



## WSF's 2014 Thinhorn Sheep Summit Action Plan Update *The Kevin & Janine Rinke Thinhorn Initiative*

**October 2015 Update**

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### **“NO CONTACT IN THE NORTH”**

Legislation is part of the solution...Marketing is the other part!

#### **Recent Actions/Strategies:**

- As the Wild Sheep Foundation's staff continue to support northern jurisdictions in the development of new regulatory frameworks to exclude domestic sheep from thinhorn sheep range, we have turned some focus to developing a complimentary “bottom-up” approach. The focus of our work during the past 2 months has been on developing criteria and branding for a potential Wild Sheep Safe™ certification program for the domestic sheep industry. We are collaborating in the development of parallel initiatives in Montana and British Columbia, as pilot programs.
- In BC, the timing is good, as the BC Wild/Domestic Sheep Separation Program (BCSSP) has the opportunity to partner with a new BC Premium Lamb branding initiative that has already formed market connections between restaurants/distributors and lamb producers and abattoirs (i.e., slaughterhouses). BC Premium Lamb has also developed an auditing system to provide market confidence that certified farms are indeed meeting brand criteria. Premium Lamb branding includes consideration of environmental sustainability, which is where we hope to apply Wild Sheep Safe™ criteria. This is an exciting development for our “*No Contact in the North*” effort as it serves to build positive relationships between wild sheep conservation groups and the domestic sheep industry, as well as to raise the profile of the wild sheep-domestic sheep disease issue. From our recent experiences in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, we know education and outreach is a critical component of our work in the North.
- Development of this certification program is aligning well with the development of a “top-down” regulatory approach to wild/domestic sheep contact. Criteria used to certify farms as Wild Sheep Safe™ could also potentially match criteria applied to regulate farms within wild sheep range using overarching state/ province/territorial regulations. The key Wild Sheep Safe™ criterion that will apply to the majority of domestic sheep producers will simply be that the farm is outside a defined high-risk zone around wild sheep range. In order to support both of these initiatives (i.e., bottom-up marketing and top-down regulations), we are working to accurately update BC's wild sheep range maps.
- Continued collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries is key to avoid overlapping efforts and to capitalize on synergies and momentum. Jeremy, in his dual role as BC SSP coordinator and thinhorn lead, has been working closely with Kurt Alt in the Montana WSF office to build a WSF Wild Sheep Safe™ brand that will benefit from shared information and serve as an example for other jurisdictions to improve and bring stakeholders into constructive relationships.
- During a trip to northern BC to address the Tahltan Outfitter & Guide Council, WSF President & CEO Gray Thornton met and spent an evening with Yukon Chapter WSF President Clint Walker and YK-WSF members, along with then-Member of Parliament Ryan Leef and other Yukon leaders to discuss a variety of topics, including our “*No Contact in the North*” initiative.
- WSF, Wild Sheep Society of British Columbia, BC Wildlife Federation, and other organizations continue their work with the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) to promote development of a thinhorn sheep management plan for the province.

- Development of a Dall Sheep Management Plan in Alaska – ADF&G Division of Wildlife Conservation continues work on developing an updated Dall Sheep Management Plan for Alaska. It was anticipated that the bulk of the work would take place over the winter months. The Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation in conjunction with WSF and SCI Foundation provided a grant of \$50K to ADF&G Division of Wildlife Conservation to assist in revision of the 5 Regional Dall Sheep Management Plans. With Pittman-Robertson match this equates to \$200K of project funding.
- AK WSF joins the Wild Sheep Working Group - The Alaska Board of Game has invited AK WSF along with several other organizations to participate in a Wild Sheep Working Group. The purpose of the group is to focus on many of the issues facing Dall sheep in Alaska and develop potential solutions to those problems. Working Group membership was designed to represent various users of Dall sheep in Alaska and also includes member representatives from the Board of Game, Advisory Committees, private landowners, and public interest groups. The group will meet over 2 or 3 weekends this winter beginning on December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in Anchorage. Dr. Alistair Bath of the Memorial University of Newfoundland has been retained as facilitator for the group; Dr. Bath recently facilitated the Wood Bison Working Group that helped facilitate restoration of wood bison in Alaska.

#### **Actions to Implement in coming months:**

- **(NWT):** Re-engage Dehcho and Sahtu Co-Management Boards in light of support for Yukon Resolution unanimously passed by 13 Yukon Renewable Resource Councils in early May 2015;
- **(YK):** Continue to support Dan Reynolds and others in the Yukon as the Resolution and associated Recommendations move up to the Minister level;
- **(AK):** Continue to solidify working relationships with appropriate government agencies and alliances with fellow conservation and sportsmen's groups;
- **(AK):** Fully participate in the ongoing Dall sheep-focused regulatory process;
- **(AK):** Further the Disease Prevention Initiative;
- **(AK):** Actively engage in the Dall Sheep Working Group and assist with revision of Dall Sheep Management Plans;
- **(All):** Coordinate monthly conference calls with Thinhorn Initiative working group to update everyone and emphasize the strength of our multi-jurisdictional approach.
- **(All):** Consider developing promotional materials for “*No Contact in the North*” program. Continue to compile information on each jurisdictional context:
  - public land management (are there concerns with public land grazing of domestic sheep/goats near wild sheep range? can we prohibit the use of sheep/goat/llama as pack animals? are there permitting processes we can use?)
  - private land regulations and politics (do we know where the farms are? are private farms the key concerns? are there agricultural acts/regulations protecting farm practices?)
  - wildlife management (what is our lobby strength? what is the role of First Nations?)
  - regional protocols for confirmed contact (can we use existing protocols developed for bighorns? can this be developed within each region? such a protocol demonstrates critical importance of issue)
  - information management (is there a regional database with accurate thinhorn herd range polygons? do sheep/goat/camelid producers know the issues? are the locations of domestic sheep farms known being tracked?)