



## **2017 Priority: the Budget for Bighorn Sheep**

### **Support Congressional direction to the Forest Service and BLM to prevent disease from spreading on grazing allotments. (Interior Appropriations report language.)**

- Recent spending bills have directed the agencies to work with sportsmen and grazing permittees to control the risk of disease carried by domestic sheep. This joint effort keeps pro-multiple-use groups together in resolving a difficult problem by consensus.
- Annual budgets have supported this approach since 2015 and must continue.
- There should be no question whether to continue on this path, we should be improving the policy. Below is the last enacted version. On page 2 is the improved version.

#### December 2015: FY 2016 OMNIBUS Interior and Related Agencies Report Language

*Bighorn Sheep Conservation.* - In order to ensure the Nation does not lose its domestic sheep industry or bighorn sheep conservation legacy, the Service and the Bureau of Land Management shall implement a variety of solutions, including the following directives: The agencies are directed to complete risk of contact analyses using appropriate data sources, such as from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and to share the findings with the public. The Service is expected to engage the Agricultural Research Service to ensure the best scientific understanding of where disease transmission occurs and the degree of that risk and to assist the Forest Service with identifying all allotments that are suitable for sheep grazing. The Service and Bureau of Land Management also are directed to identify and implement actions to resolve issues on allotments with a high risk of disease transmission, including, if agreeable to the directly affected stakeholders, the relocation of domestic sheep to allotments with a low risk, pending any site-specific environmental analysis. Together, the agencies are encouraged to convene a meeting of stakeholders interested in collaborating on strategies and solutions to address the risk of disease transmission and to report to the Committees on implementation of these directives within 60 days of enactment of this Act.

## **Improved Version for FY18**

*Bighorn Sheep Conservation.* – The Committee directs the Service and Bureau of Land Management to develop Risk of Contact analyses for domestic and bighorn sheep while engaging actively with collaborative groups, other Federal land management agencies, Tribes, State and local governments, State wildlife agencies, State and Federal animal health professionals, grazing permittees, and stakeholders. The Service is further directed to use in planning and decision-making the most current data on bighorn distribution, including telemetry data, recent bighorn observations, and the capability of surrounding rangelands to support domestic sheep both within and beyond existing allotments. The Service and Bureau of Land Management are also directed to support with appropriate agency action such changes in domestic sheep grazing operations that reduce risk of disease transmission, whether negotiated voluntarily among stakeholders or resulting from agency planning, seeking the minimal necessary disruption and displacement of permittees, including providing alternative grazing in lower-risk areas through expedited decision-making. The report received (late) from the Forest Service in fulfillment of the committee's request last year indicated that few of the reported 43 cases of Risk of Contact Analyses involve stakeholders in collaborative processes, which the committee believed and stated was needed. The Service and the Bureau of Land Management are directed to provide semi-annual briefings to the Committee on progress and adherence to the directives contained herein.