

To assure a timely publication, we have hired Allan Thomas, a recently-retired BLM biologist from Idaho, as our Technical Editor. Our intent is to have the transactions done and distributed by mid-year of 2000. Allan will be working with the conference/program/session chairs and the authors, to complete this task. We respectfully request your assistance in helping us meet that timeline.

As conference co-chairs, Rick Brigham and I are deeply indebted to a number of people who helped make this a reality. First and foremost, our program co-chairs Amy Fisher (DBC, New Mexico) and Wayne Heimer (NWSGC, Alaska) deserve a big thank you for a terrific agenda, focusing on issues of great interest and significance to us all. I would like to thank Don Armentrout and Darren Divine for taking care of some of the nitty-gritty details.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge our sponsors for this conference. Both the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service have committed significant dollars to this effort, and we thank them. I have already mentioned the gracious contribution of 220 books from the Boone and Crockett Club. Most gratifying to me is the involvement and contribution from the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS), and its chapters and affiliates. As you can see in your program, 18 of the 20 chapters/affiliates of FNAWS, plus the national organization, have contributed to underwrite this conference and our publication. Many of those organizations are represented in the room today, and we welcome and thank them.

When the 1971 and 1974 conferences were held, FNAWS didn't exist, nor did the network of wild sheep advocates which has developed over the past quarter-century. The synergy between wild sheep managers and wild sheep enthusiasts over the past 25 years has been incredible, and the accomplishments many. I believe that the status and management of wild sheep, as we know them today, rest squarely on the partnership between the advocates and the agencies which serve them. We owe each other our mutual respect and a great thanks.

Once again, thank you all for coming. We look forward to your input, and we hope you enjoy the conference.

**WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS - WILLIAM R. (RICK) BRIGHAM,
CONFERENCE CO-CHAIR**

I want to welcome all of you to Reno. This is the 2ND North American Wild Sheep Conference; it is also the 43rd annual meeting of the Desert Bighorn Council (DBC).

I want to thank several people who have put in a great deal of time and effort in this endeavor: Kevin Hurley came up with the idea for this conference two years ago; Amy Fisher has done an excellent job of putting the program together from the DBC side, and publishing the program; to Don Armentrout, who is Arrangements Chairman, and whom we can thank for the facilities here at the Peppermill; and to Darren Divine, who has done an outstanding job as Council Secretary, including putting together the newsletters publicizing this conference, as well as mailing them. Darren stepped up last year when the DBC met at Las Cruces, and volunteered for this job. He has also taken it upon himself to reprint several of the earliest DBC transactions. These, and full sets of DBC transactions, are for sale outside the meeting room here.

Other publications for sale include past proceedings of the Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council, plus new books published by the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) and the Boone and Crockett Club. At the rear of this room, the Desert Bighorn Council Ewes have items for sale (T-shirts, mugs, pins, prints), all dealing with desert bighorns. The profits from sale of these items go into the Council's Hansen-Welles Memorial Fund, which provides stipends for needy graduate students and others working with desert bighorns.

I want to acknowledge some of the very old timers from the Council who are here—Dick Weaver, Warren Kelly, and George Welsh.

I also particularly want to thank the many constituent groups which have contributed funds to make this conference a reality: FNAWS and its state chapters; Nevada Bighorns Unlimited Reno and Fallon Chapters, both of which are local; and the Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn, based in Las Vegas.

I have spent my entire career with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), a federal agency—a habitat managing agency. I attended my first Council meeting in 1971 at Santa Fe, New Mexico. I was working in the Phoenix, Arizona BLM District Office at the time. At that time, the Council was working on a book: The Desert Bighorn: Its Life History, Ecology, and Management. It was edited by Gale Monson and Lowell Sumner, and was finally published in 1980. When published, it was the best single source document for desert bighorn information at that time. It covered the usual topics: distribution, abundance, physical characteristics, habitat, food, water, behavior, predation, hunting, disease.

We have come a long way since 1980. Diseases transmitted when bighorns and domestic sheep contact

each other have become recognized as a major issue resulting in the BLM asking the DBC for guidelines on managing domestic sheep in bighorn habitat. These guidelines were published in 1990 in the DBC transactions. The guidelines were adopted as BLM policy in 1993, following a spirited meeting between wool growers, western state game and fish agency personnel, BLMers, and several wildlife veterinarians. The guidelines were revisited just last year, and expanded to include domestic goats.

We have come a long way in capturing and transplanting bighorns. Several thousand bighorns have been trapped and transplanted during the last 20 years. We have gone from darts and drugs to net capture guns and drop nets. Amy Fisher is chairing a session here later that will bring everybody up to speed on the newest techniques.

Predation was formerly not the issue it has become recently. Management of mountain lions is now a key factor in successful bighorn conservation and restoration, especially small and transplanted populations.

Constituent groups have also proliferated. At first there was the Boone and Crockett Club. Then came FNAWS (1977), and its many chapters, and related groups such as Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, the Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn, the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, and California's Society for Conservation of Bighorn Sheep. We will be hearing more from the constituent groups this afternoon, and I am looking forward to it, since they have paid so much of the freight in dollars and sweat equity to put mountain sheep management where it is today. Their comments should be very interesting.

My highest hope for this conference is to see guidelines developed which address the current problems facing the various subspecies of mountain sheep, and provide management direction for the next 25 years.

We have an excellent array of papers, session chairs, and speakers. Enjoy! Thank you.