

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NORTHERN WILD SHEEP AND GOAT COUNCIL REGARDING THE  
USE OF SPECIAL BIG-GAME (GOVERNOR'S) PERMITS FOR FUNDING WILDLIFE PROGRAMS

The Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council is one of two associations of professional biologists involved in wild sheep management in North America. It consists of approximately 100 professional sheep and goat biologists as well as university faculty members and students of wild sheep and goats from Alaska, Alberta, British Columbia, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, the Northwest Territories, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, the Yukon Territory, and Washington. As such, it represents the pooled expertise regarding management of northern wild sheep and goats throughout North America. The council has assumed, as one of its functions, an advisory role on issues involving wild sheep and goat conservation and management.

#### Background

Special hunting permits (commonly called Governor's permits) are available to the Governor in most western states and Department Ministers in some Canadian provinces. These permits are typically awarded as the Governor or Minister chooses to allocate them. In recent years, increasing numbers of these permits have been allocated to non-profit organizations for auction or lottery to generate money. The common applications of this revenue-generating mechanism have been limited to fundraising for programs in wildlife conservation, especially for management and research on wild sheep. The Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council (NWS&GC) supports continuation and expansion of this innovative funding technique for enhancing wild sheep and goat management effectiveness. However, the NWS&GC is aware of some potential problems and ethical considerations attending use of Governor's permits for fundraising.

First of all, indigenous wildlife in the United States of America has been traditionally considered the "property" and is certainly the management responsibility of the states. This system is slightly different in Canada. To varying degrees, the states and provinces have been successful in meeting their management responsibilities with respect to wild sheep. In the United States, where wild sheep populations were decimated early this century, their recovery has come largely through programs funded by the hunting public.

Even given the successes at restoring wild sheep abundance, there is still a demand for sheep hunting opportunity which far exceeds the present capability of sheep and sheep habitats to provide. As a result, resident hunters must hope for selection in the permit lotteries in most states. This means that use of Governor's permits for any purpose, decreases hunting opportunity of residents by a small amount. This opportunity is virtually lost to residents because auction of the permits brings large sums (above \$100,000 in some cases). When the revenue generated by

auction of Governor's permits is reinvested in the resource which produced it, everyone benefits, particularly the hunting public which contributed the funds to make harvest of mountain sheep possible in the first place. The NWS&GC thinks this is the best use of the Governor's permit auction system. Maintenance of this system, however, requires some further attention, and possibly some constraints.

The NWS&GC recognizes the following problems: The large revenues generated by sale of Governor's permits may inspire attempts to divert these funds to other species or non-wildlife programs. It is also possible that a glut of Governor's permits for auction could lower the revenue generated by the system, and cut resident opportunity to participate in sheep hunting without commensurate benefit to the resource or the resident hunter. Finally, there is a temptation to provide special assistance to or exemptions from common hunting regulations and practices for the benefactor who buys the permit at auction.

In an attempt to deal with these problems, the NWS&GC offers the following recommendations regarding use of Governor's permits for fund raising. We realize these recommendations are largely in the province of our various governors and ministers. Our intent, as an association of professional sheep and goat managers, is to offer the best assistance we can, and mark our positions on these issues a matter of record.

1. Governor's permits to hunt mountain sheep or mountain goats should be allocated for sale only to provide revenues for conservation (which includes research and management) of these species.
2. State and provincial wildlife management agencies should be involved in decisions regarding the appropriate number of permits, and any necessary restrictions on permit use which may be required to protect sensitive populations of big game.
3. Allocation of permits for sale should be managed with a view toward maximizing financial return to the species programs and minimizing losses in resident hunting opportunity.
4. Granting of special privileges to Governor's permit buyers should be discouraged.
5. Several conditions of permit issuance should be clearly defined when the permit is donated. They include:
  - a. If, how, and when the purchaser may transfer the permit to another person.
  - b. Acceptable payment procedures, legal tender, deadline, procedure in case of default, and amount retained by any other party (such as the auctioneer).
  - c. Timing for issuance of permit.
  - d. Required license and guide fees.

- e. Legal hunting areas, dates, and regulations.
6. Regulations and conditions of the permit should be made clear to all prospective buyers prior to auction.