



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

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October 29, 2024

Katie Cheesbrough, Executive Director  
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation  
P.O. Box 666  
Cody, WY 82414

Dear Ms. Cheesbrough and Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation Board of Directors:

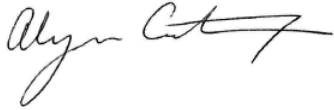
I am writing to express my support of the Nutritional Carrying Capacity of Bighorn Sheep in the Teton Range Project GIA application, submitted by University of Idaho. Ryan Martin (PhD student) and Dr. Ryan Long (advisor and principal investigator) have been working with Grand Teton National Park and Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) on this project for the past two years. This is an excellent example of a successful partnership between federal and state wildlife managers and University researchers.

This project will provide three main results that will contribute directly to WGFD management of the Targhee Bighorn Sheep Herd:

- 1) Results from this project will further our understanding of **how many bighorn sheep the Teton Range could support and directly inform our goals for the herd (including the WGFD population objective)**. Recent conservation efforts led by state and federal agencies have been controversial, including asking backcountry skiers to sacrifice ski terrain to protect bighorn sheep from disturbance, hunting licenses have been scrutinized, and mountain goats have been drastically reduced to protect sheep. Some segments of the public have repeatedly asked the agencies for a more biologically-supported population goal than what we currently have. Results from this project will greatly improve our communication by setting realistic, science-based goals for this herd that are backed up by current data.
- 2) This project includes capture, collaring, body fat measurements, and disease sampling. Sheep were successfully captured and sampled in November 2023 and captures are planned for November 2024. Due to the remote nature of this herd, we have very few disease samples from this herd and have never found *M. ovi*. This project is providing **valuable samples for continued disease surveillance**, which are being analyzed by WGFD's Wildlife Health Laboratory.
- 3) This project will provide data for the first time on **bighorn sheep forage conditions in the former domestic sheep allotments** on the west side of the Teton Range on Caribou-Targhee National Forest since they were retired in the 1990s and early 2000s. Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation was instrumental in retiring these domestic sheep allotments and previous collar data has shown that bighorn sheep use of these areas has increased. This study will provide important data on forage conditions compared to other areas in the Teton Range.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal and please reach out to me with any questions at 307-249-5807.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aly Courtemanch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Aly Courtemanch  
North Jackson Wildlife Biologist