

FOREWORD TO THE WORKSHOP REPORTS ON SHEEP MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS, NORTHERN WILD SHEEP AND GOAT COUNCIL, CRANBROOK, BRITISH COLUMBIA 2-6 MAY, 1994

WAYNE E. HEIMER, Executive Director, Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701

Originally, management of northern wild sheep throughout their ranges in the United States and Canada was done by simply opening or closing the hunting season to allow harvest of presumably surplus sheep, typically assumed to be mature rams. Later on, managers (with autonomy that is unthinkable today) began to "do what they thought was best" for the sheep and the hunters who wanted to use them. In more recent times, selective pressures for recognition of other uses and greater public involvement have driven the evolution toward a system of formally defined management programs.

These management programs are presumably guided by management policies that drive management plans which, in turn, determine effort (measured in time and money) to gather biological information which may affect the regulations by which management is practiced. Although the formal system is presumed to function in this fashion, there is considerable variability in philosophy, policy, plans, and effort expended in managing sheep among management agencies.

The purpose of this workshop was to generate reports on the sheep management program from

each member state or province in the Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council. These reports were generated by response to a questionnaire sent to the recognized sheep managers in each state or province. Questions relating to the presence of a recognized or formal program, its origin, its funding, effort expended, and a discussion of program effectiveness were asked of all participants. All member states and provinces where bighorn, Stone, and Dall sheep are present responded.

The symposium organizers, the executive board of the Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council, the workshop participants, and I hope that these abbreviated reports will be useful. We anticipate these reports will be useful as histories of how things got the way they are as well as information on how management is currently proceeding. We also hope that the agencies which prepared the reports saw them as an internal review of their own programs. The discussion sections should be particularly helpful in understanding the operation of each program because participants were asked to be particularly frank in evaluating program effectiveness.