short months the Conservation Committee has engaged with biologists and regional managers all across the state. Working to identify on-the-ground projects as well as places we can help financially and through public comment. Through these efforts we have verbally committed \$125,000 towards conservation easements and land purchases identified as critical bighorn sheep habitat. We were also able to identify and target bighorn sheep herds being impacted by predation. Through hunter involvement and in coordination with members we were successful in removing six sheep eating cats in a unit where the hunt was proposed to be closed due to low population levels. Thanks to fast acting members that crisis has been diverted for now. If you are interested in hunting predators that negatively impact bighorn sheep herds shoot me an email and I'll provide you with more information on how you can get involved - ty@montanawsf.org.


I also took the opportunity to provide comment on bighorn sheep proposals at the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting back in December 2023. My testimony was based on input from the MTWSF Board of Directors, Conservation Committee, and membership. Our advocacy was well received and had a positive impact on the Commission's decision making. As such, we were tasked with forming an Unlimited Working Group and will be working closely with FWP and other user groups to advance improvements to the unlimited hunting units. You can watch the recording of the meeting to see our testimony by following the QR code.




There is a lot going on in the world of bighorn sheep conservation. And though it's a challenge to keep up with this ever-changing world we live in, it's good to know there's a dedicated group of bighorn-loving folks willing to take that challenge head-on. A great big "Thank You" to the board and members of the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation! Proud to be a part of MTWSF!!


Ty Stubblefield
Montana Wild Sheep Foundation
Executive Director

One Low Price,
Plain & Simple, Always!




MISSOULA
MOTOR COMPANY

 Together
let's drive



www.MissoulaChevrolet.com

"State of the Sheep"

Meetings Around Montana

Join us for an evening of Bighorn Sheep conservation conversations.

Meet your local FWP biologists and regional representatives on the MTWSF Conservation Committee. Learn more about what we're doing for wild sheep right here in Montana.

- **Great Falls, April 24th, 6pm to 8pm**
FWP region 4 Headquarters, 4600 Giant Springs Road, updates on bighorn sheep conservation both locally and statewide.
- **Helena, April 25th, 6 to 8pm** at the Lewis and Clark Taproom, 1535 Dodge Ave. updates on bighorn sheep conservation both locally and statewide.



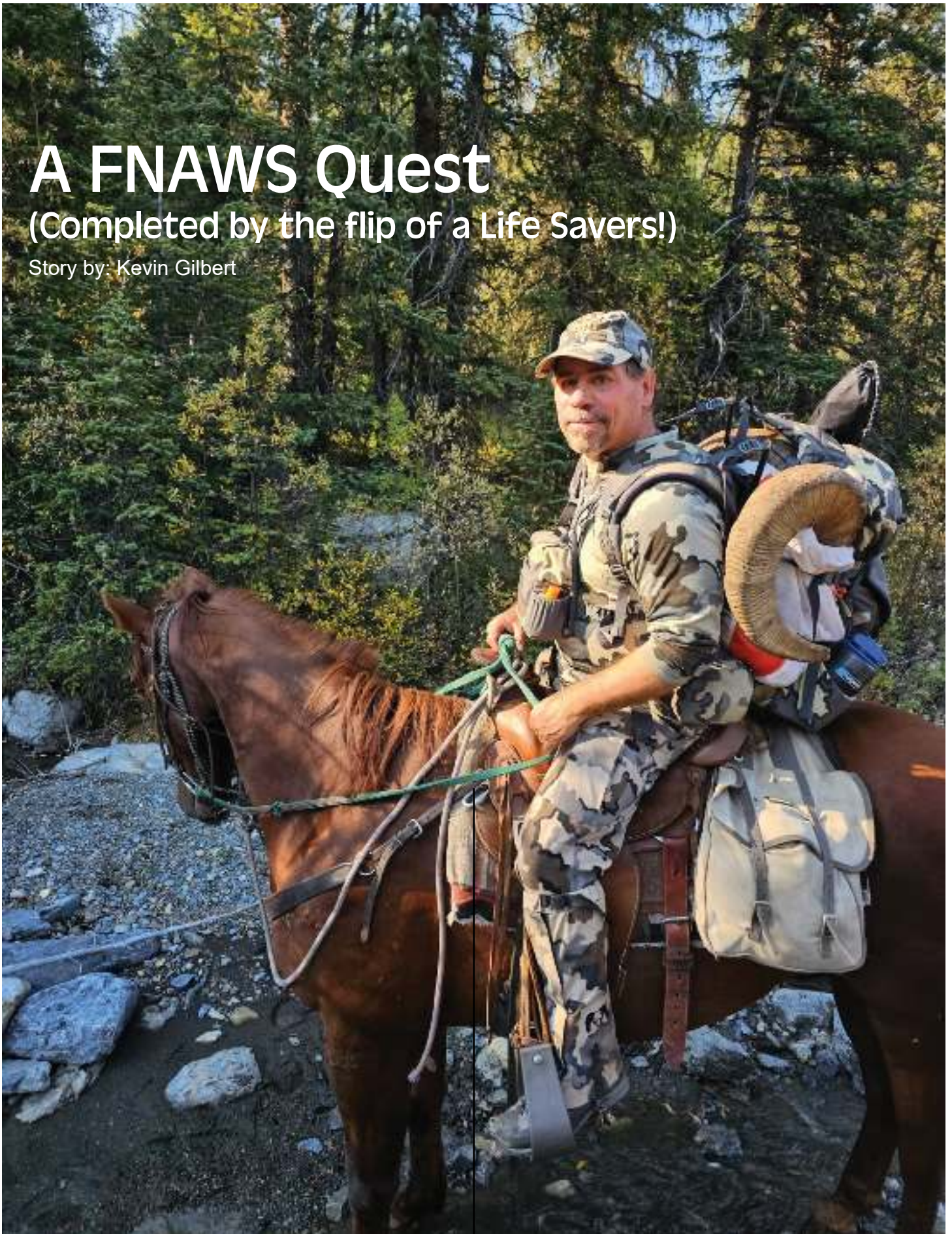
MKC
MONTANA KNIFE CO.

**KNIVES
DESIGNED
BY HUNTERS
FOR HUNTERS**

A FNAWS Quest

(Completed by the flip of a Life Savers!)

Story by: Kevin Gilbert



My first sheep hunt was in 1999 for Dall's sheep. This was a horseback hunt in Alaska, which unfortunately was unsuccessful. This setback made me want to hunt sheep even more. Four years later, I got my first ram in Alaska on the seventh day of a ten-day backpack hunt in 2003. It was a nine-year-old Dall's sheep, taken with Rob Jones, R & R Guide Service. At that time I was of the age of 40 and I told myself that I would get a Stone when I turned 50.

In January of 2013, I didn't have a Stone's sheep hunt booked. My promise to myself of getting a Stone's sheep when I turned 50 didn't look like it would happen. About a month later, I got a call from Tom Christensen, Eastern Montana Outfitters, in Glendive, Montana. I had guided mule deer hunters for Tom in the past, and he thought of me when he got a call from McCarthy Adventures, a booking agent in Pennsylvania that had a Stone's sheep hunt. He told me the price, which was considerably less than what the market was, but I turned it down. He called back a couple of weeks later and said the price had dropped, I said, "book it." The hunt was booked for September 2013 with Tom Vince of Turnagain Adventures in British Columbia. This hunt was a 14-day horseback hunt, and on the seventh day, I was successful with a 13-year-old ram. He was 39" on the long horn and 34" on the broomed horn. After that, I told myself that it would be great to achieve my FNAWS by the time I turned 60. I was halfway there.

In 2019, I booked a desert bighorn hunt with La Palmosa at the Sheep Show in Reno for November 2021. I also booked a California bighorn hunt in 2019 with a British Columbia Outfitter I had bid on and won at the MTWSF banquet. I had my last two sheep hunts booked! Unfortunately, the sheep hunt in British Columbia ended unsuccessfully.

In March of 2020 my friend Joe Mariner sent me an email with a live auction attachment. The auction was for the Pope and Young Club. The item being auctioned was a 15-day horseback hunt for an Alberta bighorn with Chad Lenz, Savage Encounters. I bid on my phone and won it! The hunt was scheduled for September 2021.

In November of 2020, Emilio Rangel of La Palmosa emailed me that he had a cancellation in February of 2021, so he asked me if I would like to move my hunt up from November to February, I said, "YES!" So, in



A FNAWS Quest *continued from page 6*

February of 2021, on the first day of the hunt, I got a nine-year-old desert bighorn! I was $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way there!

In 2021, when I was scheduled for my Alberta big-horn, Canada was closed! Chad Lenz rescheduled me for 2022. Canada was still not open to everyone in 2022, so my hunt was moved again, to 2023. I turned 60 in August of 2023, so it was very possible I would achieve my goal of a FNAWS when I turned 60. I went on that hunt in September of 2023.

I drove 7.5 hours to Caroline, Alberta on September 14. The next day we drove 2.5 hours or so to the trail head. We were met at the trailhead by one of the guides. He had great news. Eight rams had been

We rode about three hours to the next camp and stopped at a glassing spot on the way. As luck would have it, the rams were still where we spotted them from base camp. One of them looked legal, but we needed to get closer yet.

The next morning, we were back at the glassing spot. We confirmed the rams were still there, but they were on a mountain face hidden from another smaller mountain in front of us. My guide, Logan Hunt, told Jim and me that we would have to decide who would shoot first. We both wanted a ram, so Logan flipped a life saver, as he didn't have a coin. I called heads and heads it was. I was going to get first shot, if there was a legal ram, and Jim would go second if there



spotted from the base camp and it appeared that there might be two that were legal. We had about a five-hour horseback ride into the base camp. When we arrived at base camp, we went right to their glassing spot. Right before dark we spotted the rams about three miles away. Two of them had big round bellies and you could see they had good bases on their horns, but from that distance that's about all you could see.

The next day we loaded up our gear to move to another camp that was closer to where the rams were spotted. We were hopeful that two were legal because there were two hunters, Jim Ferguson from northern California, (he won this hunt in a raffle at the Sheep Camp in Salt Lake City), and me.

was another legal ram in the group.

We headed down the hill to the horses while glassing and rode to the mountain that obscured the rams from sight. We climbed the smaller mountain and got on top. We ranged the mountain face the rams had been on and it was under 400 yards. I told Jim earlier, if the rams came out beyond my effective range, I would let him have the shot. After a while, a small ram, ewe, and lamb came into view from above, but not the group of rams we had seen earlier. Then rams started coming out from below us. There were five, but not the biggest ones we had seen earlier, that we hoped were legal. The three sheep above watched them, then the five rams went back down the mountain and into a spot where we couldn't see them. The wind

was blowing in that direction so we didn't want to move closer and scare them into the trees where they could leave without us seeing them. After a while, we decided to move down the ridge, just as we stood to go, Logan said, "get down!" A ram had come out and was walking up the hill, grazing, but looking like he wanted to leave. Logan told me to get ready. I chambered a round. Matt, Jim's guide, called the range at 340 yards. Logan got a big grin on his face and said, "he's legal, take him when you're ready." I was already on the ram and just waiting to hear those words! I looked at Logan once more to confirm what I thought he said. I didn't want to mess this up! I shot right after the confirmation. I hit the ram, and he headed down the hill, but still on his feet. The wind was blowing pretty good, and my shots weren't going exactly where I wanted them. I ran down the ridge to get closer and put the ram down for good! We watched as the other rams ran out from their hiding spot.

Unfortunately for Jim, there were no more legal rams in the bunch. Lucky for me, I got my Alberta bighorn and achieved my FNAWS by calling heads on the flip of a Life Saver! 🍀



S I T K A



**BREATHE,
BLOCK,
STRETCH
& MOVE**



**MOUNTAIN EVO
JACKET**

Built for high-exertion backcountry pursuits, the Mountain Evo Jacket uses strategically body-mapped fabrics to provide windproof protection where you need it most while also allowing exceptional breathability and stretch, so you stay dry and comfortable throughout your hunts. WINDSTOPPER® by Gore-Tex Labs product technology stops heat-sapping gusts in their tracks, while 4-way stretch panels dump heat and allow unrestricted movement. The result is a jacket you can put on in the morning and not have to think about for the rest of the day.

SITKAGEAR.COM



A Season for Firsts

Story by: Colton Berg (age 12)

After my championship football game, I set out for the Youth Hunt with my friend, Fisher, and my Dad. Fisher wanted his first deer and I wanted my first buck. After a long car ride through lots of twists and turns we finally got to our cabin. After a restless night, we had breakfast and set out on a hike up the mountain. We saw not a single deer. When we got back, Fisher and I built a huge fort in the woods!

That afternoon, we finally saw a doe but we were not quick enough. The next morning we went out on another hunt with not a deer in sight. We all went to get firewood and my dad showed us how to cut down a tree. That evening we were back on the hunt. We saw a couple deer across a deep canyon too hard to navigate before sundown. That night I had a dream I got a world record buck. My friend told me he had a dream a lot like mine. We saw not a single deer that next morning. To pass the day, we perfected our fort and hunted squirrels with BB guns. For the afternoon hunt we walked across a big meadow. We saw the same doe we saw two days earlier. My friend got behind his 25-06 and fired. "That's a dead deer," said my Dad. We set off to find the deer in the ocean of meadow grass. It was getting dark and late. We eventually found the deer and got a very good picture of Fisher's first deer, with the moon in the background. The next day we cut up the deer and headed home.

A few weekends later, we traveled back to our cabin. The next morning my Dad and I went on a cold, dark, frosty, and nerve wracking car ride up to a meadow. All we saw was the pesky little squirrels that chatter at you when you are trying to be SILENT! We headed back down to my cabin but we decided to go to a part of the river instead. We saw a small spike. We crept along in my dad's truck until we saw a two pointer out looking for some ladies. We quickly got out and got the gun ready. The deer kept walking so my dad had to make a noise "BRAAP". That made it stop. Then I took my shot. "BANG" went the gun. "Dead deer," said my dad. "Dang, that 28 Nosler doesn't kick with a silencer and heavy tripod" I said. We had to cross the river to get to the deer. Then we had to follow the blood trail until we found the deer laying dead. We gutted that thing so fast you wouldn't believe it. My dog was very happy to smell the deer. We headed back to my cabin and had biscuits and gravy, and enjoyed the rest of my day. This is why I love hunting. 🍖



ON  HUNT

KNOW WHERE YOU STAND

Trusted by Millions of Hunters

 Get it on Google Play

 Download on the App Store

onxmaps.com/hunt

Conservation Corner

by Ray Vinkey
Conservation Corner Editor, Volunteer

Currently there is a lot of energy and excitement regarding bighorn sheep conservation and research in Montana! Our annual State of the Sheep seminar at the February 2024 fundraiser highlighted the new state research initiative as well as activities of the Conservation Committee.

This winter Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks began two, five-year research initiatives on bighorn sheep to learn how to best address limiting factors on their populations. The statewide adaptive management study includes 14 bighorn herds across a breadth of habitats in Regions 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Figure 1, MFWP adaptive management research proposal 2023).

ment actions to employ in the future.

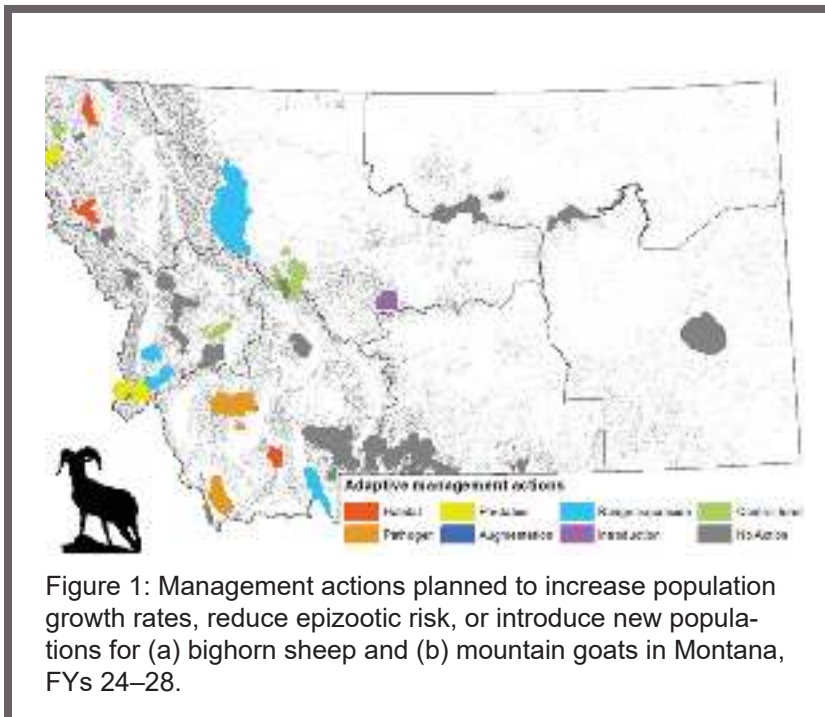
A second study on the comingling of wild and domestic sheep will “identify individual, herd/band-level, and environmental factors that influence the probability of wild and domestic sheep contact and use that information to expand the development and implementation of tools that maintain effective separation to prevent disease transmission” (Evaluating contact risk between wild and domestic sheep, MFWP comingling research proposal 2023).

Montana Wild Sheep Foundations’ advocacy and cooperation with Montana FWP and the Montana Wool Growers Association were an important factor in the department prioritizing these five-year research studies. We can’t have more bighorn on the landscape without addressing conflict with domestics and MTWSF recognizes that we best advance conservation, and support agriculture, when we work alongside agricultural producers.

Our Conservation Committee developed a proposal on how to best manage the unlimited hunting districts and is supporting multiple habitat conservation projects. The board

approved a \$5,000 contribution with the Wild Sheep Foundation offering another \$5,000 to the Stafford Ferry Conservation Easement in the Missouri Breaks. They are working with MFWP to conserve 30-acres of critical lambing habitat and winter range in Region 2.

More research to improve management, lands conservation, and the preservation of hunting opportunity—excellent! These are all priorities for our organization, and we are happy to report that we are off to a great start in 2024. 🍓



MFWP selected herds across a breadth of habitats and will test what adaptive management actions are most effective. Habitat management, predation management, pathogen management, population augmentation, herd range expansion and population reintroductions are all actions that can be used to manage bighorn. MFWP, in cooperation with the University of Montana and Montana State University, will manipulate those factors in study herds and monitor how population trends and the risk of disease epizootics are affected, in order, to determine which manage-



DESERT SHEEP HUNT

with SAN JOSE TROPHY HUNTS IN SONORA, MEXICO
PROVIDED BY JACK ATCHESON & SONS INC.

\$250

ONLY 650 TICKETS SOLD



TICKET PURCHASES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN June 30th 2024.

Drawing will be held July 31, 2024

Must be 18 or over to participate in Prize Drawing · Need NOT be present to win

Hunt Information:

Hunt supplied by San Jose Trophy Hunts in Sonora, Mexico. This is a free-range Desert Sheep hunt and takes place in the San Jose Mountain Range about one hour Northwest of Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. The winning hunter will be treated to an over-the-top lodge and guiding staff and will hunt out the back door of the lodge on the main San Jose "hog back" and satellite peaks. The hunt includes necessary permits, a guide, and the export costs of the sheep.

Due to MONTANA STATE GAMBLING LAWS NO TICKET CAN BE PURCHASED ON CREDIT

Online sales are prohibited in these states: AL, AR, CA, FL, HI, KS, LA, MI, NC, NJ, UT, WA

There will also be no tickets available for purchase over the phone, fax or email.

For more information please contact Montana Wild Sheep Foundation @ www.montanawsf.org

ANY AND ALL TAXES ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE RAFFLE WINNER. MTWSF WILL COLLECT TAXES AS REQUIRED BY IRS NOTICE 1340.

AN ESTIMATED \$15,000 IN TAXES MUST BE PAID BY THE WINNER PRIOR TO RECEIVING AND BOOKING THIS HUNT

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. Funds from this raffle are used for the benefit and enhancement of bighorn sheep in Montana.

Ticket Purchase Form

2024 Montana Wild Sheep Foundation Desert Hunt Raffle

No limit to number of tickets purchased per individual. One individual per order form. This form may be copied.

Mail this form with payment to Montana Wild Sheep Foundation, PO Box 17731, Missoula, MT 59808

* Please print clearly (all lines required)

Name : _____

Address : _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone (include area code): _____

Email : _____

No ticket stub will be mailed in return. Provide your email address and a photo of your ticket(s) can be emailed to you.

Total enclosed: _____

* Please do not send cash through the mail

☐ 1 Ticket for \$250

☐ 2 Tickets for \$500

☐ _____ Tickets X \$250

Check the box next to the number of tickets you are purchasing.

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation

Conservation Committee

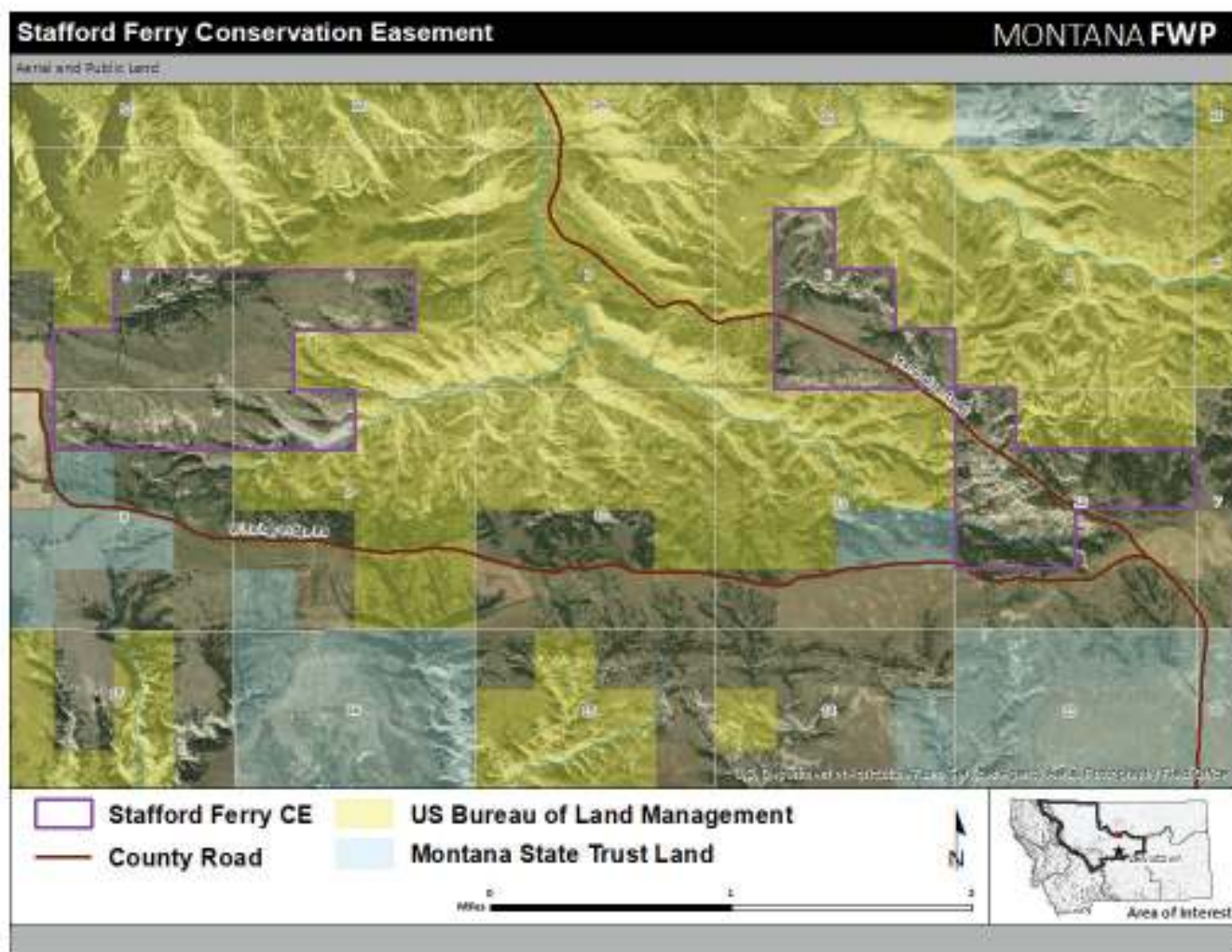
The MTWSF Conservation Committee met January 8, 2024 via Google. One of the items discussed was the FWP Stafford Ferry Conservation Easement (CE) project (Bighorn Sheep HD 482) in the Missouri River Breaks, 10 miles north of Winifred, Montana (Fergus County). Sonja Andersen, area wildlife biologist for FWP in Lewistown has headed up the effort since 2021, and is in the final stages of appraisals, draft deeds, management plan and environmental documentation.

This project is adjacent to the Whiskey Ridge conservation easement completed in 2020, and consists of a proximately 1,000 acres along the Stafford Ferry Road and Whiskey Ridge Road (three separate parcels).

Bighorn sheep and other wildlife species utilize the area year-round as well as for winter range, including

elk, mule deer, pronghorn, mountain lions, sharptailed grouse, mourning doves and Merriam's wild turkeys. Hunting Districts 482 and 680 (north side of the Missouri River) are home to Montana's largest (1,000+) bighorn sheep population.

Initial cost estimates for this conservation easement were under one million dollars, primarily funded by Habitat Montana dollars, but actual costs are a bit higher, even after the owner made an additional value donation. Sonja asked the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation for \$10,000 financial assistance to complete the package. Since the project is near completion, the additional funding is needed in the very near future. After considerable discussion, the Conservation Committee strongly endorsed this project and recommends that the MTWSF Board grant the FWP Stafford Ferry CE project funding request for \$10,000.00. 🔥





LIFE MEMBERSHIP **UPGRADE!**

Premium Life Membership

NEW

\$1500

You can now upgrade your current life membership to
PREMIUM LIFE MEMBER! * You must be a core life member

Premium Life Membership includes:

- MTWSF quarterly newsletter
- Premium Life Member Certificate
- Premium Life Member Decal
- Your Choice of Premium MTWSF Gear!

Gear options: MKC Speedgoat knife, a Stone Glacier
Cirque Lite Jacket **OR** a KUIU woman's DCS Guide Jacket



Core Life Membership

\$750

* If you are currently a Life Member, this is your membership level. Consider upgrading to Premium!

Core Life Membership includes:

- MTWSF quarterly newsletter
- Life Member Certificate
- SS Laser Engraved Life Member Card
- Core Life Member Decal

Other Levels of Membership available

Family Membership \$50

Annual Membership \$35

3 yr. Annual Membership \$90

Youth Membership \$20

JOIN NOW!

MONTANAWSF.ORG

Friday Night Ladies Bubbles & Bighorns Friend-Sheep Event

by Erika Putnam

We used a play on words as an invitation to gather women to join the MTWSF Annual Banquet this year. Friday evening, before the conservation meeting, over 50 women attended our first ever Bubbles & Bighorn event sponsored by KUIU. The ticketed event served 3 different and delicious varieties of bubbles, and a non-alcoholic version, from the Bighorn Bottle Shop in Anaconda. The ladies participated in a mixer game, sipped sparkling wine, bid on silent auction items, and played raffles to win great prizes and meet new and old friends.

I stood by as Lindsey Ferster, one of our many volunteers, welcomed the women with a souvenir glass, drink tickets, a brightly colored gift, and a smile. I was standing at the entrance when one of the ladies walking by asked, "What's this string for?" She was holding up a pink and gold bracelet for me to see.

"Fun," I answered thinking everyone knew what a friendship bracelet was. "Matching bracelets you wear to signify you are friends, buddies, comrades, BFF's."

"What do I do with it?"

"Wear it and be a friend. That's why we're here," I said as I held up my wrist showing her my colorful bracelet as if it was my most valued possession. I was happy, because prior to the event several of us picked out our own matching bracelets. They were my new MTWSF friends. I enjoyed and appreciated them already.

To include more women at our event and within our organization the board elected to host the first ever ladies' event on Friday night to foster the feminine community within MTWSF. The numbers are growing for women in hunting and conservation. Women also participate as partners, wives, and mothers and play an important role in the family dynamics of hunting and outdoor recreation.

We want to thank Venerly, Uncharted Outdoors-women, CDA Adventures, Women Hunt®, and Fish Wildlife & Parks, for participating as vendors to inspire conversations about sheep, women in hunting, and outdoor activities.

The future looks promising for other female friendly opportunities including premium life membership jackets, regional events, and education throughout the year. We are even starting a "Ewe Matters" column dedicated to women or issues related to the ewe side of sheep matters.

Thank you to everyone who attended, KUIU, our event sponsor, and all the generous donors, the volunteers who helped set up and work and the MTWSF Board who welcomed and supported the idea.

We are open to ideas for future ways to support MTWSF and all members with future events. Please reach out with your ideas, comments, and opportunities, especially if they are important to you (ewe). 🐑





2025 BANQUET BOZEMAN, MONTANA MARCH 7TH & 8TH



BOOK YOUR ROOM TODAY FOR THE BEST RATES

BEST WESTERN PLUS - GRANTREE INN
406-587-5261 MENTION GROUP 4289

Another Amazing Banquet Weekend!

We kicked off the weekend with our “Friday night of Conservation” giving away more than \$5,000 in raffle prizes from our partners at Bergara, PEAX, Springfield Armory, Stone Glacier and Weatherby along with plenty of cold Kettlehouse beer to quench everyone’s thirst. Stone Glacier sponsored the evening by providing the drinks and tons of great SG prizes. Randy Newberg gave a rousing good speech on the importance of staying active in the conservation of wildlife and specifically bighorn sheep.

Brand new this year was the “Bubbles & Bighorns” ladies night. Over 50 women attended the first year event sponsored by KUIU. The ticketed event served 3 different and delicious varieties of bubbles, and a non-alcoholic version, from the Bighorn Bottle Shop in Anaconda. The ladies participated in a mixer game, sipped sparkling wine, bid on silent auction items, and played raffles to win great prizes and meet new and old friends. This event will definitely be a headliner in 2025.

We kicked off Saturday morning with a great round of “State of the Sheep” seminars highlighting the new state research initiative, activities of the Conservation Committee as well as a great presentation on the history and current state of the unlimited units.

Banquet doors opened around 3:30 with registration running silky smooth all evening. The event was filled with great raffles like our famous ATF raffle where one lucky winner won a bottle of top shelf whiskey, some of Ecuador’s finest cigars and a Springfield Armory Saint in 5.56. New this year was the Weatherby Wall Of Guns where we gave away five high end Weatherby’s to five lucky winners. We doubled the number of buckets in the bucket raffle and gave away eight guns in total from Weatherby, Bergara and Springfield Armory.

Of course no Montana Wild Sheep Foundation banquet is complete without our Life Member hunt giveaway. And this year karma dealt her lucky hand and awarded the Alaska Dall sheep hunt with Ovis Outfitters to one of the longest standing members and supporters of MTWSF, Doug Dreeszen. With a standing ovation Doug took the stage to accept his well deserved prize and was mostly speechless at the awesome hunt he will embark on this coming August. If you want the chance to win an Alaska Dall sheep hunt all you have to do is become a life member and attend our 2025 banquet next March in Bozeman, Montana.

We’d like to extend a special thank you to the Beartooth sponsors of the evening. 🍷

Thank you to our 2024 Beartooth Sponsors!



LONG-RANGE ACADEMY HUNTER SERIES

Unlock Your Potential with Long-Range Academy Hunter Series! Join us in Hamilton, MT for a two-part three-day series. Perfect your skills and turn your passion for long-range shooting into mastery.

Reserve your
spot now



www.snowymountainrifles.com | (406) 546-8732

Classes run from April to August. \$2500.00 per person and a \$500.00 deposit is required.
60 days before the class cancellation policy.



LIFE MEMBER HUNT GIVEAWAY

JOIN TODAY!

MONTANAWSF.ORG

Kenetrek
Boots
FOR THE TRAIL LESS TRAVELED

KEVIN GILBERT



OVIS
OUTFITTERS



Montana Wild Sheep Foundation
PO Box 17731
Missoula, MT 59808

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MISSOULA, MT
PERMIT NO.74

Return Service Requested

Join Montana Wild Sheep Foundation!

Interested in becoming a member? To join or renew, visit us at <https://montanawsf.org/membership/>.

Check payments can also be mailed to the address above using the form below.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Select category (one only please per form) and membership length:

☐ Youth

☐ 1 year - \$20.00

☐ 3 year - \$35.00

☐ Regular

☐ 1 year - \$35.00

☐ 3 year - \$90.00

☐ Family

☐ 1 year - \$50.00

☐ 3 year - \$120.00

☐ Core Life - \$750.00

☐ Premium Life Member - \$1,500.00

