



News - For Immediate Release

FY 2012 Budget Bill a Mixed Bag for Wild Sheep

Cody, Wyoming, USA. December 20, 2011. Bighorn sheep conservation got a mixed bag in the year-end spending bill (H.R. 2055 - FY12 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012.)

On the downside, House and Senate appropriators stopped the U.S. Forest Service from making decisions or taking actions benefitting wild sheep restoration and enhancement if such action reduces the number of domestic sheep allowed to graze on select public land allotments. On the other hand, the new law gives state wildlife managers more say in bighorn conservation and recognizes that temporal and spatial separation should continue “unless or until there is no conflict with bighorn sheep management.” Such separation is necessary for the survival of wild sheep, due to disease transmission from domestic sheep.

“While disappointed with Congressional action which delays implementation of a duly-rendered NEPA decision on the Payette National Forest, we appreciate recognition by Congress of the legitimate concern and often deadly impact to wild sheep, when domestic sheep and bighorn sheep interact,” stated Gray N. Thornton, President and CEO of the Wild Sheep Foundation.

“Fortunately for wild sheep, Congress backed off from a domestic sheep industry proposed five-year ban on wild sheep conservation efforts on federal lands to a one-year restriction. This result would not have been possible without the support of tens of thousands of sportsmen/conservationists who urged Congress to work to achieve effective spatial and temporal separation between wild and domestic sheep. In our view, and with their action, Congress has now recognized and elevated this issue” added Thornton.

“The Wild Sheep Foundation, through our Rocky Crate Endowed Chair for Wild Sheep Disease Research at Washington State University, has been at the forefront of research which irrefutably demonstrated transmission of lethal bacteria from domestic to wild sheep. While we enter the next 5-year phase of research attempting to render bacteria shed from domestic sheep less lethal to wild sheep, we invite, and urge, the domestic sheep industry to join us and collaboratively co-fund these research efforts which benefit both wild sheep and the domestic sheep industry,” said Thornton.

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“We remain committed to working on this issue, and in the coming year, the Wild Sheep Foundation and our network of wild sheep conservation advocates will continue our efforts seeking effective separation between domestic and wild sheep. While we recognize the tradition and importance of the domestic sheep industry to many western states, we also recognize the importance, benefits, and millions of private-source conservation dollars invested to date toward restoration and management of wild sheep on our nation’s public lands,” said Thornton.

“The Wild Sheep Foundation, along with our fellow hunting/wildlife conservation organizations in the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, also appreciates that Congress recognizes that the states have the primary responsibility of managing native ungulates, including bighorn sheep,” noted Thornton.

The Wild Sheep Foundation, formerly the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS,) was founded in 1977 by wild sheep conservationists and enthusiasts. With a membership of more than 8,000 worldwide and a chapter/affiliate network in North America, WSF is the premier advocate for wild sheep, wild goats, other mountain wildlife, and their habitat. Since forming in 1977, the Wild Sheep Foundation has raised and expended more than \$85 million on conservation and education programs in North America, Europe and Asia. These and other efforts have resulted in a five-fold increase in bighorn sheep populations in North America from their historic 1950-70s lows.

For more information on the Foundation, its 2012 and 2013 conventions in Reno, Nevada and its many conservation and education programs, please visit www.wildsheepfoundation.org or contact them at 720 Allen Avenue, Cody, Wyoming 82414 USA. Telephone 307-527-6261. Email info@wildsheepfoundation.org. Find us on Facebook™ at Facebook.com/wildsheepfoundation.