

*** *Montana* ***

WILD SHEEP

FOUNDATION



KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN



Fall 2025 | Volume 33, Issue 3

Darryn Eff
DARRYN EFF PHOTOGRAPHY

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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.



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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, as I sit down to write you this message the chill in the air and the colors outside my window remind me that fall is in full swing. I'm sure many of you are as excited about this as I am. This message, my first, provides me with an opportunity to introduce myself to those of you I haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet. I'm honored to have been elected to serve as your president for this upcoming year. I'm looking forward to continuing to build on the foundation and legacy of this fantastic organization.

Huge thanks to those of you who participated in our recent Board of Director elections. I'm thrilled to introduce our two newest board directors, Bennie Rossetto and Frans Andersson. You can learn more about both of our new directors in this newsletter. I'm also excited to welcome back Erika Putnam for her second term. I'm excited to have these engaged and enthusiastic individuals on our team. I also want to extend a sincere and deep appreciation to our two departing board members DJ Berg, our past president, and Grant Winn, both of whom served three full terms as directors. Their contributions, commitment, and devotion to this organization cannot be overstated and they will be missed. Luckily for us, I'm sure we'll continue to see both contributing to the success of our organization.

As DJ mentioned in his farewell address, we continue to build on our positive momentum. The exciting announcement of Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission's approval of the Stafford Ferry Conservation Easement forever protects 1,080 acres of critical bighorn sheep habitat and grants public access for hunting and recreation. An incredible win for Montana's wild sheep! We continue to seek out opportunities to put our resources to work to support our mission and vision.

I'm excited to announce that we have a new opportunity for membership support. In this newsletter you'll find a QR code that allows you to establish a reoccurring donation to support Montana Wild Sheep Foundation, or even make a one-time donation. Our success as an organization is built off the generosity and support of our members. You all make the difference for Montana's wild sheep.

We are starting to shift our focus to planning our 34th annual banquet and fundraiser, which will once again be in Bozeman, MT on March 6th and 7th, 2026. Last year's event was a smashing success, and I know this year will be even better. We are always in need of volunteers and donors to help with planning and execution for the event. If you can help or contribute, please reach out to myself or Ty Stubblefield. I'm excited to see old friends and make new ones at this year's event.

In closing I want to thank each and every one of you for your contributions to the success of this organization. I appreciate the trust you have bestowed upon us to lead and guide the organization. I know we will move the needle for Montana's wild sheep. I wish you all a safe and happy fall.

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation President

Alex Russell

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation President



MONTANA WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION



BANQUET

BOZEMAN, MT
MARCH 7TH, 2026



MONTANA WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION

**Friday, March 6th
CONSERVATION NIGHT**

at the GranTree Inn, Bozeman

**Saturday, March 7th
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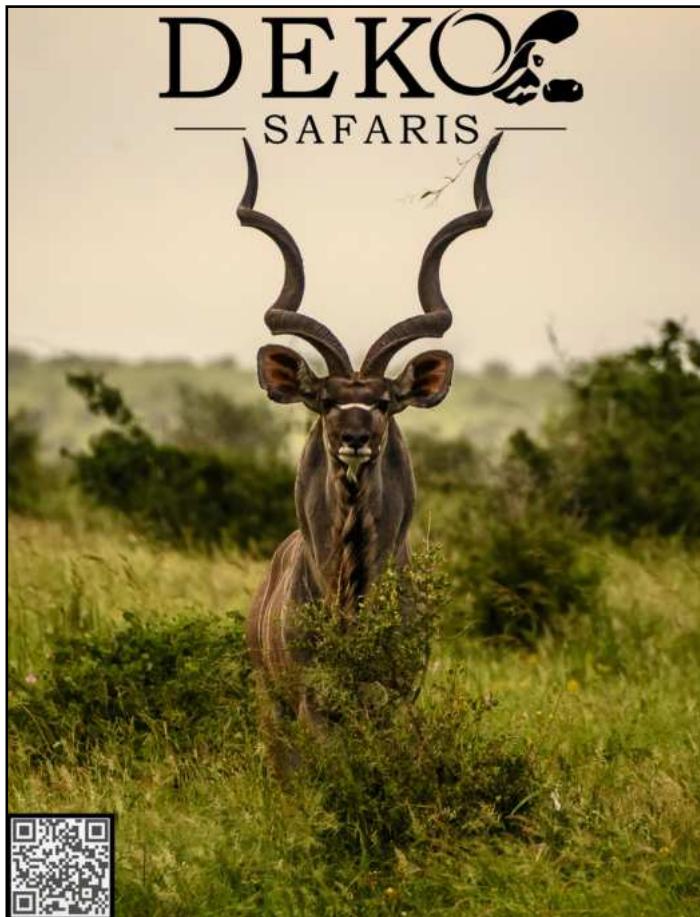
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Executive Director's Message

As fall settles into Montana, I want to take a moment to thank you for your continued support of our mission to "Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain." Your dedication makes every one of our successes possible.

In this issue of the newsletter, you'll find a feature article highlighting more than **\$30,000 in Grant-in-Aid (GIA) projects** we've funded this year. These projects represent direct, on-the-ground investments in the future of wild sheep right here in Montana. Looking ahead, we're excited about new opportunities for GIA projects that include **conservation easements and land acquisitions** to protect critical bighorn sheep habitat. These efforts will ensure that future generations inherit healthy herds and wild places.

You'll also find an update on the **East Cliffs addition to the Blue Eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area**. We're working towards another win for habitat and wildlife conservation in our state.

I'd like to take a moment to welcome new leadership to our board. Please join me in congratulating **Bennie Rossetto of Kalispell** and **Frans Andersson of Billings** as our newest board members. We're also proud to announce **Alex Russell as our newly elected President** and **Kirk Russell as Vice President**. Their experience, energy, and passion for wild sheep conservation will help guide our work in the years ahead.

Finally, don't forget that **tickets are now on sale for our 2026 Annual Banquet Fundraiser** in Bozeman, Montana, on **March 6–7th**. You can order your tickets today at <https://MTWSF2026.givesmart.com>. We hope to see you there!

And remember, if you're a life member and present at the banquet, you'll have the chance to win a Dall sheep hunt with Ovis Outfitters.

Thank you again for standing with us in this important work. Together, we are making a lasting difference for Montana's wild sheep.

Ty Stubblefield
Executive Director
Montana Wild Sheep Foundation
ty@montanawsf.org



Welcome New Board Members



BENNIE J. ROSSETTO, MD, FACP

It is with humble spirit that I accept the honor and privilege of becoming a member of the Montana WSF Board. Thank you to those who voted for me and to those icons and unheralded souls who have preceded me with the goal of putting and keeping bighorns on the mountain. For over a year now I have represented Region One on the Conservation Committee. I follow an icon, Jim Weatherly. Yes, really big shoes to fill. Details are available to you of my efforts working with our biologists to reduce highway and railroad mortality, M.ovi exposure, and excessive predation, as well as improve habitat in our eight Region One bighorn units. I will send these reports on request. I have prepared a presentation for local groups which features our Ural/Tweed (101) native Rocky Mountain Trench sheep herd which is facing extinction.

I have recently been sending the latest M.ovi research abstracts to our biologists and others interested, as I have been doing with CWD since my time on the State CWD CAC. Let me know if you want to be added to the list.

I have suggested to Ty that we send an annual survey to all members and have provided a list of issues and controversial ideas for the membership to consider.

Lastly, I commend all of those who applied for the board. There are some excellent people out there who put their name in the hat. Keep trying! Be the one who "spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat". T.R. "The Man in the Arena" speech. 1910.

We will be having a "Pint Night" at Bias Brewery in Kalispell on January 16th, to raise money for our bighorn projects and to recruit new members. Please join us on your way to Reno. ❤

FRANS ANDERSSON

I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to serve on the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation board. Wild sheep have always represented resilience, beauty, and the wild spirit of Montana, and I am committed to ensuring they thrive for generations to come.

Growing up in upstate New York, my outdoor pursuits consisted primarily of rock climbing in the Adirondacks and fly fishing the Battenkill river. I moved west after college to Ski the Tetons, but became consumed by big hunting soon thereafter. My passion for hunting became focused on chasing sheep in Montana's unlimited units quickly after learning about the amazing opportunity. Elk and deer are still not safe around me during rifle season, but sheep hunts are what I day dream about all year long.

As a tax lawyer, I spend most days helping clients navigate income tax payment and reporting obligations. I intend to combine my tax law expertise with my passion for wild sheep to protect and enhance wild sheep populations.

Being entrusted with this role means working with dedicated members, partners, and conservationists who share the same passion. I thank you for your confidence and support. I look forward to contributing my energy and perspective to guide how we invest in meaningful projects that make a lasting impact. Together, we can continue protecting wild sheep and wild places. 



Thank you to our 2025 Beartooth Sponsors!



EWE MATTER(S)

Now Recruiting Women for our Bubbles & Bighorn Planning Committee

by Erika Putnam, MTWSF Secretary

If making friends and being a part of women of Montana WSF is appealing to you and you like networking with sponsors, donors, businesses, women in conservation and hunting, please consider joining the 2026 Bubbles & Bighorns banquet committee.

Our planning committee consists of a small group of ladies that meets via Zoom to generate new ideas, plan and grow the lady's event. We need help soliciting sponsors, acquiring donations, marketing, setting up and working the event. You can help with some or all.

If you aren't a committee type you can help or other ways. If you've got great ideas send them. If you have a donation, or know a donor, please connect us. If you can attend, bring a friend. The Bubbles & Bighorn event is a social and fundraising event. Come meet new people and catch up with friends and enjoy the party. We welcome all, women who hunt and the women who don't. It takes us all to keep sheep on the mountains in Montana. The event is Friday night, March 6, 2026, and the main banquet is Saturday night, March 7th.

To volunteer, donate or pose questions please contact (erika@montanawsf.org). 



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Jerry Hunts a Ram

by Jerry



I traveled west to do some ice fishing with my good friend Speedy. We would head out around sunrise and we would see bighorn sheep frequently on our way to our fishing destinations. When I finished my mini vacation, I told Speedy I was going to change my choice for the bighorn draw to the area we had been seeing sheep.

Several months later while reading my email one morning, I was stunned to see a message from Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks. It said "Congratulations!" I have been selected for a bighorn permit. I thought I had made a mistake and put in for an ewe permit and not a ram. Ram tags are almost impossible to draw. I drove to the Fish Wildlife and Parks regional office in Miles City and confirmed I had done my paperwork correctly and that I had truly drawn a bighorn ram permit.

Before I left the FWP parking lot, I called my best friends, Jamie and Speedy. They were as surprised as I was and called me lucky.

In June, I began scouting when most of the snow had melted. I did not see any sheep until July. I called the local biologist and she informed me most sheep were "up high in the timber." It took until the latter half of August before I saw my first ram, a young sickle horn.

Another visit with the biologist and she said when it starts snowing the sheep would migrate to lower elevations and begin the rut. Local hunters agreed with the information she had given me.

Season opened September 15 and closed December 1. I had two and a half months to find my ram. It had been a hot, dry summer, and September was following the same weather pattern. Opening day was hot and dry and I discussed with my friends the plan to go out the following weekend in hopes of better weather. Snow was in the forecast. Finally, I thought, this is the break I needed. Instead of several inches as predicted, there was only a light dusting on

the higher peaks but at least the temperature was dropping. I arrived midafternoon, and my friend and I decided to do a quick check where he had seen several sheep.

Every time I had made the long trip to Western Montana, sheep sighting had consistently improved and this trip was no exception. We spotted nine sheep and upon closer inspection we confirmed there was a young half curl ram with the group.

The sun had already set so we packed up and headed out in the side-by-side. With very little warning, we slid into a deep rut and rolled the vehicle. It was a hairy experience to say the least. God was with us, and we only had minor injuries. The side-by-side did not fair too well. It was totaled.

My friend was a little bit more bruised up than me and was unable to hike longer distances. A day later, I hiked alone into a new area. Temperatures rose, and finding sheep became impossible again. The next day, I drove back home.

October arrived with no major precipitation and not much improvement for cooler temperatures, but we had to try again. We saw some sheep in lower elevations, but no mature rams.

November was less than a week away and Jamie was the one who joined me this time. Some sheep had descended and there were a few mature rams showing. We dug the spotting scope out and studied them. Some were trailing some of the ewes, and one wrestled with a four-foot pine tree. Watching mature rams made hunting more exciting! We decided to pass on stalking them with hopes of a larger ram showing up. The next morning, we hiked into a new area where we had seen sheep the evening before. We saw some great country, several elk, but no sheep.

The second weekend of November, I had plans to meet a previously successful sheep hunter. He works full time, and he only had Saturday morning available to show me some areas he had previously hunted. I arrived Thursday afternoon and I immediately went to check out a piece of private property I had permission to hunt. I glassed the mountain sides until the sun began to set. I decided to check an area known as a breeding area. As I approached the area, I saw some ewes in a closed area. I stopped to glass and suddenly a large ram showed, chasing an ewe. I was able to snap a few photos of him before he moved on.

The next morning, my goal was to try and find him again. I did, but he remained on private land. He was close to the forest line, and I was able to watch him through my scope for over an hour before he moved out of view. I could count at least seven growth rings, and he was exceptionally wide with most of his lamb tips intact: I tried to estimate his score and suspected he would be close to "book." I nicknamed him "Pretty Boy" because his horns were so wide with no apparent brooming. I made up my mind if the opportunity presented itself, I would try my best to get him.

Saturday morning came, and I met the previous hunter. I hopped into his four-wheeler, and he began to show me some glassing points. There were several national forest roads still accessible because of the limited snowfall. We immediately saw some distant sheep.

All his information was valuable, and I gladly bought him lunch before he had to depart. I spent the rest of the day and the next morning scouting but didn't find any mature rams.

Jamie again offered to help me as we passed November's halfway point. I showed him where I spotted Pretty Boy, but the ram was nowhere to be found.

Jamie's high school friend said he could join us on Saturday morning. We glassed from the lower elevations but only spotted a few small sheep. We proceeded to a higher area where we had seen mature rams earlier. Immediately a new, larger ram was spotted, but before I could get set up, he climbed out of range. As a last ditch effort, we took a trail to get above him, but he moved faster than we did. I had a brief instant where I saw his profile, though, and it could have been Pretty Boy.

I tried not to think about it, but I was afraid that I might have blown my only chance at the ram I wanted. Earlier in the season, I watched mature rams for long periods of time without spooking them and then this one headed out of the country immediately.

The next morning was cold and crisp. A cold front was beginning to move in. We started glassing from a few of our favorite points. Twenty mile an hour winds made using a spotting scope very difficult. Jamie had spotted a chocolate-colored ram, but we could not estimate his size from our location. The only option we had was to don our packs and start climbing.

Two and a half hours later, we were able to set up the spotting scope in a wind-sheltered spot. Zooming to

Jerry Hunts a Ram continued

60 power, I was stunned. I couldn't believe my eyes. There was Pretty Boy resting on a narrow, washed-out ridge. With all possible rams to see, what are the odds we found the one I had set my sights on?

"Look at him now," I said.

"If you don't try for this one, I'm hiking back down the mountain right now!" Jamie said.

We discussed the best possible route for a stalk. Backtracking and going back down the mountain, we were able to utilize some sparse timber to stay hidden. When we reached the last conifer, we ranged him at 520 yards. "My rifle is capable," I said, not at this range with the wind and the severe slope of the mountain.

I chose to try and stalk closer. I would be traversing an open mountain side to get into a low spot out of the ram's sight. Amazingly, he didn't run off, but he did get out of his bed and climb to a higher lookout position. I wiggled and crawled over some rocks and mixed vegetation. I tried at least half a dozen times to get into position, but something was always off. Weeds in the way, the near vertical contour of the mountain, etc.

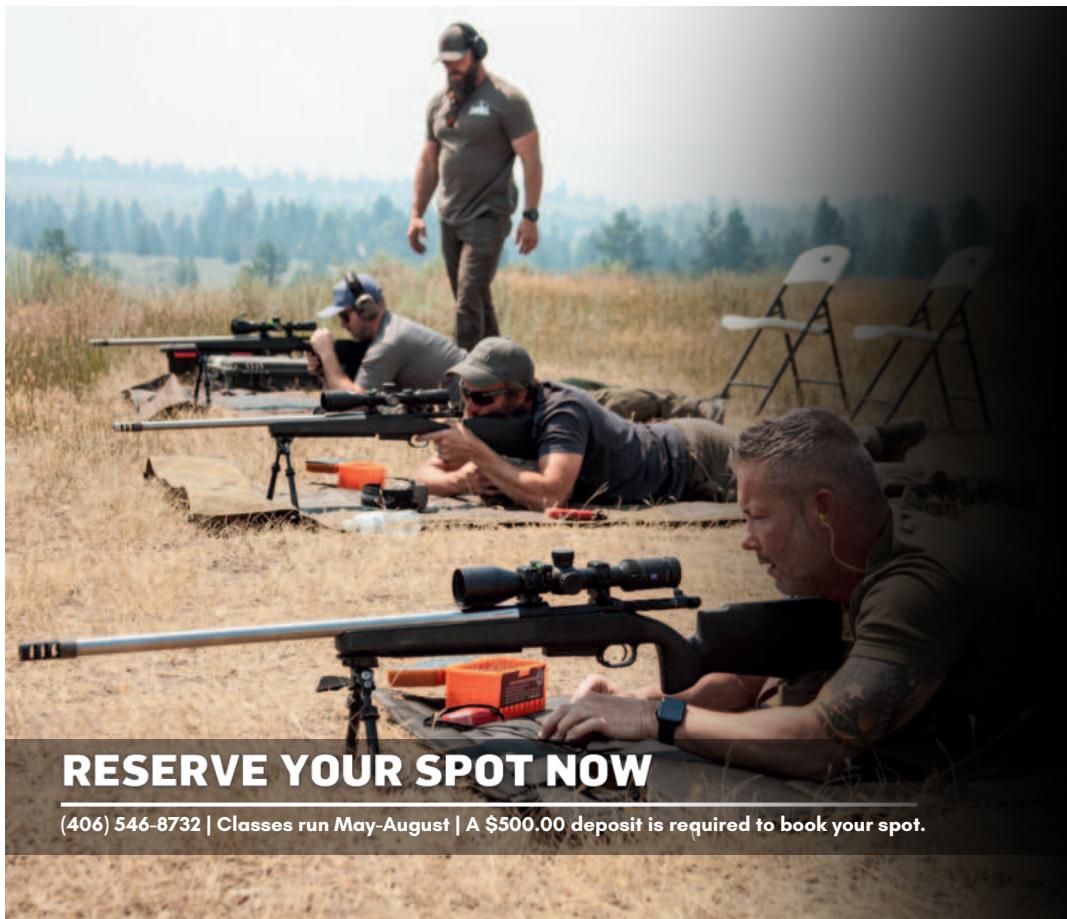
Finally I found a somewhat level area with short vegetation. Bipods in place, I could see him broadside in the scope at 240 yards. I quickly turned the Swarovski scope to a higher power. As nervous as I was, I was steady. I clicked the safety off and slowly squeezed the trigger.

BOOM. The ram bolted, but only about twenty yards then hesitated. One more shot and he was done for good.

I could hear my friends in the background yelling and cheering. I had steep, rocky terrain to cross before I could climb up to see Pretty Boy. Jamie and Gary, being several years younger than me, made it over much faster than I did.

As I hiked up to him, he looked great, but as I got closer, my friends said "wait until you see his bases." I couldn't believe my eyes. They looked enormous to me. He truly is the highlight of my hunting life. This ram was my best trophy ever. A month later and I am still on cloud nine. 





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Conservation Corner

by Ray Vinkey, *Conservation Corner Editor, Volunteer*

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation Grant in Aid Projects

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation (MTWSF) commits \$30,000 in Grant in Aid (GIA) funding in Montana. Partnering with agencies, organizations, and landowners on efforts that deliver real, on-the-ground results for wild sheep in Montana and beyond.

Supporting Translocation with New Capture Tools

MTWSF joined forces with Safari Club International's Montana Chapter to purchase a new drop net system for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). The \$9,000 investment will be critical for upcoming wild sheep translocation efforts in the Madison Range, where FWP biologist Julie Cunningham plans to reestablish and bolster herds. Capture tools like drop nets are essential to the safe and effective relocation of sheep, helping wildlife managers expand herds into historic habitats.



Investing in Youth Education

The future of wild sheep conservation depends on engaging the next generation. Through GIA funding, we pitched in to support the Wild Sheep Foundation's youth educational program. These materials provide young hunters, conservationists, and outdoor enthusiasts with the knowledge and inspiration needed to become lifelong advocates for wild sheep and wild places. If you know a teacher and would like to help educate our youth about wild sheep, direct them to www.wildsheepfoundation.org/youth-programs/curriculum for all the educational resources WSF offers.

Collaborating Across Borders to Protect Herd Health

Disease transmission from domestic sheep remains one of the greatest threats to wild sheep survival. MTWSF partnered with the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation (WYWSF) and the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area on a critical fencing project. The effort will replace a half-mile of fence to ensure a private domestic sheep herd remains contained on private property, minimizing risk to nearby wild bighorns. Both MTWSF and WYWSF are contributing \$2,000 each to the project, a true example of collaborative conservation.

Restoring Winter Range Through Weed Management

Habitat quality is directly connected to herd health. MTWSF granted \$7,000 to support the spraying of noxious weeds on private lands that serve as critical wintering habitat for the Mill Creek bighorn sheep herd. Weed infestations can degrade forage and disrupt the delicate balance of habitat that wild sheep rely on during the most challenging time of year. By investing in weed control, MTWSF is helping ensure that Mill Creek's bighorns have access to quality food sources they need to thrive.

Expanding Disease Monitoring Through Hunter Engagement

In another proactive step to address disease threats, MTWSF is funding the testing of Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae(M.ovi) kits for Montana hunters. Granting up to \$6,200 for this project provides testing for every test kit returned by bighorn sheep tag holders. We are empowering hunters to play a direct role in monitoring herd health. Early detection of M.ovi is critical to managing outbreaks and protecting wild sheep populations.

Through these GIA projects, we are ensuring that our conservation dollars translate directly into action. Whether through habitat restoration, disease prevention, or youth education, MTWSF is making strategic investments that benefit wild sheep today and secure their future for generations to come. 



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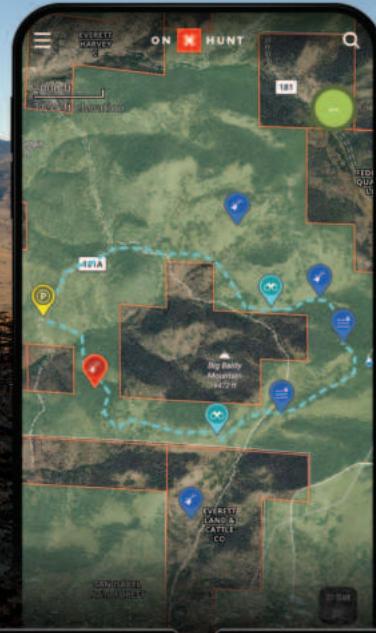
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East Cliffs Addition to the Blue Eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is in the process of completing an appraisal for the proposed 30-acre East Cliffs addition to the Blue Eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area. The appraisal is expected to be finalized by the end of October, with the land purchase anticipated to come before the FWP Commission shortly thereafter.

This addition represents a critical step forward in conserving vital bighorn sheep ewe wintering and lambing grounds. Protecting and expanding these key habitats ensures the long-term health and stability of Montana's wild sheep populations.

The Montana Wild Sheep Foundation (MTWSF), the national Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF), and our sister chapters at the Midwest and Eastern Chapters of WSF proudly partnered with FWP to make this project possible. Together, we helped raise \$100,000 to support the acquisition of this important piece of habitat.

We extend our sincere gratitude to FWP Director Christy Clark and the dedicated FWP staff who worked tirelessly to champion this effort. Their leadership and commitment, combined with the collective support of wild sheep advocates, make projects like this a reality.

The East Cliffs addition is another powerful example of what we can accomplish together in the mission to "Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain." 🐑

© Paul Spurling

**NORTH AMERICAN
NON-LEAD
PARTNERSHIP**

**HUNTERS LEADING THE WAY
IN CONSERVATION**

Hunting, fishing, and trapping provide direct support for wildlife management in North America. The Peregrine Fund, founded by falconers, co-founded the North American Non-lead Partnership.

After discovering lead fragments in the stomachs of dead raptors, our research revealed that these small lead fragments were primarily coming from the remains of shot animals. Scavenging wildlife can accidentally consume these tiny lead particles while eating remains left afield, getting sick and sometimes dying.

The North American Non-lead Partnership aims to preserve our wildlife conservation and hunting heritage by promoting voluntary efforts to reduce unintended impacts.

© Estelle Shuttleworth, DVM

Across North America, about 50% of Bald and Golden Eagles show chronic levels of lead poisoning.

Lead exposure is the leading cause of death for an obligate scavenger, the California Condor, North America's most endangered raptor.

© BK Koomler

**HOW HUNTERS
ARE HELPING**

We can reduce the amount of lead eaten by scavenging wildlife by using non-lead ammunition or removing the remains of animals shot with lead from the field. However, remains of animals shot with non-lead provide a wonderful food source for scavenging wildlife, especially in the winter months when food can be scarce.

© BK Koomler

Bullet construction and location of impact influence rates of fragmentation.

Scan to learn more about the North American Non-lead Partnership

Stafford Ferry Conservation Easement

The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission voted unanimously on August 21 to approve the Stafford Ferry Conservation Easement, securing 1,080 acres of prime habitat and working lands in the southern Missouri River Breaks.

This easement, located north of Winifred in Hunting District 482 (bighorn sheep) and also overlapping deer/elk HDs 417 & 426, protects critical rangeland and wildlife values while enhancing access to more than 20,000 acres of surrounding lands.

The Stafford Ferry CE safeguards habitat for the southern Missouri River Breaks bighorn sheep herd, part of the state's largest metapopulation of wild sheep. Recent all-age die-offs in the eastern herds have underscored the importance of conserving the western portion of this population.

The easement also connects 15,400 acres of adjacent State School Trust and Bureau of Land Management lands and lies directly next to the 4,619-acre Whiskey Ridge CE (2020), amplifying the landscape-scale value for wildlife, hunters, and recreationists alike.

Project Details

- **Size:** 1,080 acres
- **Location:** Southern Missouri River Breaks (HD 482) bighorn sheep herd; also deer/elk HDs 417 & 426; north of Winifred
- **Landowner:** Cliff Henderson
- **Enhanced Access:** 15,400 acres (State School Trust & BLM lands) + 4,619-acre Whiskey Ridge CE
- **Appraised Value:** \$1,080,000
 - Cliff Henderson donation: \$85,000
 - NorthWestern Energy (NWE): \$50,000
 - Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF): \$5,000
 - Montana Wild Sheep Foundation (MTWSF): \$5,000
 - MTFWP Bighorn Sheep Auction Account & Habitat Montana: \$980,000 (including appraisal costs)

Funding Partners: MTWSF, WSF, NorthWestern Energy, Cliff Henderson, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Bighorn Sheep Auction Account (funded by WSF Auction), Habitat Montana

With unanimous Commission approval, the Stafford Ferry CE stands as a testament to what partnerships between landowners, nonprofits, energy companies, and state agencies can achieve.

A special thank you to Gray Thornton, President and CEO of the Wild Sheep Foundation and all of our members who submitted comments to the commission as well as everyone who worked so hard to see this across the finish line. ❤



Coproducing Science to Evaluate Contact Risk Factors Between Wild and Domestic Sheep in Montana

Synopsis of Annual Report, July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Respiratory disease, specifically that caused by *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (*M. ovi*), remains a limitation to bighorn sheep recovery across the west. *M. ovi* can be transmitted among all members of the Caprinae family, including domestic sheep and goats, via direct contact or aerosols at distances up to 15 meters. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the risk factors associated with bighorn-domestic sheep and goat contact across eight study herds where existing bighorn sheep research is planned or underway (Fig. 1). Ultimately, the goal is to develop predictive models and practical tools to minimize contact between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats. By integrating scientific research with local producer knowledge and stakeholder collaboration, this project aims to support both wildlife conservation and sustainable livestock production.

To date, project staff have identified 197 domestic sheep and goat producers within 14.5 km of eight bighorn sheep study herds (Fig. 2). These operations collectively hold 13,219 sheep (median of 16 sheep/producer), 1,146 goats (median of 5 goats/producer), and 62 livestock guard dogs (26 producers with a median of 2 LGDs/producer). Over the last year, GPS collars were deployed on 206 bighorn sheep (151 ewes,

55 rams), as well as 304 domestic sheep and 25 guard dogs in proximity of 3 bighorn study herds.

Collar data is used to document and alert project staff to close contacts events, with close contact defined as bighorns within 200 meters of domestics or a pasture actively holding domestics. Over the last year, a total of 188 close contact events were recorded - these involved 12 individual bighorn rams, 14 individual ewes, and 6 domestic operations within 3 study areas. Contact rates (measured as the number of close contacts per collared bighorn per month), vary by study herd, individual animal, and time of year. Darby had the highest average monthly contact rate (0.268), followed by the Highlands (0.106), and Sleeping Giant-Beartooth (0.025). Other study herds (Greennhorns, Tendos, and Thompson Falls) had no recorded close contacts during the annual reporting period.

Visual observations (in the form of ground-based surveys and camera traps) have been used to supplement GPS data and capture additional close contact events, animal behavior, and group composition of bighorn sheep involved. A total of 40 visually observed events involving an average of 11.1 bighorns (including an average of 8.8 uncollared) were recorded.

This project will continue through June 30, 2028. 

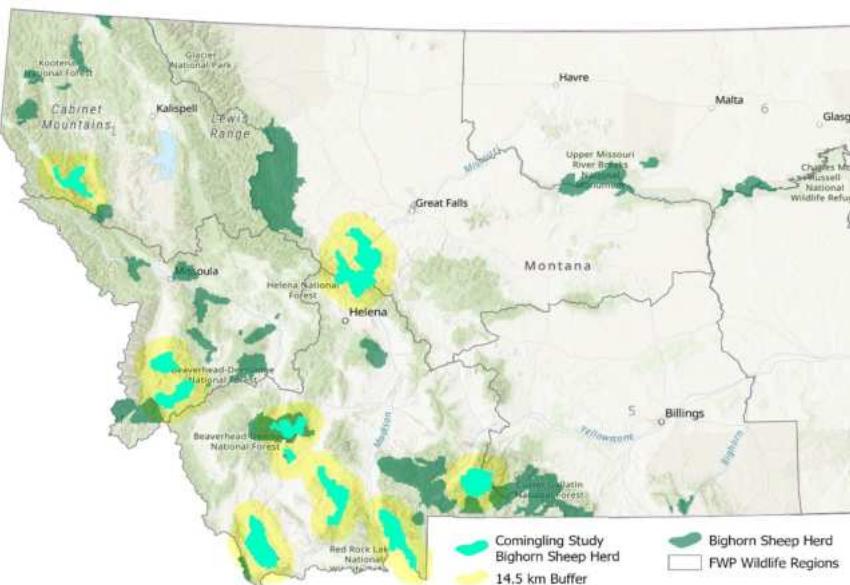


Figure 1. Map of Comingling study herds and 14.5km buffers around core bighorn sheep distributions (yellow). During the reporting period, there were no collared bighorn sheep or domestics in either the Madisons or Mill Creek study areas

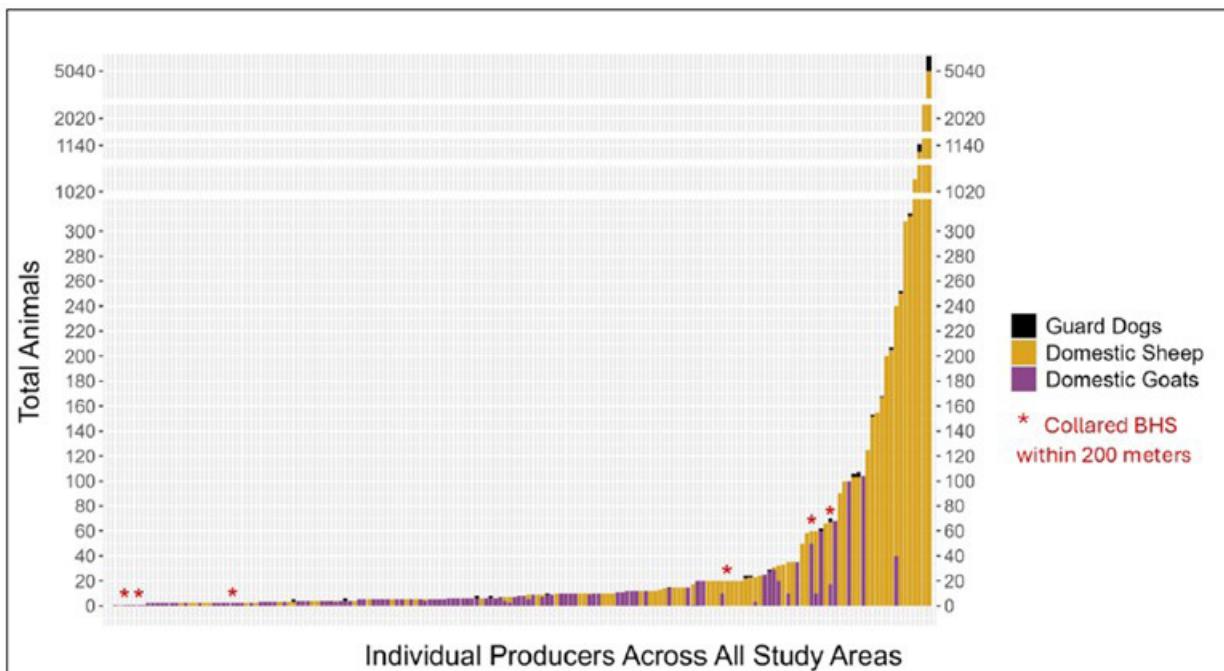


Figure 2. The number of domestic sheep, goats, and guard dogs owned by each producer within the study areas. Each bar represents an individual producer and the graph is sorted by operation size (vertical axes). Operations where bighorn sheep were within 200 meters of their sheep and/or goats during July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 are shown with a red asterisk.

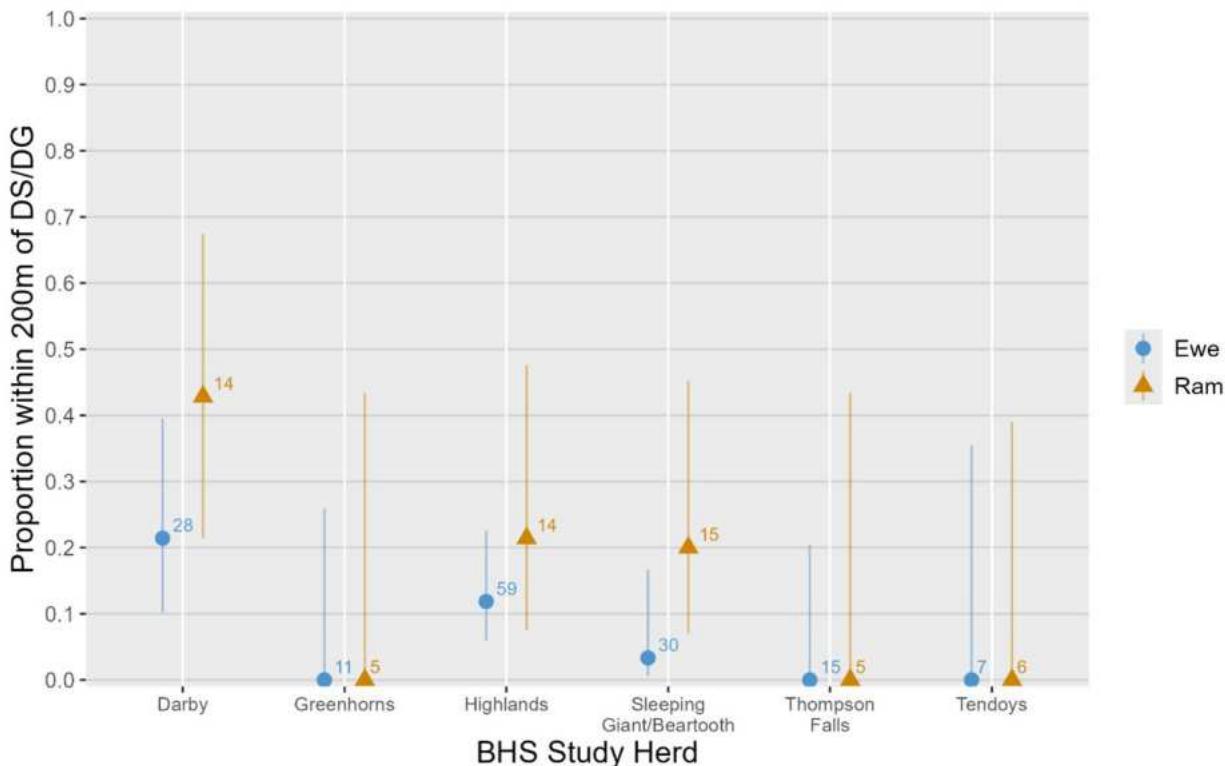


Figure 3. The proportion of collared bighorn sheep (BHS) ewes and rams, by study herd, that were within 200 meters of domestic sheep (DS) or domestic goats (DG) during July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. The total numbers of collared BHS involved is reported next to the symbol.

ADVENTURE AWAITS



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