



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

**February 2015 Update**

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**“NO CONTACT IN THE NORTH”**

Legislation is part of the solution

**Recent Actions/Strategies:**

- Continued planning for series of presentations in Yukon April 30 – May 2. Expanded discussions to include Chief Veterinary Officer for Yukon government.
- Coordinated conference call to update THS working group, discuss Alaska process of Dall Sheep Management Planning, and development of Alaska Legislative Brief.
- Initiated discussion to support new policy by applying U.S. Forest Service “Risk of Contact” tool to thinhorn sheep range; this ROC approach scientifically models risk of contact with domestic sheep grazing.
- Engaged THS working group from all jurisdictions through monthly update (AK, BC, NWT, YT)

**Jurisdictional Updates:**

- **YK:** Dan Reynolds is helping to coordinate a presentation by Jeremy Ayotte at the Dawson Renewable Resource Council (RRC) April 30-May 2, 2015 AGM. During this time, Jeremy will also travel to Whitehorse to discuss the *No Contact in the North* effort at a meeting with staff from the Yukon Department of Environment as well as the Yukon Agriculture Branch. Dr. Mary VanderKop (Chief Veterinary Officer, Environment Yukon) is helping to coordinate this agency meeting/presentation. Currently, there is no regulation in place to limit contact between domestic sheep and goats within thinhorn sheep range. There are however, several policy initiatives that have been implemented to advise and support a multi-pronged approach to protect health of wild sheep, and the Yukon is also in the early stages of developing regulations under the new Animal Health Act to address risk of disease from domestic sheep to thinhorn sheep. Jeremy will help coordinate and share these Yukon examples of policy and regulations among the THS working group, so that each jurisdiction can benefit from others that may have progressed further in this process.
- **AK:** At our March 5<sup>th</sup> conference call and regional update, Kevin Kehoe provided useful context regarding Dall's Sheep Management Planning in Alaska, and how this might contribute to State policy regarding limiting or excluding domestic sheep from wild sheep range in Alaska. The current Dall's Sheep Management Plan is 40 years old and requires updating. Synchronizing a revised/updated Dall's Sheep Management Plan with current knowledge of the risk of domestic sheep disease to thinhorns, and the effectiveness of separation, will help set things up for specific

state policy that protects Alaska's wild sheep from contact with domestic sheep or goats. We also discussed the importance of stressing effective temporal and spatial **separation** rather than certification, as attempting to certify that domestics are "*Mycoplasma-free*" will be problematic. Any new regulation to protect wild sheep in Alaska will require scientifically defensible mapping of Dall's sheep core home ranges, as well as a standard and consistent method to develop "separation zones" or buffers around home ranges. The U.S. Forest Service GIS-based "Risk of Contact" tool will provide this type of Decision Support. To our knowledge, the Risk of Contact tool has only been applied to bighorn sheep range in the western U.S.; however, BC is currently in the process of modifying/applying the Risk of Contact tool to Stone's sheep range in northern BC. Jeremy will help coordinate results of this pilot project across northern jurisdictions, given that this analytical tool is exactly what we need to put forward, to support policy.

#### **Actions to Implement:**

- **(NWT):** Initiate contact with Sahtu Co-Management Board. Emphasize opportunity for this program to provide support for legislation to protect wild sheep within the Sahtu Region. April 2015 presentations in the Yukon will help develop opportunities to catalyze effort across boundaries (Dehcho-Sahtu, Yukon- NWT).
- **(NWT):** Continue to communicate with First Nations leaders that are very supportive of this Thinhorn Sheep initiative; develop a Dehcho position statement or resolution to exclude domestic sheep and goats from thinhorn sheep range across the Dehcho region.
- **(YK):** Continue to work with Dan Reynolds and Mary Vanderkop to confirm agenda, timing, and locations for April-May 2015 presentations in Whitehorse and Dawson. Once dates are set, contact Yukon Outfitters Association, Yukon Fish & Game Association, and Wild Sheep Foundation members in the Yukon who are currently working to establish a WSF Yukon Chapter, to coordinate public presentation details and advertising with interested stakeholders.
- **(AK):** Continue to work with Wayne Heimer/Kevin Kehoe to support their work to develop a Brief to Alaska's Legislature. Any relevant briefing notes from other jurisdictions should be sent to Kevin K.
- **(All):** Coordinate monthly conference call with Thinhorn Initiative working group to update everyone and emphasize strength of multi-jurisdictional approach.
- **(All):** Consider developing promotional material 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 use of sheep/goat/llama as pack animals? are there permitting processes we can use?)
  - private land regulations and politics (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 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? are the locations of domestic sheep farms known being tracked?)