

California Wild Sheep

IN THIS ISSUE

Letter from the Editor	3
President's Letter	5
RAMS: A Privilege With Pressure.....	6
My Desert Bighorn Sheep Hunt.....	8
Future RWWS Installations Scheduled	9
No Points, But I Drew It	10
Max Points, Max Reward	11
Ram in a Million	12
Fundraiser Recap.....	13
FY 25/26 Year In Review	15
Election.....	16
Dream Hunt to Tajikistan for Bukharan Markhor and Bukhara Urial – November 2025	25
New Zealand Adventure.....	27
Governmental Affairs.....	29
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Update	30
2026 Chapter and Affiliates Meeting	31
Death Averted.....	32
Society For The Conservation Of Bighorn Sheep	35
The Cady Mountains: A Brief History Of California's Tenth Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zone.....	37
The Politics Of Conservation	40



Craig Cattel

Newberry Mountains

166" / Age 10

Hunting with Sierra Crest Outfitters

See Story on Page 8



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Letter FROM THE EDITOR

2026 is rushing past! The green hills I love so much have lasted longer again this year, but are fading fast. Several state drawings are out. I hope you have a coveted sheep tag, or other premium tag, in your pocket (I don't, but continue to hold out hope). This issue includes your ballot for the Director election - please, please vote! We have highly qualified candidates, a sign of a thriving organization and positive for our future! This issue also has lots of pictures from our April fundraiser, great hunting stories, an update on the recent CA Wild Sheep Summit, tasty & fun game recipes, fun humor, AND MUCH MORE!

Thanks to each of you who have contributed to the board, a committee, the fundraiser, a drinker installation, the sheep hunter orientation, a wild sheep summit, donated money, taken a youth hunting or shooting, or recruited new members. It is the collective of all those activities by MANY that enables us to accomplish so much and be the envy of other species focused hunter-conservation groups.

Your feedback, ideas, articles & requests are always welcome. Best way to reach me is email: mike.borel@kearney.com. Due date for input to the 3Q26 issue is August 10. Stay fit, healthy, safe and get both climbing and rifle or bow practice in!



I DECIDED NOT TO WAIT

By Beverly Valdez, Distinguished Life Member

Have you ever thought about having a memorial drinker in the desert? We currently have several Legacy Drinker projects in active fundraising, with members choosing to create loving memorials of family and friends that will benefit wild sheep long into the future. Each new drinker represents a lasting commitment to conservation and a legacy that can be seen in healthier herds and thriving wildlife.

One morning I woke up and realized something important — I wanted to see the impact of a wildlife drinker while I was still here to enjoy it. I wanted to read the reports, see the photos, and know that more sheep were surviving because of something I helped make possible.

I decided not to wait until after my passing to have that memorial drinker installed. Instead, I chose to help build one now — while I can still work on the installation, visit the site, and witness the results firsthand. Knowing that dozens of additional sheep may benefit from that water source is deeply rewarding.

The Chapter has made it possible in two ways:

- A one-time contribution of \$35,000
- Or a seven year commitment of \$5,000 per year

You can build your memorial drinker too.

To discuss options, contact:

Mike — <mailto:mike.borel@kearney.com>
or John at the office — <mailto:forthesheep2@gaiatec.com>

Your legacy will live on with wildlife enthusiasts for generations — and especially with the sheep whose lives you may help save.

Sample Plaque



MORE WATER, MORE SHEEP, MORE LEGACY

Donate to Katie In the Cadys or any water installation at <https://www.cawsf.org/store.html>

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California Wild Sheep is published quarterly.

Please email all articles and photos to

Mike.Borel@kearney.com

Photos should be high resolution and in color.

It is recommended that digital photos be sent by email.

Please include photo credits and captions.

Content editing by John Ware, Vince Bloom

Humorous outtakes provided by Tammy Scott

Published by Beverly Valdez

Events

2026

June 1	2026 Election ballots sent to members
June 28	2026 Election ballots must be completed and sent to CA WSF
August 10	Due date for articles for 3Q2026 CA WSF Newsletter
October 23-25	"Bee Gee" Rebuild RWWS Installation
November 10	Due date for articles for 4Q2026 CA WSF Newsletter
December 11	Sheep Summit XXXIX "All Virtual"
December 11-13	TBD, GALAD RWWS Installation

2027

January 8-10	TBD, GALAD RWWS Installation
January 20-23	SCI Convention, Nashville
January 23-24	GSCO Convention, Nashville
February 4-7	WSF International Sheep Show, Reno
February 10	Due date for articles for 1Q2027 CA WSF Newsletter
February 19-21	TBD, GALAD RWWS Installation
March 19-21	"Bearclaw" Rebuild RWWS Installation
April 9-11	"Peachy" RWWS Installation, Castle Mountains/Paiute Range. Sponsored by Eastern WSF
April 30	Sheep Summit XL, Santa Rosa, Hyatt Regency
May 1	CA WSF Annual Fundraiser, Santa Rosa Hyatt Regency

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Hello CA WSF members,

Our banquet was a great success this year, and I'd like to start by thanking our attendees for showing up. It seemed like everyone enjoyed themselves, and I know I did. It couldn't have happened without all of our donors either. They are an integral part of our chapter, and we couldn't do it without them. I'd also like to thank all of the bidders who supported our wildlife and CDFW's conservation plan. I am truly appreciative of each and every one of you. This energy has supported the development of three new hunt zones and the addition of five new sheep tags this year. I look forward to the promise of more zones and more tags in the coming years as well!

Our partnership with SCBS is alive and strong, and we have included a guzzler installation and work schedule in this newsletter. Please make plans to join one of these, and feel free to contact us about other work and water-haul opportunities throughout the year. There is lots to do, so come join the fun and satisfaction of Giving a Lamb a Drink. Good hunting and be safe.

We have a new venue for our banquet that we announced at this year's fundraiser. It will be held May 1, 2027, at the Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country in Santa Rosa, California. Come make a weekend out of it with golf, shooting, and touring the Sonoma wine country. We are going to have a boatload of fun options available — look for more information to follow.

I'm pleased to announce that we will once again offer a Stone's sheep hunt for our 2026–2027 drawing, from Spatsizi River Outfitters.. Our Life Member drawing will be a horseback Dall sheep hunt with Jonah's Alaskan Adventures. You have to be present to win this Life Member hunt, so please make plans to attend on May 1! Your CA WSF Board of Directors has many more exciting hunts planned and secured for your adventuring pleasure. Stay tuned.

Again, please know that we are greatly appreciative of each and every one of our supporters for *putting and keeping sheep on the mountains*.

Jim Fitzgerald



Setting a new record

At the 2026 Annual Fundraiser in April, CA WSF set a new record for the auction of a California state tag. The bidding was lively and people at the dinner were enthralled watching as the bids went higher and higher. When auctioneer John Bair said "All in, All done!" the winning bid was \$310,000!

Congratulations to the bidder in the room!



RAMS: A PRIVILEGE WITH PRESSURE

By Rick Parker, Life Member

Well, it was a most unusual day, unlike any other day...my wife's car was giving out so we got a new car. We got home and checked the web, and I had drawn a desert sheep Tag for the Clark/ Kingston mountain range in the Mojave Desert, REALLY? WOW!

If you did not know, that is one of the best and biggest units in the state of California, around 500 square miles with the highest peak almost 8,000 feet. It is around 10:00 PM now, and I called my boss, Dan Montgomery of Alaska Trophy Adventures, and asked him about my thoughts of hiring an outfitter. He said, "That would be smart!"

So, I called Cliff and Matt St. Martin of Dry Creek Outfitters early the next morning. They specialize in trophy desert sheep and have an excellent group of people. Plus, I already knew Cliff somewhat through the Wild Sheep Foundation shows in Reno.

It was all set. And I wanted to soak it all in — every moment! I ordered maps, studied the geography and history of the area, and of course, I attended the orientation, learning a lot. I did a lot of shooting to prepare and tried to stay healthy through my sheep guiding season with Dan at Alaska Trophy Adventures in Alaska.

Finally, the time had arrived. The season starts December 6th through February 1st. Cliff and Matt decided January would be the best time since the bigger and older rams tend to show up around that time of year. Yet another reason to hire an outfitter with many years of experience.

It is a two-day drive for me to get to camp. California was experiencing some big storms, so we pushed back the hunt date. It is interesting how much rain, fog, wind, cold, and crummy weather we experienced in the Mojave Desert.

When I arrived at camp, everyone was out scouting for sheep. This gave me time to settle in. Dry Creek has great accommodations! A main wall tent for cooking and gathering, with separate carpeted and heated sleeping tents.

It was not long before Jonston St. Martin, Eli Lang, and Cliff stopped by. Cliff said, "Grab your things, let's go for an evening glass. Bring your rifle — the season is open!"

Cliff spotted seven ewes that evening. I did not spot any. The glassing ability of those guys is humbling!

Clay arrived later that night. The next day was the first official day of the hunt, and it was very windy and cool. Clay spotted seven rams, but they were not what we were looking for. Jonston and Eli spotted eight ewes and one ram, again not what we wanted.

Tyler came in that night, and Jake and Brandon the next day. Jonston and Eli had to go to another area. We all saw younger rams and ewes.



Rick Parker with the Dry Creek Outfitters team

So now Cliff and I, Clay, Jake, Tyler, and Brandon are all in camp.

On day four, Cliff picked up a group of three rams, one of which was a very good ram!

Tyler finds us, and we all agree it is a very good ram. Cliff suggested that since it was late in the day, Tyler slip in closer and get some footage of the big ram so we could make a good decision.

Later that evening, Brock arrives at camp and we all studied Tyler's footage... it is a great ram!

After locating the rams the following day, we made a plan: Cliff, Jake, and Brandon would watch from a distance. Tyler, Brock, and I would hike on the backside of the ridge where the sheep were located.

So off we went across the desert floor, "the Deck," up an old wash, finally to the backside of the ridge. A big rock marked the spot where the three rams "should" be on the other side.

I was carrying a 7 Mag that is practically the same age as I am and that I grew up with. Once we finally got to the rock outcropping — NO RAMS!

We were all sweaty from the climb, so we put on another layer of clothing. As we set up to glass in the cold and gusty wind, the rams appeared 300 yards away. I missed the shot, shooting over the ram. I did not compensate for the angle, and I was excited and rushed it. I just plain missed!

It gets better though — that spent cartridge got stuck in the chamber. Damn! There goes my dream desert ram in a big cloud of dust!

I turned to the guys and said, "I'm sorry, I missed."

Tyler and Brock were so professional and cool about it; they just said, "That's okay, we get to hunt more!"

We tried to track and follow them and tried to figure out where the rams went. Twelve to fourteen miles later, in the dark, Cliff picked us up. We never saw them again.

The next day the weather was worse: wind, fog, and rain! Desert my ass! Really?

The following day, Cliff and I went to a different location, trying to let those rams settle down. We saw some other rams and ewes, and a white lamb — I mean Dall sheep white. The other guys saw some ewes. Colton arrived at camp after dark. The weather was crummy all day.

On the last day of my contracted hunt (although Dry Creek is the type of outfit that would keep you hunting no matter what logistical nightmares it would cause them), the morning was clear, crisp, and felt good! You know the feeling of those mornings.

Everyone headed out in different directions. Cliff gave me a look, "I know a spot."

We jumped into the side-by-side and bounced off into the desert darkness. We parked the buggy and walked up an old wash into an area a few miles away from where I missed the ram a few days earlier.

A great-looking spot — big basins, canyons, lots of cover, and escape terrain.

Cliff spotted four ewes. Then, not long after that, we spotted the horns of a ram in a Spanish Dagger. There was also a small ram that appeared... could it be the three rams I missed earlier?

It was around 10:30 a.m. when the ram finally stepped out. WOW!

He looked old — that is a good thing! His horns looked good — that is a good thing! It is all about the bases, but we were pinned down and could not move to get into a better position to really evaluate him.

Two and a half hours later, we got to move... cramps, anyone?

We were able to close the distance somewhat and get a better look. This was not the same ram that I missed earlier. In fact, this ram had not been seen before, and he had very good horns!

All in, game on!

We ended up going around him to get better wind and cover. Both rams had moved up the mountain by the time we got to our planned location. They were in a cut, which gave us an opportunity to move closer into a rock outcropping.

We got set up: Cliff on the glass, me on the rifle (a 7mm PRC, a much younger rifle than my 7 Mag).

I dry-fired a few times... all set.

Neither ram came out of the cut, and we could see the whole area — at least we thought so.

More than an hour went by. We talked it over and decided to move up and see into the cut better.

Another hour later, we spotted the young ram. We got set



Rick with his Grand Slam Ram

up again.

This time we were in close... 200 yards +/-, and of course the sun had started going down.

Soon the young ram stood, stretched, and walked a little way.

Then...

The big ram walked out onto the edge of the ridge, looked our direction, turned, and started to headbutt a Spanish Dagger.

Cliff gave me that look...

"SHOOT HIM!"

One shot — he was dead instantly.

Staying in the gun and watching for a few moments, I turned to Cliff. I was choked up with emotion.

He said, "WOW! Congratulations, what a great Grand Slam ram."

Oh yes, did I mention that it was my Grand Slam ram?

We took care of the ram for the night and came back with the crew the next morning.

I cannot convey in words how special it really is. The highs, the lows, the whole journey. It was truly a magical day; two older guys harvested a true old desert warrior of a ram.

The desert had given us a rare gift.

The ram was the oldest ram harvested in California for the 2025/2026 season — 13 years old with an official Boone and Crockett net score of 171 4/8".

I cannot say enough about Dry Creek Outfitters and their team: Cliff, Matt, Jonston, Eli, Clay, Jake, Brandon, Tyler, Brock, Colton, and Zack.

A huge THANK YOU!!

And a special thanks to Paige, Regina, and Danielle of California Fish and Wildlife, the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation, Wildlife Restoration, the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep, and the National Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation. Also, the many people I did not meet who also helped make this all possible.

THANKS!!!

MY DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP HUNT

By Craig Cattell

I have been applying for many years for desert sheep. So many in fact, I felt that I was going to pass away prior to being able to get a chance to take a desert bighorn sheep! Well, wouldn't you know it. After 24 years of applying and turning age 75, I drew my desert bighorn sheep tag! What a relief.

After calming down, I spoke with Adam Bronson of Epic Outdoors. He recommended Josh Schulgren of Sierra Crest Outfitters. After speaking with Josh over the phone, I knew I wanted to go with him. He was extremely knowledgeable about the unit, and he would also help me out with my traveling. Being from Michigan, it was a bit challenging figuring out all the logistics of the area. Josh had me covered.

As we got closer to my hunt, I was getting excited, but it also became stressful.

There were some plans I had made earlier in the year, but when I explained this to everyone involved, they agreed I should go on the desert bighorn hunt. It really is a "once in a lifetime hunt".

When I arrived at camp, there were hundreds of motorcycles enthusiast preparing for a rally! I thought they would scare all the sheep off! I learned later there was a race through the desert and this was a meeting point. Josh assured me this would have no impact on the sheep. In fact, he said they were pretty used to it. After a change of clothes and a bite to eat, we went to shoot the rifle I would be using.

Shooting a different rifle was a bit scary for me. I was not comfortable with it. The main reason why I chose to do this was that California required copper bullets and since my rifle shot lead, it would require a lot of effort to get mine to work. So, when Josh offered his rifle, I took the opportunity. After a few shots, the rifle was perfect! It was a huge relief knowing the rifle was on point and that I was comfortable with it. As I was putting the rifle away, I heard Josh say, "Have a ram". I looked over and he was looking several miles out on a big range. Who can say they sighted in a rifle and could see a nice ram from the same spot! After a closer look at the ram, he was not what we were pursuing but seeing the ram got me excited.

As it became light opening morning, we were greeted with fog up on the surrounding mountains. It made it



Craig with the Sierra Crest Outfitters team

difficult to glass but we managed. We were seeing rams, but it wasn't till around 10am when Josh spotted a band of rams. We kept a close eye on them. There was one ram that had our attention, but I could tell Josh just was not overly excited over him. Another hour went by and Josh glanced back at the ram's and he noticed a new ram had joined the group. I could say tell his voice this was a very good ram and we need to get a closer look at him! Off we went.

The hike up was steep, but manageable. Being 75 I wasn't sure what to expect but keeping up with Josh I felt pretty good! Just before getting to our location, we ran into another band of rams. One ram was very nice, but we still wanted a closer look at the one we were after. So, we chose to pass. As we topped out above the rams, they were 160 yards below us. Josh said he is a great ram, let's get ready. As I was getting everything set up they all bedded. There were 7 rams and all we could see were the tops of their horns. Josh said this could be awhile so get comfortable! After nearly two hours, one by one they all started to finally stand. They were angling down away which wasn't good but suddenly they all took off across the drainage for no reason! As they were going away, I was never able to get a clear shot, but they were all hitting heads and feeding, which was good because they were not spooked. From being so close now so far, it was not looking so good.

It was now after 3pm and the wind was starting to intensify. We were seeing gusts well into the 30's. The rams were only 500 yards but with these winds, Josh and I were not comfortable with me taking the shot across two drainages in fear of wounding him or pushing him further away. Josh said "Let's give it till 4 or so before heading off

the mountain. You never know, maybe they will come back this way."

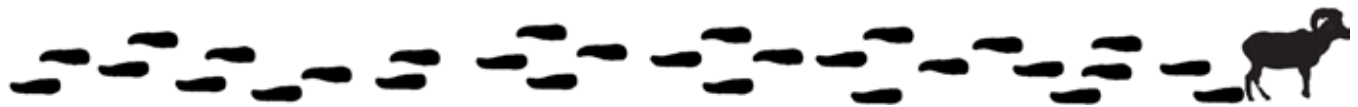
For the next hour, we watched the rams inch their way back to us. The wind was howling and I was still not comfortable. They were now 300 yards, heading right at us. We couldn't believe it. They crossed both drainages and were now on our side, 200 yards below us. Josh and I were doing everything possible to find myself a good rest but each time I got comfortable the rams went out of my sight. Finally, I was able to get into a spot. In fact, Josh had to hold onto my belt in fear of me slipping down a 40 ft drop off as I shot.

The ram was now standing 200 yards broadside. The wind was still blowing, and I was now finally comfortable taking the shot so I squeezed the trigger. After the shot Josh confirmed it was indeed a hit but he was still moving well out of site. We watched the group of rams cross the canyon

and hold up looking back. We counted 6 so we knew our ram was held up just out of sight from where we had last seen him. Josh said we only have 20 minutes of light left so let's get down there. As we approached where he last was, Josh said there he is! He started making his way down the ridge and we could tell he was hit hard. As he cleared the rocks, I was able to get my final shot in him with minutes of light to spare.

I couldn't believe what had just happened. I had just shot my desert sheep!

Walking up to him I will never forget. He was everything I wanted and more. Later the biologist aged him at 10 years old. He was well into his prime! I would like to thank Epic Outdoors and their application services and Josh Schulgen of Sierra crest Outfitters and his team. I could not have done it without you all!



FUTURE RWWS INSTALLATIONS SCHEDULED

Make plans to help with one of these future RWWS installations. You won't be sorry! Make a difference and help not only desert bighorns but all the other denizens of the desert! Installations planned for this year include three state lands parcels. See newsletter Winter 2024 to learn about the state land parcels program.

October 23, 24, 25	"Big Gee" Guzzler Rebuild	Hunt Zone 9 - Cady Mountains
December 11, 12, 13	PP 04 "Casabier" New Private Property Guzzler Install	Hunt Zone 12 - Providence, Woods, and Hackberry Mountains
January 8, 9, 10	SL 74 "North Sacramentos" New State Lands Guzzler Install	No Hunt Zone
February 19, 20, 21	SL 04 "Lava Hills"	Hunt Zone 8 - South Bristol Mountains.
March 19, 20, 21	"Bearclaw" Guzzler Rebuild	Hunt Zone 6 - Sheep Hole Mountains
April 9, 10, 11	SL 75 "Peachey" New State Lands Guzzler Install	Hunt Unit 13 Castle Mountains/Paiute Range; Sponsored by Eastern WSF

NO POINTS, BUT I DREW IT!

By Mark Langbehn

My name is Mark Langbehn, and I am 26 years old. While applying for a deer tag, I decided to take a chance on a sheep tag with the intention of gaining points for the future. When the tag results came out, I saw I was successful in drawing a sheep tag with ZERO points.

I didn't quite understand what this meant. Calling some buddies and guides, I was shell-shocked at the seeming weight of such a tag. I ended up having a great conversation with Jake at Kika Worldwide Outfitters and ultimately hired them to guide me on the hunt.

Leading up to the hunt, I watched a lot of YouTube videos to get an idea of what this hunt would be like. After months of research and anticipation, it was finally time. My twin brother Matt joined me on the hunt. The first few days were tough, not seeing many sheep, which aligned with all the information I had heard about the Sheephole Range.

On day four, we found an old ram by himself. We watched him bed and game-planned to make a big move on him early the next morning.

The following day, the excitement was so high you could feel it in the air. My brother and a guide, Geoff, were watching him from the front of the mountain while I and the other guides looped all the way around the mountain on horseback. After climbing as high as we could on the horses, we started to climb, sneak, and sprawl our way up the ragged mountain.



Mark and his twin with his Sheephole ram

We peeked over the top and the ram had moved. We settled for a few minutes, and he bedded again. I set up on the sheep and could only see his horns in the scope. It was an hour-and-a-half wait for him to get up from his bed; an hour and a half prone turned out to be a wild challenge.

After all the waiting, in an instant, the ram stood up and I pulled the trigger.

RAM DOWN.

What a rush of emotion all wrapped up into one moment.

We all got to the sheep, and I immediately shared the moment with my brother. To say the moment was surreal would be a massive injustice. That was something I will never forget. A once-in-a-lifetime experience, with once-in-a-lifetime memories made.

I'm a blessed man.



Thank you Kursat and Temir!



In November 2025, I took my first hunt with Wild Hunting Turkey & Asia and the identical twin brothers Kursat and Temir Ekenler. I recommend them without reservation. Their in-country teams, business model, attention to detail and care for their clients is second to none.

www.wildhuntingoutfitters.com.tr



Mike Borel

MAX POINTS, MAX REWARD

by Todd Pavlik, Member

Knowing that I had max points in CA for sheep, I figured that I had as good a chance as anyone in the draw. Hunting Fool is always a great resource for deciding which unit to apply for, and as usual, I read the entire section to come to a good decision.

When I found out I had drawn, I immediately started thinking about an outfitter. This is literally a once-in-a-lifetime hunt, so I knew I needed some help. I contacted Dawson Work of Camp Five Outfitters in Paso Robles, CA. I had done a couple of hunts with him for pigs on his beautiful ranch and valued his opinion. He told me to call Dry Creek Outfitters (<https://www.bighornoutfitter.com>). It didn't take long on the phone for me to decide that these guys were the ones I wanted to hunt with. I had drawn the second hunt in that unit, which was in January. Matt St. Martin, (owner of DCO), explained to me that this was probably the better hunt since they would have been in the unit quite a bit in December and would have current intel on where the majority of the sheep were and what their movements were like.

In December, while Matt was hunting the unit, he put eyes and video on a sheep that he had been aware of for a couple of years. He sent me the video of the ram and said, "He is special." Even though I'm not a sheep hunter, I could tell the ram was indeed special. He told me that starting the day after Christmas, they would put guides on the mountain to keep track of his movements until opening day on January 3rd. He wanted to get this ram to reward his team for doing such a great job throughout the season. They had a couple of hunters try for this ram previously only to have the clients unable to physically make it in far enough to take this extraordinary animal, and everybody on the team wanted to get him.

I arrived in camp on January 2 and met Matt. We hit it off immediately. I had a large wall tent all to myself, which made it easy to get all my gear sorted and organized. At dinner that night, Matt explained the plan for the next day. We would leave early, and two other guides would leave earlier than us to get up the mountain to find the ram, hopefully close to where they had seen him last.

Opening day delivered beautiful blue skies and very pleasant temperatures. After a short drive, we pulled off the dirt road. Matt showed me where we would be going, which always helps me mentally know just how difficult it could be. But it didn't look bad. We left the truck around 6 a.m. and took a short break around 8 to let the spotting guides get up high to locate the ram. Word over the radio came that they had the ram. Off we went. It was a bit of a walk, but we were in position to make the shot at 1



Todd with Dry Creek Outfitters crew

p.m. Matt ranged him at 320 yards, steeply downhill. I had been shooting my TS Customs 300 PRC out beyond 600 yards in prep for this hunt for months, and once in the prone position, I felt very confident of the shot. Matt took some time to make absolutely sure that this was the ram that we wanted, and that time allowed me to really calm down and be relaxed for the shot. There was another ram with him, but he wasn't a factor. At the shot, I lost him in the recoil, but when I found him again, he was done. Handshakes and hugs followed. It's always difficult to try to preserve and savor the initial feeling of such a thing, you know that it's so fleeting....but you do your best. Readers of Huntin' Fool know the emotions that one experiences as you walk up on the dream animal that you just made your own, so I won't try to describe them, I'm not Hemingway or Ruark. Pride, satisfaction, and awe come to mind, but there are others for which words cannot be found. Let me just say that slowly approaching this majestic animal, trying to preserve the sentiment, smells, sights, and overall experience in my head for posterity was overwhelming. The character, bases, length, and width of his horns stood out immediately. He surely would have lost his right horn by next year if not for the fact that we got to him first. There was a huge chunk of horn missing from his right side that was a badge of a hard fighting life on that mountain.

I want to sincerely thank Matt and his entire crew for the extraordinary effort on this hunt. I couldn't have done it without them.

RAM IN A MILLION

By Tom Willoughby, Member

"It's the white ram, Tom-do you want him?" "He's bedded right below the ridgeline...280 yards."

There are moments in life when time seems to slow down when everything becomes crystal clear. This was one of them. My dad didn't hesitate. He settled in behind my Proof 6.5 PRC, calm and steady, like he's done a thousand times before. But this wasn't just another shot. This was something else entirely. How often does anyone get a chance at a true once-in-a-lifetime animal-pure white desert bighorn? I'm talking Dall sheep white. The kind of ram most hunters only ever dream about.

Every year, like clockwork, I'd call Cliff St. Martin with Dry Creek Outfitters to talk sheep applications in California. Years ago, I hunted with them when a buddy drew a tag in the White Mountains, and ever since then, my dad and I had been applying-year after year, building points, chasing hope. Then just before the June deadline, my dad told me he was done. He figured his time had passed. Sheep hunting is no joke, and he wasn't sure he had it in him anymore. "I'm applying for you," I told him. No debate.

When the draw results came out, I checked mine first-nothing. Same old story. But then I pulled up my dad's results...and there it was. After all those years: Successful. A California desert bighorn tag in the Clark/Kingston Mountains. This wasn't just luck-this was destiny finally showing up. We've guided hunts our whole lives-pigs, turkey, deer, elk-but this was different. There was only one call to make. Cliff and the crew at Dry Creek were already watching a couple of great rams...including a unicorn: a white desert sheep they'd been tracking for years. The Clark/Kingstons are one of the only places they've ever been seen. We circled early January on the calendar.

All summer, my dad prepared. Walking, shooting, pushing himself every day. Like they say, getting old ain't for sissies-but he wasn't backing down.

By the time January rolled around, the desert had other plans. Wind. Rain. Brutal conditions. We delayed a few days, hoping for a break in the weather. Finally, on January 7th, we rolled in the Clark/Kingstons. The crew-Jonston, Brandon, Colton, and Cliff-were already out glassing. I had a couple buddies, Tyler and Dave, join us too. Spirits were high...but the mountain doesn't give anything easy. January 8th was rough. Snow flurries, howling wind, near-



Tom Willoughby with the Dry Creek Outfitters crew

zero visibility. We scratched out a few sheep sightings, including a decent ram late in the day, but nothing close. Then came January 9th. The weather broke. Everyone split up, covering country. Sheep were moving. We spotted ewes, small rams-even a white lamb. The kind of day that keeps your heart rate just a little elevated all day long. And then, the phone rang. It was my dad. "We found the white ram... what do you think? Should I take him?" In that moment, a thousand thoughts hit at once-Where are you? Can I get there? How fast can I move? But deep down I already knew. I wasn't going to make it in time. And this wasn't about me. "YES" I said, "Absolutely-kill him." One minute later, my phone rang again. "Ram down." Just like that.

The crew converged, and over an hour later, we finally reached him. And there he was-lying against the rugged desert backdrop. Pure white. Unreal. The kind of ram you do not just see-you feel. Something rare. Something sacred. A one-in-a-million animal, taken by the man who taught me everything I know about hunting. I would have given anything to be there beside him in that exact moment-but some things unfold exactly the way they're meant to. And this one? It was perfect. This hunt is something I'll carry with me forever.

Thank you to Dry Creek Outfitters-and to Tyler and Dave-for being part of a story we'll be telling for the rest of our lives.

THANK YOU FOR AN INCREDIBLE 2026 CA WSF FUNDRAISER!

By Donald C. Martin, Fundraising Committee Chair, Distinguished Life Member

I want to thank everyone who came out on April 25th to the DoubleTree by Hilton in Sacramento to attend our event. It was praised as one of our best yet! We did very well — we're still crunching numbers — but turnout was near record levels, and the enthusiasm in the room was absolutely incredible.

Special thanks go to our entire Board of Directors for coming together and working hard to make this one of our best events ever. In addition, a special thank you to CDFW Statewide Sheep Program Coordinator Paige Prentice-Young for joining us and delivering our afternoon presentation, then speaking directly to attendees Saturday evening and sharing the exciting news about California's three new sheep hunt zones available this fall and expanded tag opportunities.

Thank you, Paige!

A couple of the obvious standout moments during the evening were our two major State tags awarded to the chapter by CDFW, including the Multi-Zone Elk Fundraising Permit and the new Unit 12 Sheep Fundraising Permit.

The Multi-Zone Elk Permit sold for \$102,500, and the new Unit 12 Sheep Permit sold for an astounding \$310,000!

THAT'S A NEW RECORD!

The previous record was set earlier this year in Reno, where the Statewide Sheep Fundraising Permit sold for \$300,000. One additional sheep fundraising tag was sold bringing the total to \$730,000.

Take a moment to consider the impact this has on California's wild sheep program. three fundraising sheep permits sold for a combined **\$730,000**, which will be matched 3-to-1 through Federal Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Funds, increasing the total to an incredible **\$2,920,000**. This represents the largest direct infusion of revenue into California's sheep program in its history. That means the future remains very bright for California's bighorn sheep.

Congratulations to all of our winners, especially our two big winners of the evening.

The Life Member random drawing for a Desert Bighorn Hunt with our friends at La Guarida Outfitters in Chihuahua, Mexico, was won by NEW Life Member Ryan Ferguson. Ryan upgraded his membership that evening and was greatly rewarded. Congratulations Ryan, and thank you for becoming a Life Member!. Ryan became the lucky winner because the first name drawn was not in attendance. Remember — if you are a Life Member, you are automatically entered to win, BUT YOU MUST BE IN THE ROOM!

Our grand prize this year was a 15-day Stone Sheep Hunt with our friend Aaron Florian and Yukon Stone Outfitters. Aaron has been a tremendous supporter of the chapter over the years, and we were excited to partner once



2025 Annual Fundraiser

again to provide this incredible opportunity to one of our supporters.

The lucky winner was in the room, which always makes for a great moment!

Congratulations to our winner, Justin Akins. Justin has been a member for some time and has also volunteered on several of our water projects in Southern California.

Thank you, Justin, for your support, and good luck this fall!

Special thanks also go to our supporting members, volunteers, donors, and everyone who helped sponsor the random drawings.

Additional thanks to our administrative support staff — Beverly, John, and Shannon.

Special thanks also go to auctioneer John Bair, Jensen/Hall Creative–Tudor Road Studios, OnlineHuntingAuctions.com, and Mandi's Models — Mandi, Launa, and Tory — for helping us put on a fantastic show.

We are moving our event next year!

I know... FINALLY!

We have finally found an event space that will work for us, and next year we will be at the Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country in Santa Rosa.

The date for next year's event is May 1st, although that may still change. We'll keep everyone informed.

I can also announce that we already have two sheep hunts lined up again for our public random drawing and Life Member drawing. More details will follow once those contracts are finalized. Watch for future emails!

Make your plans now to attend. Let's continue to **"Put and Keep Sheep on California's Mountains"** together in Santa Rosa in 2027.

Thank you!

WINNERS ALL!



FY25/26 YEAR IN REVIEW

More Water = More Sheep

As an organization, we're focused on what lies ahead: more water, stronger herds, and lasting impact across California's wild sheep country. In fact, we are one of the most respected conservation organizations by CDFW for the work we do to fulfill our mission of *PUTTING AND KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAINS*.

Before we charge forward, here's what you made possible during 2025-26.

Water for Wildlife — GALAD Program

Installations

- Three new RWWS installed with one more planned prior to June end of FY
- Multiple repairs & restorations completed
- Thirteen total new RWWS since GALAD inception plus numerous repairs/upgrades

Each Raincatcher Wildlife Water Systems (RWWS)

- Supports 45–75 bighorn sheep
- Costs ~\$35,000
- Built by 30 volunteers over 2–3 days

Working Together

Powered by Partnership

- SCBS — boots on the ground
- KUIU — funded a full RWWS
- Eastern Chapter WSF — critical support
- Memorial Funding from members Katie Martin and Andrew Pontious

Fundraising That Fuels the Mission

- \$385,000+ raised in FY25/26
- 2026 Dinner reached 300+ attendees
- Provided direct funding to water & conservation projects
- Helped open three new hunt units

Conservation in Action

- Monitoring Brightline West Rail Project
- Advocating for wildlife overcrossings
- Protecting migration corridors
- Partnering with agencies to safeguard sheep habitat

Sheep Summit & Community

- Hosted 2 **Sheep Summits** (20th year)
- Unified agencies, biologists & conservation groups
- Supported **CDFW Hunter Orientation**
- Delivered our signature **BBQ for tag holders**

CA WSF DIRECTOR CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHIES FOR THE 2026 ELECTION SLATE

Listing is Alphabetical by Last Name



MIKE BOREL — Alamo, CA

Founding Member, Current VP, Magazine Editor, Organizer-Facilitator of the CA Sheep Summits (#39 is scheduled for December) and GALAD & Water Projects chair. He is a Past President, Secretary & Fundraiser Chair.

Mike is a Partner in Kearney, Inc., a full-service consultancy. Mike's focus is assisting agricultural businesses with strategy, management, operations and insights. Mike has lived across the USA, in France and Australia. A hunter his whole life, Mike is an active supporter of wildlife conservation, hunting rights and the Second Amendment. He's been a Director of WSF, a Director and VP of SCI, and an officer and board member in three SCI Chapters - in addition to CA WSF. He believes political action is necessary to preserve our hunting heritage and 2nd Amendment rights, and is an active campaigner, phone caller and letter writer.

He confesses to being severely afflicted with "Sheep Fever" and has taken 59 of the world's Ovis and Capra species. Mike invites your text, call (925-330-0463) or email (mike.borel@kearney.com) with any questions you might have.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member



JIM FITZGERALD — Orange Cove, CA

Jim Fitzgerald is an avid hunter, outdoorsman, and dedicated conservationist with more than 40 years of leadership and service supporting wildlife and conservation organizations. Throughout his years of involvement, he has organized, supported, and led efforts with organizations including the National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, and the California Wild Sheep Foundation (CA WSF).

Jim is a Distinguished Life Member of CA WSF and received the organization's "Above and Beyond Award" in 2025. He is also a Life Member of the National Rifle Association and a Chadwick Ram Society member of the Wild Sheep Foundation. He currently serves as President of CA WSF, while also contributing as a banquet committee member and Silent Auction Chair. Jim has been involved with CA WSF since its inception.

A retired Battalion Chief with the California Department of Forestry, Jim brings extensive knowledge in prescribed fire and wildlife habitat improvement. Jim and his wife Susan, married for 37 years with two adult children and one grandchild, live on a small ranch in Central California where they raise horses and mules for backcountry packing adventures.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member



SCOTT GIBSON — Joshua Tree, CA

Scott Gibson currently serves on the Board of Directors for CA WSF and holds the position of Secretary. Scott is also on the Board of Directors for the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep and is the "Area Captain Coordinator" (coordinates guzzler inspections and repairs).

Scott is a Marine Corps veteran, has 35-years' experience in the construction industry and is an avid outdoorsman. He uses his decades of experience to lead desert bighorn sheep water projects. Recently, he's also taken on camp cook duties

for our volunteer crews—nothing beats feeding the team after a long day installing or repairing guzzlers in the field.

He also supports organizations including Desert Wildlife Unlimited and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, believing collaboration strengthens conservation efforts and delivers lasting results. Putting and keeping sheep on the mountain is what matters most to Scott. Thank you for considering his continued service for our cause.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member



MAK KERN — Walnut Creek, CA

Mak Kern was born and raised in Kansas, IL, a 700 person farming community in rural East Central Illinois. His educational experiences include a Bachelor's in Agricultural Finance (Minor in Environmental Law) and a Master's in Ag and Applied Economics, both at University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. Later, he got his M.B.A. at UC Berkeley with a focus on Finance.. Mak is currently a lender in the food and agribusiness industry, where he has spent his career in operations and credit investing..

Mak is a proponent of improving and conserving our California sheep populations via sustainable use (hunting) and habitat improvement. He has recent experience implementing and providing all the manual labor for NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) on his property in Illinois.

Mak and his wife live in Walnut Creek, CA with their three children. He and his family recently went on their first international Ovis adventure together, which emphasized the necessity to conserve populations for future generations.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member.



CASEY NICK — Atascadero, CA

My name is Casey Nick, and I am seeking a position on the California Wild Sheep Foundation Board of Directors. I am 29 years old and live on California's Central Coast, where I was raised on my family's cattle ranch. I have been passionate about hunting and the outdoors my entire life, beginning with my first turkey hunt at age eight.

In 2018, I turned that passion into a career by starting Lost Valley Outfitters. Today, I guide pig, turkey, blacktail deer, and tule elk hunts across more than 30,000 acres of private ranches along the Central Coast. Since 2020, I have also had the opportunity to guide for Matt and Cliff St. Martin of Dry Creek Outfitters, where I developed a deep passion for desert bighorn sheep and the country they call home.

Through these experiences, I have gained valuable knowledge of California's wild sheep herds and hope to use my field experience to help CA WSF keep sheep on the

mountain, grow populations, and expand hunting opportunities where healthy herds exist.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member



ANDREW OHANESIAN — Sacramento, CA.

Andrew Ohanesian is a Sacramento native who began hunting as a young man with friends and family in Northern California's wetlands for ducks and foothills for deer, pig and turkey. Andrew is a distinguished life member of the WSF and has attended many California and National banquets.

He holds a degree in business administration from UC Berkeley and is a certified public accountant and works in real estate. He and his wife Julie, a veterinarian, make their home in Sacramento, CA and are busy raising their two boys, Clyde and Woody.

If elected, Andrew will do his best to live up to the high standards of the WSF and help pass on sheep hunting opportunities to future generations.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member



DON PRIEST — Cave Creek, AZ.

Don is a fifth generation born and raised Californian. Don is an Actuary and member of all three US actuarial societies, with a BS in Applied Mathematics and Masters in Statistics. He has his own Underwriting/Actuarial Consulting business, consulting to reinsurance Syndicates at Lloyds of London.

Don is a Distinguished Life Member of CA Wild Sheep Foundation, Summit Life Member of Wild Sheep Foundation (Gold Benefactor-Chadwick Ram Society), members of SCI, Boone & Crockett, NAHVDA, DU and Trout Unlimited (Lifetime). He is currently CA WSF's Committee Chair of the Governmental Affairs Committee and Projects Other than Water, and former Secretary and Fundraiser's Live Auction Chair. Also, presently a Wild Sheep Foundation's Legislative Affairs Committee Member and Wild Sheep Legacy Foundation Board Trustee.

Don has harvested four North America sheep and two Mountain Goats, and harvesting more than twenty sheep/goat/ibex in Asia/Europe. Also hunting a number of species in North America and Africa. He would appreciate your support to continue his participation as a Board Member of CA WSF to help 'Put and Keep Sheep on the Mountain'.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member



BRENTON SCOTT — Littleton, CO

Brenton is seeking reelection to ensure that he stays engaged as we undertake some significant strategic endeavors in the next two years.

A dedicated hunter and conservationist, he has drawn six sheep tags in five states, so far, and has accomplished a Grand Slam / FNAWS and an Ovis World Slam.

Brenton is a founding life member of our organization, has served on our board for a cumulative fourteen years and has continuously served on our Projects Committee(s) since their creation. His roots in conservation, and specifically the wild sheep of California, goes back to the 1980's when he started his long-standing relationships with many key personnel, including that of the CDFW past and present.

Brenton brings extensive non-profit conservation organization experience to our board; he has served on nine different conservation organization boards. Brenton maintains life membership in more hunting and conservation organizations than we have room for here. The information he gains from these organizations are

brought to bear on his duties with our organization.

Brenton asks for your vote to allow him to continue to bring his broad breadth and extensive depth of experience to our board.

MEMBERSHIP – Founding Life Member



JOSH SCHULGREN — Tehachapi, CA.

Josh was born in Southern California where he was raised in the small town of Tehachapi where he currently lives today. He works in Energy Renewables and is managing one of the oldest wind farms in the world for over 10 years.

He has been guiding in the state for over a decade. He owns Sierra Crest Outfitters where he guides for Mule deer, Elk, Wild boar, and Desert Bighorn sheep in the fall.

Josh has been an avid outdoorsman his entire life. He started hunting at an early age with his dad where he was shown passion for wildlife. He believes in true conservation where he has helped on many water checks, Desert Sheep counts,

and Sierra Nevada sheep counts. Josh has been a supporter of CA WSF, Wild Sheep Foundation, Sierra Nevada sheep society for many years.

If elected I hope to bring knowledge and advocate for the wild sheep. I would like to help continue putting sheep on the mountain as the foundation has been doing so for many years.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member



GREG TOOLEY — Vista, CA

Born and raised in Wisconsin, I developed a deep passion for hunting and fishing at an early age. After serving in the United States Marine Corps from 1997–2001, I stayed in California and pursued my passion for mountain hunting and conservation.

Today, I serve as a Battalion Chief for a Southern California fire department and remain committed to service both professionally and in the outdoors community. I am a Life Member of the Wild Sheep Foundation, a Distinguished Life Member of the California Wild Sheep Foundation, and a Life Member of the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep.

Over the past two years serving on the CA WSF Board, I have worked to support conservation, membership engagement, and our hunting heritage. I am hopeful for the opportunity to continue building on that progress and helping strengthen

the future of CA WSF for generations to come.

MEMBERSHIP – Distinguished Life Member

The eight Board members elected will officially begin their service with the July 2026 Board meeting and continue through June 2028. We are excited to welcome these individuals as they join a dedicated team of volunteers committed to the future of California's wild sheep and wild places.

Together with our continuing Board members — and with the continued support, passion, and dedication of you, our members — we will work side by side to advance the mission of California Wild Sheep Foundation and continue Putting and Keeping Sheep on California's Mountains.

Our strength as an organization has always come from the people who give their time, energy, expertise, and hearts to conservation. Every project completed, every drinker installed, every mountain climbed, and every success story shared is only possible because of the commitment of our volunteers and members.

The continuing Board members are:

Donald C. Martin
Glen Pyne
Matt Burke
Brad Aboltin
Vince Bloom
Jake Bricker
Tony Gigliotti
John Oldenkamp

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude and deepest appreciation to the following Board members who are retiring this year (at least temporarily!):

Ben Gordon
Steve Torres

Their dedication, volunteer time, leadership, and commitment have helped strengthen our organization and support conservation efforts that will benefit wild sheep and wildlife for years to come. We thank them for their hard work, friendship, and many contributions, and we hope this is simply “see you later” rather than goodbye.

CA WSF 2026-2027 DIRECTORS BALLOT

The California Wild Sheep Foundation Nominating Committee is pleased to present ten candidates for Board of Director positions. These positions are for two-year terms beginning July 1, 2026. We believe the candidate biographies on the prior pages will provide you with the input needed to vote; however, should you have additional questions feel free to contact me. You may also contact Beverly at the office (forthesheep@gmail.com or 650-302-3744 phone) and she will forward information.

Matt Burke

Nominating Committee Chair 2026

matthew.burke124@gmail.com

Putting and Keeping Sheep on the Mountains

Voting Form

This is the voting form in the newsletter (you will also receive this via email; please vote only by email or by using this form). You may vote for a total of eight candidates, including write-in votes.

How to submit your vote

Your ballot must be received no later than 5 p.m. on June 30, 2026.

You may mail your ballot to the CA WSF office at:

CA WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION

1620 Williams Hwy #146

Grants Pass, OR 97527

You may also fax to 650-302-3744. Or reply to the email sent to you to place your vote.

Remember: Vote no more than ONCE for each candidate (no cumulative voting). Vote for up to EIGHT candidates. Vote must be received no later than 5 p.m. on June 30, 2026.

CANDIDATES (Listed randomly)

- _____ Mike Borel
- _____ Mak Kern
- _____ Scott Gibson
- _____ Andrew Ohanesian
- _____ Don Priest
- _____ Josh Schulgren
- _____ Greg Tooley
- _____ Don Martin
- _____ Casey Nick
- _____ Jim Fitzgerald
- _____ Brenton Scott
- _____ Your Write-in Candidate

Your Name: _____ **optional**
Email or Phone: _____ **required**

CA FNAWS dba CA Wild Sheep Foundation (CA WSF) is a not-for-profit organization with the goal of KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN through conservation, education, and promotion of professional management to ensure generations to come are able to experience the phenomenal beauty of wild sheep. CA WSF tax identification number is 68-0481140.



Are YOU a CA Wild Sheep Foundation Distinguished Life Member? NOW is the time to join or upgrade!

SHOW YOUR TRUE COMMITMENT TO THE WILD SHEEP OF CALIFORNIA AND THE WORLD! JOIN OR UPGRADE YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY.

You will be joining a hard working, and hard hunting, group of CA WSF Distinguished Life members when you join or upgrade.

Meet our Distinguished Life Members:

BRAD ABOLTIN	RICK GARZOLI JR	BOB KEAGY	PEATRESS	DAN SMITH, III
JUSTIN AKINS	JACOB GARRETT	BRYN KERN	JEREMY PECHTEL	DANIEL SMITH, IV
HUDSON AKINS	LUKE GERHART	MAK KERN	JEFF PERACCHI	RENEE SNIDER
PEGGY MAY BLOOM	SCOTT GIBSON	RANDY LASKOWSKY	DON PERRIEN	ADAM STARR
VINCE BLOOM	ANTHONY GIGLIOTTI	PEGGY BARNETT LEE	JOHN PESTORICH	BROOKS STILTZ
MIKE BOREL	STEVE GINGRAS	GINA MAACK	DON POWERS	BILL TITTLE
JAKE BRICKER	BEN GORDON	CHASEN MARLER	DON PRIEST	MICHAEL TORRES
JIM BRICKER	TINA GORDON	MAKENA MARLER	CAROLINE PYNE,	GREG TOOLEY
JED BRUSSEAU	CASEY HADDOX	DONALD C MARTIN	DVM,	NATHAN TREADWELL
ADAM CASAGRANDE	JESSICA HADDOX	JEFF F. MARTIN	DISTINGUISHED LIFE #1	BEVERLY VALDEZ
KEVIN CHENG	JUSTIN HALLOCK	JOSEPH MASSOLO	CONNOR PYNE, DVM,	REUBEN VALLES
DAVID COMBS	MEGAN HALLOCK,	ROBERT	DISTINGUISHED LIFE #2	ZACK WALTON
KEN CROTHER	DISTINGUISHED LIFE #8	MCCLELLAND	GLEN PYNE, DVM,	JOHN WARE
WILLIAM CULLINS	DAVID HARTWIG,	ROGER MCCOSKER	DISTINGUISHED LIFE #5	JIM WARNER
JOSHUA DARNELL	DISTINGUISHED LIFE #6	RICHARD M. MCDREW	MADISON PYNE,	SHAINA WARNER
CLIFF DAVIS	STEEN HENRIKSEN	KYLE MEINTZER	DISTINGUISHED LIFE #4	SIMON WHETZEL
BRET DISMUKES	CORY HIGGINS	NICK METTA	TRAVIS PYNE,	DARRYL WILLIAMS
JIM DISMUKES	TYLER W. HIGGINS	ANDY MOECKEL	DISTINGUISHED LIFE #3	SHAWN WOOD
NOAH DISMUKES	GARY HILL	ROBERT "BO"	TOM REA	WILLIAM WULFING
DAN EVENSON	ERNEST HOLLOWAY	MORGAN	MASON ROGERS	
CLAIRE FERGUSON	PATTY HOLLOWAY	ANDREW OHANESIAN	DAVE ROWAN	
SCOTT FINLEY	SHAD HULSE	PATRICK OILAR	JOSH SCHULGEN	
JIM FITZGERALD	BRETT JEFFERSON	JOHN OLDENKAMP	PAUL SCHULTHEIS	
RANDY FORTUNE,	STEVE JESSOP	NATHAN OLDENKAMP	RICH SELLERS	
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #7	TRAVIS JESSOP	CHRISTOPHER	ALAN SHULTZ	
			DAN SMITH, JR.	

Join as a Life Member (\$500)

Make a commitment now to continue PUTTING AND KEEPING WILD SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAINS of California! Join CA WSF as a Life Member or a Junior Life Member and receive ONE chance to WIN the special Life Members item/hunt.

Upgrade your CA WSF Life Membership (\$1,000)

Upgrade your CA WSF Life Membership to DISTINGUISHED Life Membership (\$1,000) to receive THREE chances to WIN the special Life Members item/hunt.

You may also join at the Distinguished Life Member level for \$1,500.

All Distinguished Life Members receive a PELOTON 240 VEST from Kuui emblazoned with the CA WSF logo.

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Member Steve Hunter with his desert ram taken at the Seri Indian Reservation in Mexico. Congratulations Steve!



Craig Van Arsdale -- "I've had a spot on my OnX Maps pinned for years to go chase Desert Mule Deer (Crooki Subspecies) so after spending a week in Old Mexico this January hunting Coues Deer and not seeing a single deer I decided to go check it out. A few days of searching and I found this guy out in the flats with a big group of does. After watching him for a few hours at 500 yards he made a mistake and I was able to cut him off in a draw at 19 yards. Cool country and encounter made for a fun hunt!"



Photo from the field from Cliff St Martin, Dry Creek Outfitters, in mid season.



Where is he?



Here!

Against a backdrop of broken granite, the desert bighorn sheep can be difficult to see.
thewayofthings.org

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Putting and Keeping Sheep on California's Mountains



Island Explorations



Szechuan Hot and Spicy Beef from Tony Gigilotti

INGREDIENTS

- 1.5lbs of beef; top round works best, but you can use any larger cut
- 2tsp chinese cooking wine
- 5 scallions
- 2-3 slices of fresh ginger
- 1 cup of oil
- 1/2 onion
- 1/2 head of garlic
- 10 dried szechuan peppers
- 4 bay leafs
- 1 star anise*
- 1.5 sticks of cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp fennel*
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 tbsp sichuan peppercorn
- 1/2 black cardamom
- 1/2 tsp of cumin
- 2 tbsp of sesame seeds
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 1/2 tsp sugar

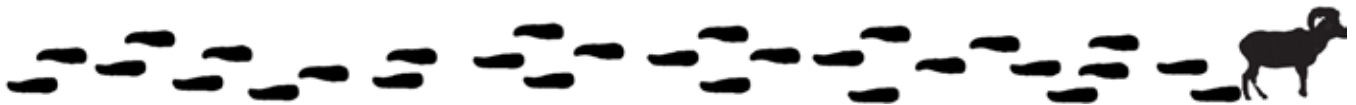


DIRECTIONS

- 1) Cut the beef into large chunks and bowl for 10-15 min with the cooking wine and 3 scallions
- 2) While the water is boiling mix the spices saving some of the sesame seeds for texture once the beef has been fried
- 3) Slice the beef into thick strips or half inch cubes
- 4) Heat the oil in a cast iron pan adding the crushed garlic, scallion (cut in thirds), and onion. Stir and remove once fried, do not let them burn
- 5) Add the beef to the oil and begin frying
- 6) Remove the beef from the oil, discard 90% of the oil, then add the beef, spice mix, and 1/4 cup of water back

into the pan stirring until the water has evaporated
7) Refrigerate for a few hours and then enjoy as a crispy snack.

To make it into a meal you can add onions, bell peppers, zucchini, and carrots to step 6 creating a stir fry



GUIDE / OUTFITTER APPRECIATION

APPRECIATE YOUR OUTFITTER

Do you have a special outfitter or guide who helped make a hunt unforgettable? Here's your chance to recognize them and share their name with our CA WSF community.

This is a perfect way to say thank you to a great outfitter or guide while helping fellow members discover trusted professionals.

Look for ads throughout this issue! Ads are \$250 • 3.5" × 2"

Contact Beverly at forthesheep@gmail.com for assistance creating your outfitter promotion.

DREAM HUNT TO TAJIKISTAN FOR BUKHARAN MARKHOR AND BUKHARA URIAL – NOVEMBER 2025

By Mike Borel, Distinguished Life Member

This was my “Dream” hunt reward to myself! My Partners and I sold our business to a larger firm in October 2024. This hunt, and a new car for my wife, was our reward/indulgence.

This was my “Dream” hunt reward to myself! My Partners and I sold our business to a larger firm in October 2024. This hunt, and a new car for my wife, was our reward/indulgence.

I was last in the country in 2007, for Marco Polo and Pamir Ibex. First priority of this trip was the Markhor. Base camp was in the village of Kisht and very comfortable. After seeing Markhor (at very long distance) from our very comfortable base camp, we moved into the hunting area where there was also a small house (no plumbing but still very comfortable). On day five of my vacation and day two of the hunt, we climbed to a vantage point with visibility to a large area that had feed, cover, and was over a ridge from super steep rock faces. This particular spot has produced a trophy Markhor each of the last few years. The local guides knew of three very good billies in the area, with one that was exceptional. At 10AM we spotted what we were looking for but it was over 1000 yards away. Rather than move toward us, he lounged for an hour and went back over the top, presumably to bed down. He was exceptional and we determined he was the one we wanted. We stayed in place counting on his return.

We saw more markhor, mostly females and young males. At ~2:30 he came back over the top. He rendezvoused with some females and steadily moved closer. At 3:30, he was at 450 yards. I took the shot which felt good, but hardly phased him. I shot twice more and he went down. When we recovered him, we found that all 3 shots were solid hits (one was a bit farther back than ideal). Bullet performance looked like I was shooting FMJ ammo – my Berger bullets didn’t expand.

Kurshat’s local team was outstanding. They knew the area, regularly scouted, knew the inventory and were excellent at predicting movement. For the climbing, we used horses as much as we could.

He’s handsome, 11+ years old and tapes 53 2/8” on the longest horn, 11” bases. Green Score 126 6/8. Best of all, he’s MINE!

This is my 34th specie of Capra and my 1st (and likely ONLY) Markhor.



Mike Borel and his Markhor

Wild Hunting Asia & Turkey is a First Class Outfitter. I give them my highest recommendation.

After celebrating and taking care of the cape and skull, we moved to Nurek Reservoir (closest town – Kalkot). I had the privilege of hunting on the Tajikistan President’s personal hunting lodge – it was fantastic. Lots of country and the lodge requires a one hour boat ride to get to it, no roads in any of the area. I’m pretty sure my room was the one the President uses when he’s there! We arrived in the afternoon of Nov 25 and headed out early the following day. Short boat ride, long horseback ride, longer hike. In early afternoon we spotted an excellent ram with four ewes. We watched for over an hour hoping he would come within range. I did have a brief opportunity at 540 yards, but we decided to try and intercept him a bit closer. That entailed more climbing. Did I mention it was warm/hot, there was no snow, and the sheep were high. We got right near the top of the mountain range. Around 3:00, I got a shot at 325, solid hit, but not a finisher (my Berger bullets did the non-expanding pass through again). I took another shot that put him into a 300 yard tumble down the mountain.



Thank you to Kursat/Wild Hunting for a great crew as it was a long trek back to the horses and then to the boat. It was full dark when we intercepted the ram recovery team. Right at dark we heard a loud shot, which meant someone was in the area poaching! We got pictures of my ram, then half the crew set off to find the poachers! In the dark, the rest of us made it first to the horses, then to the boat. On the way one horse lost its footing and went down with its rider stuck in the stirrup. Fortunately, no serious injury.

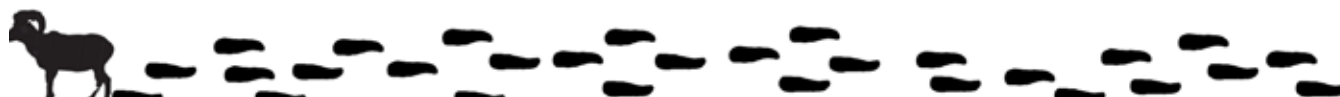
In the morning (Thanksgiving Day), we found out our crew caught the poachers. They confiscated the rifle and the ram, and took pictures. They were not able to hold the persons, but have the evidence needed to get them prosecuted.

He's handsome, 33" on each side, 11+ years old. Best of all, he's MINE!

This is my 27th specie of Ovis.

From arrival to departure, I ran into several hunting friends also in country – Dan Smith III, John Amistoso, Gary Young, Tim Pask. Always fun to run into people you know when you are in remote places.

Housing, food, knowledge of the area scouting, relations with locals, and support in the field were outstanding. I recommend Wild Hunting without reservation.



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF TAXIDERMMY ANNUAL AWARDS

by Gary McDaniel, C.A.T

Again in 2026, CA WSF proudly sponsored an award at the annual California Association of Taxidermists (C.A.T.) competition. Fifteen years ago, C.A.T. created this special award to recognize the "Best Horned Game Mammal," celebrating outstanding artistry and exceptional trophy presentation.

This year, we are especially excited to congratulate our good friend, longtime member, and generous donor, Eric Gould, as the recipient of this prestigious award! Congratulations, Eric, on an incredible achievement and thank you for your continued support of CA WSF and wild sheep conservation. Well deserved!



NEW ZEALAND ADVENTURE

By Vince Bloom, Distinguished Life Member

It all started in 2012. You are officially a Mountain Hunter now, the guide said. You can tackle any North American mountain hunt now, he stated.

That one made me think. I had always dreamed about Dall Sheep in Alaska and thought those kinds of hunts were out of reach.

I had bought a New Zealand Tahr hunt on a whim. It was an online auction, and I was trying to steal a hunt. I don't know if I did at \$5,000 for a New Zealand Tahr hunt for 2: 1 Hunter, 1 observer. Come to find out, I had a lot to learn.

I had bought the hunt 18 months prior to meeting my wife, Peggy. I had 2 years to go on the hunt and was running out of time.

Two weeks into our relationship, Peggy was telling me about her Mom and that she had been to New Zealand 12 times hunting and that she had gone on one of them. It was a bucket list trip. She said, totally amazing.

And it was a trip that you had to go with somebody else to share the experience.

I started dying laughing. She looked at me puzzled.

So I blurted out, so do you want to go to New Zealand? I bought a Tahr hunt, and I have to go in the next couple of months!

She said yes, spur of the moment, let's go!

Two months into our relationship, we are on the long flight to New Zealand. If you want to test a relationship, go on a long trip together. You'll find out if you're compatible for sure.

Needless to say, we are definitely compatible and got married that first year.

It was a cheap public land New Zealand Tahr hunt. Definitely not the fancy helicopter, private land hunts that they have.

We did get dropped off by a helicopter. I remember calculating the cost per minute for the helicopter.

We flew in under very snowy conditions, and when the helicopter dropped us off, it disappeared quickly into the snow flurry. I took a big gulp and thought, wow, this is cool.

We stayed in a trampers' cabin with no running water, and I thought it odd because they had a wood-burning stove, but



Vince with his New Zealand Mountain Tahr

there was not a stick of wood within 100 miles, puzzling.

I had showed up enthusiastic and in shape, but wasn't that well prepared with my gear.

I showed up with Redwing work boots as my mountain boots, they had a semi slick sole and it was a struggle navigating the snowy landscape.

We hiked and climbed and worked very hard looking for Tahr. We hiked up and down the mountain each day, I remember there was a deep stream that I had to cross every morning and I didn't even have gaiters. My feet were wet right out of the gate for the rest of the day.

Wet and cold is what I remember. Being young is awesome. I didn't even really care. I was on a bad ass Mountain Hunt.

On the third day, we saw some Tahr moving towards lower elevation. We saw Tahr every single day, but they're always way up high that we couldn't get to them with my crappy boots.

Luckily, the Tahr were rutting. Some big males finally came from the top down to check out the females. I got Buck fever so bad I couldn't locate the Tahr 300 yards away.

The Guide was yelling at me. He's right there. Can't you see him?

Finally, I calmed down, located him and made either a good or lucky shot.

I was elated!

The New Zealand countryside is unbelievably beautiful. We high-fived, laughed and took some amazing pictures.

Peggy had waited for us at that day at the tramper's cabin.

We were both so excited. We had flown halfway around the world to a foreign country.

Thank God, they spoke English.

We hunted for Chamois and never saw one, again this was a tough public land hunt, and the Chamois weren't rutting.

It was an amazing eye-opening experience that opened the doors to Mountain Sheep Hunting.

It would be quite a while before I would go on my first Dall Sheep Hunt.

It gave me fuel and memories to build on while I was pining away for that elusive North America ram hunt.

I was not prepared for this hunt and I didn't have the right gear. Probably didn't have the right gun, and definitely didn't have the funds to do any upgrades. I still went and had an amazing time and came home with a soon-to-be wife.

The moral of the story.

The timing is never perfect. You never have enough money and often your experience is limited. Opportunity should be what we should continually look for. Take a chance and do something bold. You won't regret it.

It was, and still is one of my proudest hunts.

The memories we create. The life experiences that we get, are what we file in the catalog of our mind. Sharing with people and telling stories make these memories priceless and live forever.

Now I plan my mountain hunts up to a year in advance. I have a custom rifle, good gear and definitely good boots!

Preparation is half the fun. Make a plan and start today.

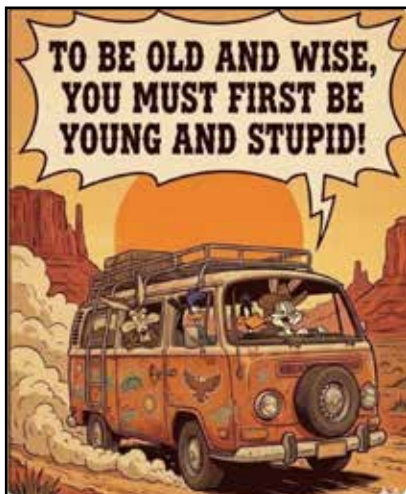
I still seem to bite off more than I can chew, but I like the idea of pushing my boundaries as I get older.

So throw caution to the wind and bid on an auction hunt, put in for every raffle and apply in every state.

And just go! You might even fall in love.



Vince and Peggy grinding it out on the mountain;
at the trampers' cabin below



We had a great hunt!



European Hunting Adventures
with Sasha and Stefan Belancic

info@safari-eha.com



You will too! John & Bev

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS UPDATE

by Don Priest, Distinguished Life Member

APPROVED NEW DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP HUNT ZONES FOR THE 2026-2027 SEASON

The California Fish and Game Commission (FGC) approved the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) proposal for three additional Desert Bighorn Sheep (DBS) hunt zones at its April 16 meeting. All three hunt zones are located within the Mojave National Preserve.

The new hunt zones and associated tags are:

- Zone 11 – North Bristol / Granite Hunt Zone – 1 Tag
- Zone 12 – Providence / Wood / Hackberry Hunt Zone – 2 Tags
- Zone 13 – Castle / Piute Hunt Zone – 2 Tags

The total number of hunt tags for the season is **30**, an increase from previous years. Three fundraising tags were also approved:

- One Open Zone tag
- One tag for Zone 10 – Newberry / Rodman / Ords
- One tag for one of the new hunt zones, Zone 12 – Providence / Wood / Hackberry Mountains

Two of the 2026 auction tags brought in a whopping **\$610,000** combined! The Open Zone tag auctioned at the Wild Sheep Foundation Sheep Show in Reno this past January sold for **\$300,000**, while the Zone 12 tag sold at our own CA WSF Fundraising Banquet on April 25 for **\$310,000**.

SODA MOUNTAIN SOLAR PROJECT

Unfortunately, the California Energy Commission (CEC) approved the Soda Mountain Solar Project at its April 27, 2026 meeting.

The efforts of the sheep conservation community, including CA WSF, were at least successful in securing a quarter-mile buffer zone, along with relocating the battery facility to an alternative site as mitigation measures for Desert Bighorn Sheep. This buffer area will be located away from the Springer Mountain range, which connects to the Kelso and Cady Mountains and to the mountain ranges leading to one of the three wildlife overcrossings planned over Interstate 15 as part of the Brightline High-Speed Rail Project.

Additionally, CA WSF has learned that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will not reopen the prior Right-of-Way (ROW) approval granted during the Obama Administration. BLM reviewed project maps indicating that the proposed project location appeared to be sufficiently distant from the wildlife crossing area, and the CEC's recommended mitigation measures also influenced its decision not to reopen the ROW approval.



CA WSF now expects this project will regrettably move forward.

A huge thank you goes to Neal Desai of the National Park Conservation Association and Charlie Booher of Watershed Results for all of their hard work in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., during our efforts to halt this solar project.

BRIGHTLINE HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE PROJECT

The Brightline High-Speed Rail Project has been delayed in beginning any significant construction, although some limited preliminary ground work has started in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The delay is due to Brightline seeking an additional public subsidy loan. The project is still expected to include construction of the three planned wildlife crossings as part of the overall project.

CASTLE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL MONUMENT

The National Park Service (NPS) is expected to issue a ruling regarding hunting access on lands managed by the NPS, including the Castle Mountains National Monument.

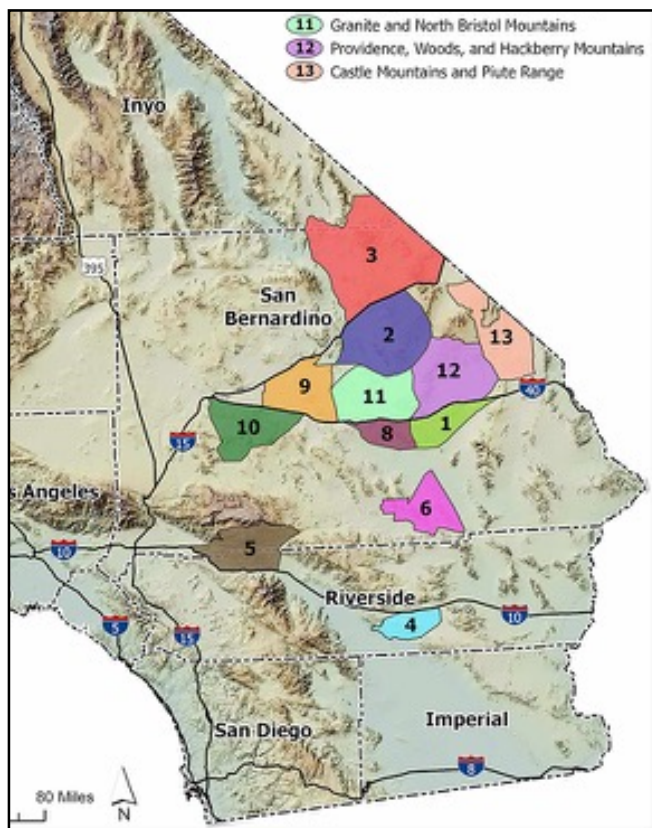
Unfortunately, there is currently no timeline for when the NPS will make this decision, so we remain in a waiting period regarding future actions.

CA WSF will continue monitoring this issue closely, as the decision could expand hunting opportunities within the new Zone 13 – Castle / Piute Hunt Zone beyond this upcoming hunting season..

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE UPDATE

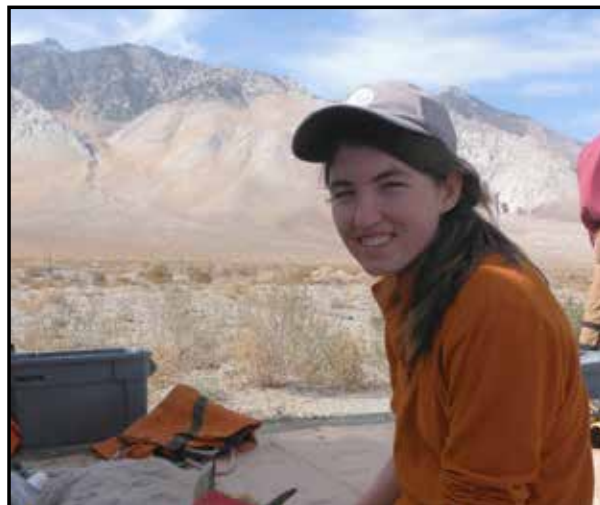
by Danielle Glass Desert, CDFW Bighorn Sheep Biologist

The California Department of Fish & Wildlife Desert Bighorn Sheep Program is proud to announce that the Fish & Game Commission has approved our proposal for three new bighorn sheep hunt zones. Zone 11 – Granite and North Bristol Mountains, Zone 12 – Providence, Woods, and Hackberry Mountains, and Zone 13 – Castle Mountains and Piute Range will open for the 2026–2027 hunt season with 1, 2, and 2 tag quotas respectively. Remember to put in before June 2nd for a chance to be among the first season of hunters in these new zones!



Desert bighorn sheep hunt zones in California for the 2026–2027 hunt season.

The last few months have been a smorgasbord of fieldwork, policy, and data management and analysis. Thanks to our crew's terrific Scientific Aides, we completed 16 population estimates. Notably, many of these estimates were for populations in northern Death Valley where no population estimate had previously been conducted. Within this northern fragment of the metapopulation, it appears as though Tin Mountain is one of the larger populations with an estimated 81 ewes (confidence



interval: 36–181). We also conducted population estimates across our bighorn hunt zones including the Kingston, Orocopia, Cady, Granite, North Bristol, Old Dad, and Newberry Mountains.

We have revitalized discussions with the Bureau of Land Management about upgrading the Wildlife Water Developments (WWDs) that are 50+ years old. The desert bighorn program is looking to collaborate with the BLM on a programmatic Environmental Assessment that will provide the paperwork necessary to upgrade the 40+ Water for Wildlife Developments. The feasibility of completing this objective will depend on the current interpretations of the National Environmental Policy Act and various Department of the Interior plans and policies.

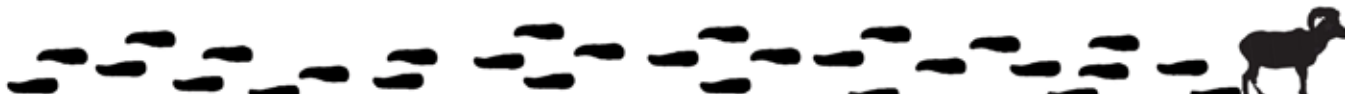


The new Water for Wildlife Development 'Blue Bell' in the North Soda Mountains.

In the past few months, our crew has also collaborated on various projects to improve the on-the-ground reality for bighorn. With the Bureau of Land Management, we removed most of the 6-string barbed wire fence that was entangling bighorn and other wildlife at Crystal Springs in the Kingston Mountains. We then installed a jack rail fence for burro and cattle exclusion. We anticipate removing more of this 6-string barbed wire at other springs in the Kingston Mountains in the future. With the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep, we helped install a WWD in the North Soda Mountains, which currently lacks a bighorn population due to geographic isolation from the closest available surface water because of Interstate 15. A wildlife overpass across Interstate 15 is currently planned to be built in association with the Brightline West Rail line currently nearing construction. Having surface water available in the North Soda Mountains should increase the likelihood of having a resident bighorn population there in the future.



The new jack rail fence at Crystal Springs in the Kingston Mountains



2026 CHAPTER AND AFFILIATES MEETING

by Brenton Scott, CA WSF Founding Life Member

Chapters and Affiliates (C&A) of the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) met in Grand Junction, Colorado from May 14th through the 16th and your California Wild Sheep Foundation (CA WSF) began making an impact at the meeting weeks ahead of time.

The decision to ask Paige Prentice (Statewide Bighorn Sheep Coordinator for California Department of Fish and Wildlife) to present prior to the auction at our CA WSF fundraiser proved to be the right move. Her words and information hit home with fundraiser attendees, in the room and streaming from home or on their phones, including from out of state in particular.

The word spread and was brought up during this C&A gathering by other organizations, as well as individuals, within the "Wild Sheep Family" as they want to help us put guzzlers in! Your CA WSF Board also lit another fire by stepping forward to volunteer to host the C&A meeting in 2028 in California! We were the talk of the WSF Board meeting held on-site Thursday the 14th before the start of the C&A events. A decision will be made on this by the WSF Board during their Fall '26 meeting.

A more in-depth article to follow in a later newsletter after we catch our breath...



Our Don Martin (Northern California V.P.) using a field trip stop during Friday's tour of the Colorado National Monument to have a discussion with Gray Thornton (WSF President & CEO) shows how we engaged throughout the event. (Photo by Brenton Scott)

DEATH AVERTED

Tammy Scott, Life Member, Volunteer and Author

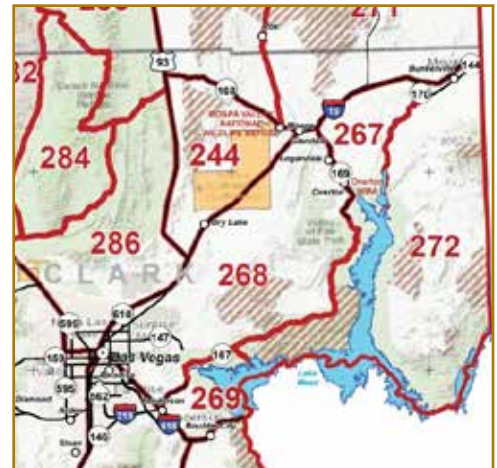
Flying through the air, blind folded, legs restrained and lightly sedated, their lives are about to change for the better as they are averting imminent death!

With years of ongoing drought, wildlife agencies and volunteers bring in supplemental water, via vehicles, man-power, and expensive helicopter time to fill the wildlife drinkers. But when the drought continues, supplemental water isn't enough to sustain the wildlife, and there isn't enough natural moisture to produce forage, let alone nutritional forage, what's your next step? Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) being in this exact predicament, brought in the big guns, in the name of Kuui Conservation Direct and Grand Slam Club / Ovis, to fully fund the largest wild sheep translocation ever!

Background: The desert bighorn sheep that occupy the Muddy Mountains in Unit 268 and Black Mountains in 267 make up one of the most prolific populations in Nevada. NDOW has implemented ewe hunts since 2014 to reduce the population and slow herd growth. However, recent prolonged drought has impacted habitat quality and water availability in this area. The estimated population in these Units decreased from over 1000 animals in 2021 to approximately 880 in 2023 due to extreme drought. A reprieve in 2022 and 2023 resulted in a quick population rebound, but the habitat is still in poor condition and unable to sustain a growing population. Prior to implementing ewe harvest, relocating bighorn sheep to viable release sites in Nevada



Kuui Team were there to support and work on the capture/transfer.



Muddy Mountains in Unit 268 and Black Mountains in Unit 267

and other states was used to manage the population in relation to the carrying capacity of the habitat. Viable translocation sites are currently very limited in Nevada due to widespread presence or threat of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M. ovi), a respiratory pathogen responsible for limiting bighorn populations across their range. Currently, M. ovi has not been detected in the



- #1 Muddy Mountains and (to the northeast) Black Mountains – Capture sites.
- #2 Cortez Mountains – Release site.
- #3 Tobin Mountain Range – Release site.
- #4 Nursery Herd at Promontory Point, Utah – Release site.



Muddy Mountains or Black Mountains herds.

Since 2022, NDOW has collaborated with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) to translocate desert bighorn sheep to establish and maintain a disease-free nursery herd in Utah. The facility is approximately 1,000 acres of fenced property at Promontory Point near the Great Salt Lake. A total of 51 bighorn sheep have been translocated thus far: 31 (27 ewes and 4 rams) in June of 2022 and 20 (17 ewes, 3 rams) in June 2024. Another 20-30 bighorn sheep were slated to be translocated during this capture window.

NDOW also began identifying possible translocation sites within Nevada to reintroduce or augment existing desert bighorn populations. In February of 2025, 8 possible

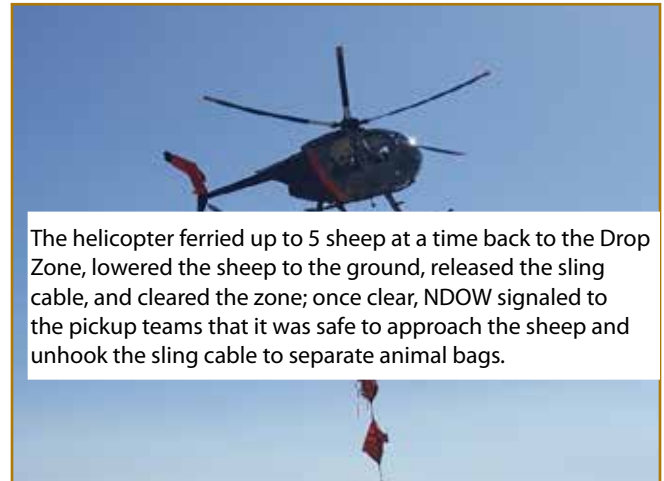


augmentation sites were sampled by targeting multiple subgroups from each population. Of the potential release sites, only the Tobin Range results returned both PCR and ELISA negative, making them a candidate for release. The Cortez Range is currently unoccupied, and reintroduction was approved by the BLM via Categorical Exclusion (an action that has no significant effect on the quality of the human environment) in April

2025.

Objective: Capture and translocate approximately 150 desert bighorn sheep (targeting approximately 120 ewes and 30 rams of different age classes) from the Black and Muddy Mountains in Units 267 and 268 in Clark County. Release sites included: the Promontory Point nursery herd facility in Utah, the Tobin Range, and the Cortez Range. This will reduce overexploitation of limited water and forage resources in areas affected by drought. Pathogen sampling occurred during the capture and sheep were not be released until laboratory results were obtained.

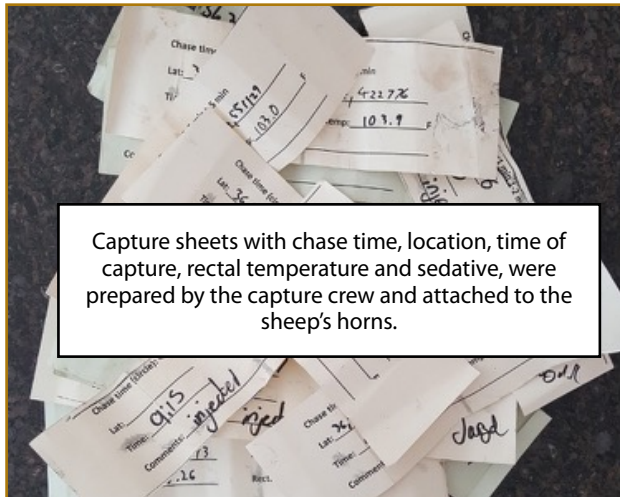
Dates: The captures occurred in two 3-day stints to limit the stress on non-captured animals. The first stint was Tuesday, June 10 through Thursday, June 12, 2025. The second stint was Wednesday, June 18 through Friday, June 20.



The helicopter ferried up to 5 sheep at a time back to the Drop Zone, lowered the sheep to the ground, released the sling cable, and cleared the zone; once clear, NDOW signaled to the pickup teams that it was safe to approach the sheep and unhook the sling cable to separate animal bags.

Animal Processing: All captures were performed by the helicopter crew via net gun, and animals were slung back to base camp to be processed.

- All animals received a sedative and rectal temperature on the mountain when captured. All sheep were blindfolded with legs hobbled and secured in a sling bag.
- The helicopter ferried up to 5 sheep at a time back to the Drop Zone, lowered the sheep to the ground, released the sling cable, and cleared the zone; once clear, NDOW signaled to the pickup teams that it was safe to approach the sheep and unhook the sling cable to separate animal bags.
- The data recorder and handling team carried the sheep to the scale (1 secured head/horns, 1-2 people for body), weighed them under the tripod scale, and carried them to the tables. Placed the sheep on its left side on table. Undid sling bag buckles, momentarily hold the animal up and remove bag by sliding it to one side of table.
- Cooling animals down was the most critical and demanding part of this capture, with temperatures approaching triple digits. Dedicated staff and volunteers were assigned the tasks to immediately:
 - Take rectal temperature.
 - Animals with temps >103F were cooled down with



Capture sheets with chase time, location, time of capture, rectal temperature and sedative, were prepared by the capture crew and attached to the sheep's horns.

cold ice water towels in their leg pits and around their horns along with water sprayed from large portable spray container and nozzle.

- Oxygen was provided to all animals.
- Animals with temps approaching 105F were administered IV fluids.
- Respiratory and heart vital rates were taken by Wildlife Health staff.
- Wildlife Health staff performed a general physical exam and assess abrasions/lacerations check ears for parasites, eyes for injuries and foreign objects and apply topical treatment or if necessary, stitches.
- Wildlife Health staff determined a body condition score. The age and sex of each animal was recorded.
- All animals for the Utah release underwent whole health assessment by UDWR, and nasal swabs, tonsil

swabs, blood, and feces were collected. UDWR staff assessed body condition via ultrasound.

- Most rams and ewes were fitted with radio collars by NDOW or UDWR staff.
- Once the Wildlife Health staff had completed processing each animal, the handling team carried the animal to the trailer. Every animal was loaded by experienced NDOW personnel.

At the end of the two weeks, 139 desert bighorn sheep had been translocated to greener pastures, literally! Thirty-eight (38) went to supplement the nursery herd at Promontory Point in Utah, fifty-eight (58) went to create a new herd in the Cortez Mountains and forty-three (43) went to supplement an existing herd in the Tobin Range.

The project was planned and staffed by the incredible biologists and veterinary staff from NDOW. NDOW, UDWR staff, as well as all the volunteers from many non-profit wildlife organizations from across the U.S. which made this project a reality!

The project was fully funded by KUIU Conservation Direct and Grand Slam Club Ovis. These funds were specifically earmarked to cover the capture, translocation, and collar portion of this emergency project.



SOCIETY FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BIGHORN SHEEP

by Steve Marschke, SCBS Board of Directors

We had a full year of accomplishments and due to multiple volunteers stepping forward to lead projects we were able to divide our project management resources, attract additional volunteers and successfully work 3 major tasks simultaneously: new water projects on state land, new installations along border wall, and typical repairs and water hauling events.

For the state lands, we completed 3 new systems. We started off in October with SL13, Hawkeye, named for the Iowa state mascot since the Iowa FNAWS funded this project. Many thanks to Iowa and to CA WSF for promoting their sponsorship. This project is now in the new North Bristol hunt zone. The project started poorly as our experienced equipment operator Chuck from Diversified Excavating called us at 5 am the morning of the project to inform us that the tongue on his equipment hauler broke while driving on the interstate – he hadn't even gotten to the unpaved section! Scott Gibson (SCBS and CA WSF) was able to use his extensive contacts and arrange for a rental machine for the remainder of the weekend. This machine was smaller and we had a volunteer operator with less experience and efficiency but it allowed us to get started. Normally we can get these projects done in about 1.5 days on site, due to the narrow access, smaller machine and less skilled operator we were behind schedule at the end of Saturday. We contacted Chuck Saturday evening to see how his trailer fared and he informed us that after working most of the day and part of the night with his son-in-law the trailer had been repaired. We asked him to return on Sunday but he thought it would be unnecessary and a waste of money since we had the rental excavator. After some arm twisting, a quick board consultation, and maybe a little bit of begging he agreed to return. That turned out to be the best decision. The volunteer crew was shrinking as the day wore on and we almost postponed the plumbing task for another day. Jim Fitzgerald and David M'Greene both gave the team great pep talks, reminded us that we will never be closer without having to come all the way back, and ramrodded



Hawkeye Completed

the plumbing in less than 1 hour. We were down to about 10 volunteers but we finished the project and after raking out our tracks by headlamp and flashlights, got back on the road about 1 hour after sunset. We are looking forward to seeing some bighorn use on this system soon. We expect it will allow bighorn to utilize the southern end of the North Bristol range during the hot summer months which has no permanent water sources until now. This will spread the bighorn and allow them to range farther from the Hyten Tank system and be less vulnerable to predators and mechanical failures.

The second system we constructed was SL82, Flat Top. This system happens to be in the Cady hunt zone, we don't expressly give construction priority for the hunt zones but it does come into a complicated fuzzy logic method we use to prioritize. We do recognize that more hunting opportunity drives funding for the overall bighorn program. Other factors such as existing habitat use, projected habitat use, human development and encroachment, resiliency against mechanical failure, and feral burro competition are also considered. This site was selected due to the proximity of the heavily used Big Gee water system and the Afton Canyon area that experiences recreational off-road vehicle use. Due to the size of the bighorn herd in this area, this system is a 3 tank system for 6900 gallons of storage which is 50% more storage than we typically build. That volume requires a larger rainmat for collection so the entire project ended up being 50% more effort than usual. Luckily we had our volunteers and DFW employees step up and 39 people turned out for this project.

The third system we installed was SL61 named Blue Bell. This system is in the South Soda range and there is no known permanent water source in that range. However there are signs of bighorn use that is likely historic and seasonal. This system is midway between the system we installed at Fort Irwin a couple years ago and Zyzxx



Big equipment necessary for this work



Flattop Completed

spring. We expect this system to be vital to the bighorn in the coming years as the Brightline high speed rail is constructed along the I15 right of way. This railroad will be accompanied by a 12 foot high chain link fence that will completely eliminate any possibility of wildlife crossing the interstate. Due to the impact, Brightline has been required to construct 3 overcrossings expressly for wildlife. California is way behind other states in this regard with only a single crossing now (and that is for mountain lion!) The new Blue Bell water system is positioned in a strategic position to help augment use of the proposed overcrossing and to promote bighorn use of the South Soda Mtns. This system will be augmented with a burro enclosure fence, on May 16th, perhaps before you read this article.



Blue Bell Completed

All funding for SL82 and SL61 was provided by CA WSF Give A Lamb A Drink - thanks a million! Your ongoing commitment to fund every system we can construct allows us to make strategic advance purchases of materials that drive maximum efficiency both of our financial capital as well as our volunteer labor. Due to Ca WSF funding pledges, we spend SCBS time and energy planning and constructing instead of fundraising; it is a mutually beneficial arrangement of partners in conservation.

Additional 5 days of scouting has been completed on 6 parcels and engineering designs have been made in preparation for the next construction season. Our next steps will be to perform biological and archeological

site visits to discover (or rule out) sensitive species and uncatalogued cultural resources that might be impacted by our efforts. Jeff and Jenny of JJ Restorations have been doing the biology work pro bono and have committed again. We are currently looking for an archeologist that would be available to make site visits, our former volunteer has moved on to other projects and is no longer available for this work. If you know anyone that is a trained archeologist please contact Steve Marschke and we can discuss the scope of the work. That said, we are expecting to make another scouting trip (probably during the hotter months) to develop detailed plans for additional sites. We would like to get ahead of the construction schedule and have multiple projects ready to go, the volunteers can handle more than 3 per season if we just get the planning completed. We'll be selecting and publishing dates shortly, stay tuned we hope that you all can make it to a project next year and join us at the campfire afterward!



After a long day of work, it's great to relax around the campfire with friends

THE CADY MOUNTAINS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA'S TENTH BIGHORN SHEEP HUNT ZONE

by Vernon C. Bleich

Following the openings of nine bighorn sheep hunt zones and as efforts to better understand the distribution and population dynamics of desert bighorn sheep in California expanded, it became apparent that at least one additional population was doing very well. One such population occupied the Cady Mountains in San Bernardino County. That mountain range is named for Major Albermarle Cady of the 7th U.S. Infantry, who had been the Commanding Officer at Fort Yuma, Arizona (Schoffstall 2014). In 2011, the Cady Mountains became the tenth bighorn sheep hunt zone to open in California since 1883. At that time, the state legislature established a 4-year moratorium on the take of any elk, pronghorn, female deer, or bighorn sheep, and in 1887 the moratorium on the taking of bighorn sheep was extended indefinitely (Bleich 2007). In 1933, nearly 50 years later, bighorn sheep became the first species to be granted “full protection” by the California Legislature (California Department of Fish and Game [CDFG] 2005).

The Cady Mountains are located about 60 km east of Barstow, between Interstate Highway 15 and Interstate Highway 40. Elevations range from about 400 to 1,400 m, and are quite low compared to many Mojave Desert mountain ranges. Water historically was available in Afton Canyon, where the Mojave River provided surface water to bighorn sheep, and water remains available, albeit not continuously, along the course of the river through Afton Canyon. Aside from the Mojave River, Weaver et al. (1972) described the location of a temporary source at a tinaja that held water on a seasonal basis, and

recommended water be developed at two additional locations. In their preliminary evaluation of the Cady Mountains, Weaver et al. (1972) did not identify livestock grazing as being problematic for bighorn sheep. Those authors did, however, describe the range as being rather thinly populated by bighorn sheep, but also supporting more dense and widely distributed populations in the past; they concluded that, “... the decline [in bighorn sheep] ... is due mainly to the extended drought of the past 15 to 20 years.”

In 1972, the Cady Mountains was selected as the area in which the first Big Game Guzzler (BGG) totally dependent on rainfall for water collection and storage was to be installed by the CDFG Wildlife Habitat Development Program (Federal Aid Project W-26-D) following the desert-wide recommendations of Dick Weaver et al. (refer to Appendix I of Bleich and Weaver 2007). CDFG W-26-D personnel, assisted by the U.S. Military and 250 man-days of volunteer labor completed that installation (Massie 1972). Following that installation, the Big-G BGG was developed on 29 January 1983 in the central Cady Mountains to provide an additional, reliable source of surface water in that part of the range; 150 man-days of volunteer labor were contributed to that project. No evidence of cattle sign was reported at those installations during biannual inspections performed by W-26-D personnel from 1972 until 1986 or from 1983 until 1989 at the Cady Mountains BGG or the Big-G BGG, respectively (V. C. Bleich, unpublished inspection reports).

Little information on the bighorn sheep population in the Cady Mountains was available until late in the 1980s. Indeed, no population ‘estimates’ were available prior to 1940 when the first was recorded at 10; subsequent ‘estimates’ were made in 1946 (20), 1957 (35), 1972 (25), 1985 (25), and 1994 (25–50) (Torres et al. 1994, 1996; Wehausen 1999). The first year in which detailed demographic information on bighorn sheep occupying that mountain range became available was 1992, following extensive ground sampling using mark-resight methods that yielded an estimate of 24 females (95% CI = 16–41; Wehausen 1992). The population subsequently was estimated at between 25 and 50 individuals by Torres et al. (1994), Torres et al. (1996), and Epps et al. (2003).



Weaver et al. (1972) previously had noted little overlap between bighorn sheep and cattle in the Cady Mountains. Beginning in about 1975, however, approximately 175 cattle were grazed there until about 2005 (Aardahl et al. in press), and spatial overlap with bighorn sheep was considerable because of the extensive areas of shallow slopes and mildly rugged terrain that cattle were able to negotiate; as a result, cattle had access to large amounts of forage that otherwise would have been available for bighorn sheep (Wehausen 1992). Cattle grazing in the Cady Mountains ceased in 2005 following the purchase of the grazing allotment by the Department of Defense as mitigation for the expansion of Ft. Irwin, further north in the Mojave Desert (Aardahl in press, Aardahl et al. in press).

Following termination of the grazing allotment, additional aerial survey work was conducted over a period of several years. In 2007, 5.6 hours of flight time yielded observations of 109 total sheep, and an estimate of 87 females. In 2009, 8.6 hours of flight time yielded observations of 230 bighorn sheep, and an estimate of 102 females (Aardahl et al. in press), and the population in the Cady Mountains was placed in the numerical category of 201 to 300 bighorn sheep by Abella et al. (2011). Clearly the situation in the Cady Mountains had changed substantially since 2005 following the removal of cattle. Aardahl (in press) and Aardahl et al. (in press) recently have discussed this history in detail, and readers are referred to those papers for additional information.

The population of bighorn sheep in the Cady Mountains by 2010 was such that a management plan for that area was completed (Bleich et al. 2010). In keeping with policy established by the California Legislature (i.e., to maintain diversified recreational uses of wildlife, including hunting, as proper uses of certain designated species of wildlife, subject to regulations consistent with the maintenance of healthy, viable wildlife resources, the public safety, and a quality outdoor experience; California Fish and Game Code Section 1801), CDFG personnel in Region 6 and Sacramento worked together and proposed that the Cady Mountains be opened to the limited harvest of bighorn sheep.

Following the preparation, mandatory public review, and approval of the requisite environmental document (CDFG 2011), the California Fish and Game Commission approved a new hunt zone in the Cady Mountains in the spring of 2011. The boundaries of the new zone were described as, "That portion of San Bernardino County beginning at the junction of Interstate Highway 40 and Newberry Road; north on Newberry Road to intersection with Riverside Road; East on Riverside Road to junction with Harvard Road; north on Harvard Road to junction with Interstate Highway 15; northeast on Interstate Highway 15 to junction with Basin Road; south on Basin Road to intersection with Union Pacific Railroad; east on Union Pacific Railroad to intersection with Crucero Road; south on Crucero Road to intersection with Interstate Highway 40; west on Interstate Highway 40 to the point

of beginning." A total of three tags were issued for the 2011 season in the Cady Mountains, and all hunters were successful that year. Since then, the number of tags available annually has ranged from 2 to 4, a total of 45 tags have been issued, and a total of 43 bighorn sheep have been harvested for an overall success rate of 95.6% following the 2025 hunting season.

This brief history is the tenth I have written over the past several years that summarize many historical aspects of the first 10 bighorn sheep hunt zones that opened from 1987 to 2011. It was important to memorialize the challenges, setbacks, and successes that occurred during those efforts, but that few individuals currently recall and even fewer will be aware of (or find to be of interest) in the future. An eleventh zone opened in 2019, and three additional hunt zones will open for the first time in 2026. Each of these have long histories of earlier management actions and habitat enhancements, and all of which contributed to the conservation of bighorn sheep in those four areas.

In upcoming issues of California Wild Sheep, I will explore the early conservation and management actions that occurred in the Newberry, Ord, and Rodman mountains (opened in 2019), the Northern Bristol Mountains and Granite Mountains, the Woods, Hackberry, and Providence mountains, and the Castle Mountains and Piute that contributed to those recent harvest opportunities. Those prior actions paved the way for these events and provided the opportunities to those that have hunted there—or will do so in the future—and must be memorialized.

Historical accounts matter. Without them, corporate memory disappears quickly, and history merely becomes something that happened in the past. It has been my hope that information included in these brief accounts will be of value in the future, and these actions will not suffer the fate of "generational amnesia" (Fisher 2021), as has so much history of bighorn sheep conservation in California.

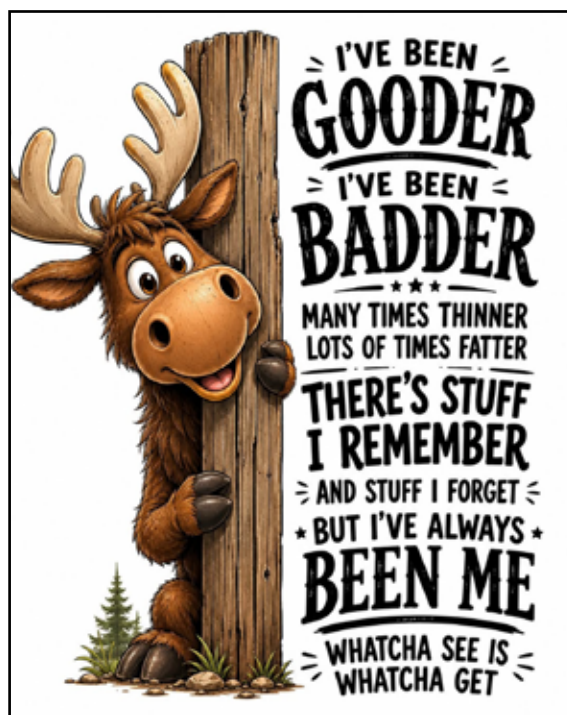
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—This article is part of a series by Dr. Vern Bleich, who increasingly is concerned that many aspects of the history and management of bighorn sheep in California are being lost. That history is long and complex, and at times has been misinterpreted, or even wrongly conveyed to others by those not having any direct connection to the past. Articles in this series are based on field experiences, monthly and annual reports, memoranda, past verbal discussions, and personal recollections, as well as material in the scientific and popular literature.

Vern was employed by the California Department of Fish and Game for 34 years, during which he worked extensively with large mammals occupying the Great Basin, Mojave, and Sonoran deserts of California and, in particular, desert bighorn sheep. He was fortunate to have joined the Department shortly after completion of a thorough inventory of bighorn sheep in California and has remained active in the conservation and management of that species since 1973. He currently is Research Professor at the University of Nevada Reno, serves on the Advisory Board of the Texas Bighorn Society, is Science Advisor for the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep, serves on two committees of the California Wild Sheep Foundation, is a member of the Wild Sheep Foundation's Professional Resource Advisory Board, and represented wildlife conservation and management interests on the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board from 2019 to 2022. I thank Rick Ianniello and Danielle Glass for providing the bighorn sheep harvest data included in this article. Parties desiring additional information can contact Vern directly (vcbleich@gmail.com).



THE POLITICS OF CONSERVATION

KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN AND YOU IN THE FIELD

*California State Legislature
2026 Session Hits Fiscal Deadline
By Bill Gaines, Gaines and Associates*

With the May 15 deadline for fiscal committees to hear and pass house-of-origin bills to the Floor now at hand, the California Legislature has reached one of the most significant stages of the 2026 Legislative Session. This past week, both the Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees held their “suspense hearings,” where hundreds of bills with noteworthy fiscal impacts were either passed or quietly set aside.

To provide some background, bills that pass their policy committees and would cost the state money to implement must next be heard by the fiscal (a.k.a. Appropriations) committee in their respective house. The committee then reviews the estimated cost of each bill, with legislation expected to cost the state \$150,000 or more generally placed on the “suspense file” to be considered at a later date.

The Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees then hold what are known as “suspense hearings,” where they take up all bills that have been placed on the suspense file. Some bills are passed out of committee and sent to the Floor for consideration by the full house. Others are amended — often with “upon appropriation” language — which allows the bill to move forward but prevents it from taking effect unless the Legislature later approves funding for that purpose.

The remaining bills are simply left on the suspense file and quietly die due to legislative deadlines without further discussion.

With the important deadline for bills to pass from fiscal committee to the Floor now being reached, the following is an update on the status of legislation of concern that the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (CA WSF) is actively working during the 2026 Legislative Session.

Bills are listed in numerical order, not in order of priority or importance.

AB 1624 (ZBUR) - PUBLIC LANDS PROTECTION ACT

AB 1624 by Assembly Member Rick Chavez Zbur (D-Los Angeles), coined “The Public Lands Protection Act,” would have required that federally owned lands transferred to private or nonfederal entities automatically receive the most restrictive conservation-oriented zoning if no prior designation exists. The bill would have also prohibited rezoning or development inconsistent with that designation unless specified conditions were met, including completion of a full California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental impact report.

Among other things, if passed, AB 1624 would have helped ensure that federally owned lands that are sold retain their wildlife habitat values, protected critical habitat connectivity, and maintained access for hunting and other recreational pursuits.



In March, AB 1624 was double-referred to the Assembly Local Government Committee and the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee. However, in April, prior to the bill being heard, the author pulled the bill from consideration.

AB 1624 is dead.

AB 1673 (HADWICK) - COUNTY FISH AND WILDLIFE PROPAGATION FUND: EXPENDITURE AB 519 (BERMAN) – PET BROKER SALES – SIGNED

As amended April 9, 2026, AB 1673 by Assembly Member Heather Hadwick (R-Redding) would expand allowable uses of county fish and wildlife propagation funds to include costs relating to wildlife coexistence programs to prevent human-wildlife conflict.

AB 1673 was heard in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee in March where it passed out on a unanimous vote. AB 1673 was then heard in Assembly Appropriations Committee in early April, passing out to the Assembly Floor. In late April, AB 1673 easily passed off the Assembly Floor and over to the Senate.

Now in the Senate, AB 1673 has been referred to Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee but has not yet been set to be heard.

AB 1722 (HADWICK) - CALIFORNIA ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT: TAKE PROHIBITION: SELF-DEFENSE

from civil, administrative, or criminal penalties for taking, or attempting to take, a protected species if they acted in good faith and used necessary and reasonable force to protect themselves or another person from immediate bodily harm. It would also require that person to notify the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) within 24 hours of the incident.

Double-referred, AB 1722 passed out of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee in early April, then out of the Assembly Judiciary Committee one week later – clearing both

committees without a single “no” vote. AB 1722 was then heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee in early May, passing out and to the Assembly Floor via yet another unanimous vote.

Currently on the Assembly Floor, AB 1722 may be brought up for a vote at any time.

AB 1912 (HADWICK) - DEER: ARCHERY SEASON: CONCEALED FIREARMS

As amended March 25, 2026, AB 1912 by Assembly Member Heather Hadwick would repeal current law which prohibits a person taking or attempting to take deer during archery season from carrying, or having under their immediate control, a firearm of any kind, except for an active or honorably retired peace officer.

Current regulations allow hunters pursuing other big game species during archery season to carry a concealable firearm, but state law does not extend that same allowance to those archery hunting deer. This bill would correct that disparity by allowing those hunting deer during archery season to carry a concealable firearm for personal safety in the event they encounter an illegal marijuana cultivation site, an aggressive mountain lion, or other large predatory species.

Double-referred, AB 1912 passed out of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee in late March, then out of Assembly Public Safety Committee in early April. Having no fiscal impact to the state, AB 1912 bypassed the Assembly Appropriations Committee and went straight to the Assembly Floor. In mid-April, AB 1912 passed off the Assembly Floor on consent and over to the Senate.

Now in the Senate, AB 1912 has been referred to Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee but has not yet been set to be heard.

SB 948 (ARREGUÍN) - FIREARMS: SAFETY CERTIFICATES.

Existing law requires any person who purchases or receives a firearm to possess a firearm safety certificate. Currently, to obtain a firearm safety certificate an individual must be at least 18 years old and pass a written 30-question test with a score of 75% or better.

As amended May 14, 2026, SB 948 by Senator Jesse Arreguín (D-Oakland) would require, beginning July 1, 2028, an applicant for a firearm safety certificate to complete within the prior year at least four hours of training – including firearm safety instruction and live-fire range exercises. SB 948 would also require personal firearm importers to obtain a valid firearm safety certificate and prohibit a person from bringing a firearm into this state without obtaining a valid firearm safety certificate within 180 days.

SB 948 would significantly increase the time, cost, and training requirements to obtain a firearm safety certificate, potentially creating barriers for law-abiding individuals seeking to purchase or bring firearms into the state. The added training and live-fire mandate could reduce access, particularly for lower-income applicants, rural residents with limited range access, and new firearm owners, while expanding regulatory and enforcement burdens at the local level.

SB 948 was heard in the Senate Public Safety Committee in March, passing out and to the Senate Appropriations Committee on a party line vote. SB 948 was then heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee in mid-April and placed on the suspense file. This week, SB 948 was pulled from suspense and heard in Senate Appropriations Committee, passing out on another party line vote.

Now on the Senate Floor, SB 948 could be brought up for a vote at any time.

SB 1021 (CHOI) - FISHING AND HUNTING: YOUTH PROGRAM

As amended April 7, 2026, SB 1021 by Senator Steve Choi (R-Irvine) would require the Fish and Game Commission to, on or before January 1, 2028, establish a program to increase opportunities to fish, and to hunt big game, wild pigs, upland game birds, and migratory game birds, for resident youth with life-threatening illnesses. The bill would require the Commission, in developing the program, to consult with DFW, relevant nonprofit organizations, and other interested parties.

SB 1021 would sunset on January 1, 2033.

SB 1021 would expand access to hunting and fishing for youth facing significant life challenges, offering restorative outdoor experiences, mentorship, and a sense of normalcy and community. It would also help foster conservation values and connect participants to California's outdoor heritage.

SB 1021 was heard in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee in March, passing out and to the Senate Appropriations Committee on a unanimous vote. SB 1021 was then heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee in mid-April and placed on the suspense file. This week, SB 1021 was pulled from suspense and heard in Senate Appropriations Committee, amended with clarifying language, and passed out to the Senate Floor on another unanimous vote.

Now on the Senate Floor, SB 1021 could be brought up for a vote at any time.

SB 1250 (CORTESE) - STATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM: WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY

As amended May 14, 2026, SB 1250 by Senator Dave Cortese (D-San Jose) would require the targets and performance measures adopted by the California Transportation Commission to include measures reflecting state transportation goals and objectives for wildlife connectivity assets that reflect the need for new assets and conditions of existing assets that improve or maintain the connectivity of wildlife crossings on the state highway system. SB 1250 would also direct Caltrans to include wildlife connectivity assets in its statewide transportation asset management plan.

SB 1250 would also require Caltrans to comprehensively review wildlife connectivity needs and work jointly with DFW to develop and regularly update an inventory of priority locations where wildlife passage improvements are needed.

SB 1250 would improve wildlife movement and habitat connectivity across California by prioritizing wildlife crossings and other infrastructure that reduce habitat fragmentation. By strengthening coordination between Caltrans and DFW, it would also help reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, enhance public safety, and support healthier, more sustainable wildlife populations.

Double-referred, SB 1250 was first heard in the Senate Transportation Committee in early April, passing out on a unanimous vote. SB 1250 was then heard in Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee in late April, passing out and to the Senate Appropriations Committee on another unanimous vote. In early May, SB 1250 was heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee and placed on the suspense file. This week, SB 1250 was pulled from suspense and heard in Senate Appropriations Committee, amended, and passed out to the Senate Floor on a party line vote.

Now on the Senate Floor, SB 1250 could be brought up for a vote at any time.

SB 1305 (RICHARDSON) - WILDLIFE: GRIZZLY BEARS

As amended May 14, 2026, SB 1305 by Senator Laura Richardson (D-Inglewood) would, contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature, require DFW to develop and make publicly available a roadmap that evaluates whether, and under what conditions, reintroduction of the grizzly bear is feasible and advisable, and the extent to which the ecological functions once provided by the grizzly bear may be restored through human-mediated landscape restoration, including through reintroduction of the species. As amended, SB 1305 would authorize DFW to contract with outside specialists in developing and completing the roadmap.

The bill would also require DFW, by June 30, 2030, to submit the roadmap document to relevant budget and policy committees of the Legislature, the Legislative Analyst's Office, and the Fish and Game Commission. The bill would prohibit reintroduction of the grizzly bear in the state until DFW or others have carried out various actions, including, among other things, completion of the roadmap, determinations, based on the best available science, that establishment of a self-sustaining grizzly population in the state is biologically viable, and a consultation with California Native American tribes. SB 1305 would also require DFW to engage with the University of California, local governments, law enforcement agencies, landowners, land managers, regional conservation organizations, outdoor recreation organizations, residents, stakeholders, and other experts in wildlife conservation and grizzly bear reintroduction communities.

SB 1305 would preclude designating grizzly bears as a game mammal in California.

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis, SB 1305 would cost approximately \$4.8 million to implement in the first year and \$4.2 million annually for at least fifteen new positions and associated activities.

Reintroducing grizzly bears into California would dramatically escalate an already intensifying predator management crisis. The state is currently grappling with overabundant black bear populations, expanding mountain lion numbers, the rapid growth of gray wolf packs, and unprecedented conflicts involving coyotes. Human-wildlife encounters with all these predators are rising sharply statewide, including documented attacks and fatalities, while rural communities also endure sustained livestock and pet depredation and growing public safety concerns.

Adding the grizzly - North America's most dominant terrestrial apex predator - would place even greater pressure on residents, ranchers, hunters, and other outdoor recreationists, as well as on California's already fragile deer herds. In many regions, deer populations are in steep decline due to heavy predation from bears and mountain lions, compounded by habitat loss and fragmentation, prolonged drought, and wildfire impacts. Introducing grizzlies into this already stressed system could further suppress deer recovery and severely complicate science-based wildlife management.

Beyond biological consequences, reintroduction would likely trigger sweeping regulatory restrictions, land-use limitations, expanded litigation, and substantial long-term costs for taxpayers. In effect, the proposal risks layering a new and irreversible predator management crisis onto an already strained and reactive wildlife framework.

At a time when the state is doing little to actively manage the apex predators already on the landscape, introducing the grizzly bear - the top of the predator hierarchy - would be a serious

policy mistake.

SB 1305 was heard in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee in April, passing out and to the Senate Appropriations Committee on a party line vote. In early May, SB 1305 was heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee and placed on the suspense file. This week, SB 1305 was pulled from suspense and heard in Senate Appropriations Committee, amended, and passed out to the Senate Floor on another party line vote.

Now on the Senate Floor, SB 1305 could be brought up for a vote at any time.

SB 1397 (ALVARADO-GIL) - MOUNTAIN LIONS: HUMAN-MOUNTAIN LION CONFLICT PROGRAM

SB 1397 would strengthen proactive efforts to reduce human-mountain lion conflicts by expanding nonlethal deterrence, scientific research, and public outreach. By emphasizing methods that prevent habituation and reestablish lions' natural wariness of humans - including the possible responsible use of trained hounds for pursuit and hazing - SB 1397 may help reduce livestock depredation and human-lion encounters in residential and recreational areas. Expanded nonlethal deterrence authorities could provide additional opportunities to reinforce avoidance behavior, improving public safety while maintaining existing protection for the species.

SB 1397 was heard in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee in mid-April, passing out and to the Senate Appropriations Committee on a unanimous vote. SB 1397 was then briefly heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee in late April and placed on the suspense file. This week, SB 1397 was pulled from suspense and heard in Senate Appropriations Committee, amended, and passed out to the Senate Floor on another unanimous vote.

Now on the Senate Floor, SB 1397 could be brought up for a vote at any time. However, because SB 1397 proposes to amend Proposition 117, "The California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990", it requires a four-fifths vote of the membership of both houses of the Legislature to pass.



thank you



YUKON STONE





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