



# Bleats and Blats

Official Newsletter of the  
Desert Bighorn Council  
March 2023



## Inside:

- **Alpine, TX DBC Meeting Information**
- **Muddy River Translocation**
- **Morenci Translocation**
- **Decreasing Hunters in Arizona?**
- **Transactions Co-Editor Announcement**

---

*Hello DBC members and friends,*

*I hope this Newsletter finds you well. Having material to print is an important part of creating a Newsletter, so please, share. If you have highlights or status updates send them to me for the next Newsletter. For more information about the Desert Bighorn Council or to download a membership form, please visit our website at [www.desertbighornCouncil.com](http://www.desertbighornCouncil.com).*

*In this edition please make note of the suggested changes to the bylaws which will be voted on at the Council meeting April 2023. We are also going to vote to elect new officers and fill technical staff positions.*

*All the best to you,  
Erin Butler (DBC Secretary)*

*Regional Terrestrial Wildlife Program Manager  
Arizona Game and Fish Department  
5325 N. Stockton Hill Road  
Kingman, AZ 86409  
Office phone: 928-263-8853  
[ebutler@azgfd.gov](mailto:ebutler@azgfd.gov)*

---

# Desert Bighorn Council Meeting 2023

## Alpine, Texas

The 57th meeting of the Desert Bighorn Council will be hosted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The meeting, held 11-14 April, 2023 meeting will be chaired by Froylán Hernández. **Theme - The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: successes, disease, and aoudad/predators**

- Venue: Espino Conference Center, Sul Ross State University, E. Sul Ross Avenue, Alpine, TX 79830.
- Meeting Registration: Registration is currently open. Early registration will be \$200/person through 15 March 2023, \$250/person for late registration. You can register here: (<https://wafwa.org/workshops/desert-bighorn-workshop/>) *THERE WILL BE NO VIRTUAL OPTION*
- Meeting Plans: General meeting plans begin with a reception/social on the evening of Tuesday, 11 April, followed by oral presentations and special session in support of the meeting theme on Wed-Thurs (12th-13th), Business Meeting Thursday afternoon, and concluding with a field trip to Elephant Mtn Wildlife Management Area on Friday, 14 April.
- Airport Transportation: Alpine is located on Hwy 90, approximately 3 hrs from El Paso International Airport and 2.5 hrs from Midland International Air & Space Port.
- Lodging:  
Hotel Parker (Formerly *Quarter Circle 7*), 2800 US-90, Alpine, TX 79830. Phone: (432) 837-1100. Instructions: to get discounted rate (\$98/night + tax), call front desk and let them know reservation is for Texas Parks and Wildlife-Desert Bighorn Council (TPWD DBC). Only 27 rooms (double queen) available at discounted rate. First come, first served. Room rate will be valid until 20 March 2023, regular room rate afterwards (\$159/night + tax).

*Hampton Inn Alpine*, 2607 US-90, Alpine, TX 79830. Phone: (432) 837-7344. Instructions: to get discounted rate (\$139/night + tax), call front desk and let them know reservation is under Froylan Hernandez - Texas Parks and Wildlife. Only 30 rooms (15 double queen, and 15 single king) available at discounted rate. First come, first served. Room rate will be valid until 11 March 2023, regular room rate afterwards (\$163/night + tax).

---

### Happening at the Business Meeting:

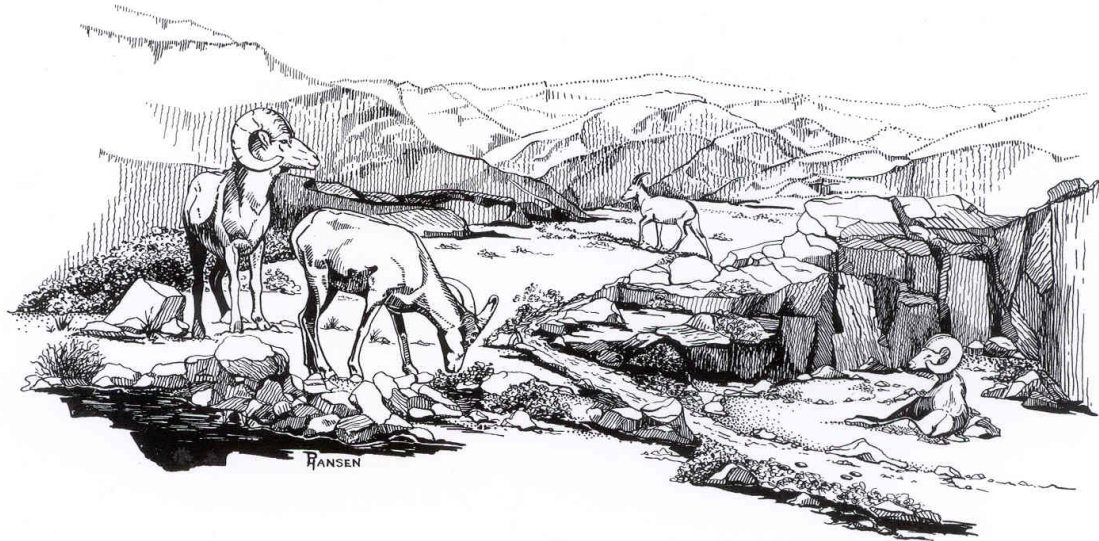
- Vacant Technical Staff positions and Officer positions voting; are you interested in serving?
- Bylaw Changes; see email for changes we'll vote on
- Scholarship Announcements; know someone worthy - email Pat Cummings at [patrickcummins1002@gmail.com](mailto:patrickcummins1002@gmail.com)
- Silent Auction; accepting donated items for silent auction: you can ship items to: Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. c/o Froylan Hernandez, 109 S. Cockrell, Alpine, TX 79830, OR deliver in person at time of meeting.

Call for Papers: **Deadline 15 March 2023**

Please submit abstracts for consideration to Dr. Carlos Gonzalez at [carlos.gonzalez-gonzalez@sulross.edu](mailto:carlos.gonzalez-gonzalez@sulross.edu) AND Calvin Richardson at [calvin.richardson@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:calvin.richardson@tpwd.texas.gov). Also, please cc Froylán Hernández at [Froylan.Hernandez@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:Froylan.Hernandez@tpwd.texas.gov)

Accepting donated items for silent auction: you can ship items to: Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. c/o Froylan Hernandez, 109 S. Cockrell, Alpine, TX 79830, OR deliver in person at time of meeting.

---



---

## **From the Valley of Fire to Greener Pastures: Muddy Mountains Bighorn Sheep Capture and Translocation**

*Submitted By Erin Wood*

Few animals evoke a sense of perseverance like the desert bighorn sheep—adapted to precipitous terrain, sweltering temperatures, and scarcity of water, desert bighorn sheep make their home in some of the most extreme environments on earth. Yet they are not invulnerable to the impacts of irresponsible human actions. Overhunting, habitat alteration, disease introduction, and rapid human expansion pushed the desert bighorn to the edge, and many populations were lost entirely. Through successful cooperative management, desert bighorn populations in the west have grown from an estimated low around 7,000 in the 1960s to a current estimate of over 27,000 across their range. This was largely achieved through the translocations of desert bighorn sheep from remnant populations into areas from which they were extirpated. Nevada has had some of the most successful growth in its desert bighorn herds, expanding to an estimated 8,200 animals currently distributed throughout much of their historical range in the state.

The success Nevada has experienced has allowed us to assist other western states in their desert bighorn sheep reintroduction efforts. Nevada has supplied source stock for multiple translocations into California, Colorado, Texas, and Utah, with almost 400 desert bighorn sheep going to Utah alone since 1973 in 13 capture and release events. We in Nevada have benefitted from translocations of wildlife from Utah as well, including elk, antelope, and wild turkeys, and maintaining that relationship has been important to wildlife management for both states. In August of 2021, The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) requested an allotment of up to 100 desert bighorn sheep to establish a source herd of their own near Tabiona, Utah, which was approved by the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners. The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) identified the herd occupying the Muddy Mountains near Overton, NV, as a good source herd for several reasons.

Perhaps most importantly, the Muddy Mountains bighorns are free of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* (*M. ovi*), a pathogen that is one of the major limiting factors of all wild sheep populations in North America. *M. ovi* can spread rapidly through populations, causing die-offs, depressed lamb recruitment, and in some cases total loss of herds. The bighorns that occupy the Muddy Mountains remain isolated from *M. ovi*, allowing for positive growth despite inhabiting one of the most drought-impacted areas in an already arid state. Exceptional drought conditions over the last two years have lowered the quantity of forage and free water available for wildlife in the Muddy Mountains, and a targeted reduction in population would ease the competition for limited resources while avoiding overall herd decline. Given the density of sheep in the area, the low water availability, and the drought forecast, NDOW decided to conduct a helicopter net gun capture of 30 sheep in the Muddy Mountains scheduled for June 27-28, 2022.

The crews gathered at the Overton Wildlife Management Area on the 26th to go over the final logistics, and captures commenced at first light the following morning in Valley of Fire State Park. The helicopter and ground crew with Wildlife Capture Management were very efficient, slinging sheep to the staging area at a steady rate while limiting chase times to keep stress and body temperature down. NDOW and UDWR veterinary staff and biologists, along with dozens of other professionals and volunteers, processed each animal with care. Over two mornings, a total of four rams and 27 ewes were weighed, ear-tagged, collared, aged, assessed for body condition, and had samples collected for disease testing before being loaded into trailers fitted with cooling fans. Each day, the trailers were driven to Utah while the samples flew to the lab in Washington. All lab results returned negative, indicating the sheep had not been exposed to *M. ovi*, and they were released into their new home at the Skyrider Wilderness Ranch. The 1800-acre enclosure at the ranch will provide the space and resources for this herd to thrive and serve as a disease-free source to reintroduce or augment bighorn sheep herds in Utah.

Though it was through the actions of humans that desert bighorn sheep were extirpated from much of their historical range, it is also through the collaborative efforts of wildlife managers and conservationists that their recovery has been so successful. Translocation efforts such as this have been essential to the recovery of desert bighorn sheep, and it requires the collaborative efforts of government agencies, non-government entities, and private citizens. It is a testament to the dedication of all those concerned with the recovery and conservation of wildlife, and a demonstration of the perseverance of desert bighorn sheep.

# Arizona Continues Translocations to Utah

*Submitted By Rana Tucker*

In 2021, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources announced their intent to repopulate Antelope Island. After the initial translocation from Nevada of desert bighorn sheep outlined above, Arizona also contributed to the cause. Here is a short clip of an announcement within Arizona and the Wild Sheep Foundation article.

Twenty-seven Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep from southeastern Arizona are getting used to their unlikely new home at Utah's Great Salt Lake following a translocation in October from the Morenci-Clifton areas by AZGFD, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and other stakeholders. Bighorns at Antelope Island State Park died off following a pneumonia outbreak in 2018. They had served for two decades as the source herd for translocation to elsewhere in Utah. Meantime, the approximately 300 bighorns in the Morenci-Clifton areas have been vulnerable to traffic accidents and other hazards given their proximity to the Morenci Mine and populated areas.

"This is what collaborative conservation looks like," said Gary N. Thornton, president and CEO of the Wild Sheep Foundation, which had its Utah and Arizona affiliates involved with the helicopter and net gun translocation along with BLM, the University of Arizona, and KUIU Conservation Direct.

<https://www.wildsheepfoundation.org/blog/wsf-bighorns-back-on-utahs-antelope-island>

# **A Decreasing Numbers of Hunter in Arizona, or Is There?**

*Submitted By Dustin Darveau*

During the past decade, and especially during the past two years of Covid-19, many states have seen increases in the interest of hunting, and Arizona is no exception. Those interested in quantifying the statement may want to tease out the data and not just look at the percentage of hunters per capita, as the increasing populations in a state may cause that percentage of hunters to show a decline.

The reality is the actual number of hunters and/or interest in hunting has increased in Arizona. As we await the 2021 publication of National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and compare it to the 144-page report from 2016 to confirm these thoughts, we thought we could simplify the process and track what's happening right here in Arizona. Don't get me wrong, those reports are full of valuable and relevant information, but for this write-up for DBC, we can simply look at the number of applicants within our permit draw reports.

In 2007, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission approved the Department's recommendation to authorize 99 permit-tags to hunt bighorn sheep in Arizona. During this year, there were 10,930 individuals that elected to dispense with some of their discretionary income for the opportunity to pursue this majestic animal.

In 2022, the Department recommended and received approval to offer 140 permit-tags to hunt bighorn sheep. To the average person, increasing 41 permit tags over the course of 15 years may seem very trivial and insignificant, but for all of us in the "bighorn sheep business" we know how incredible this type of increase in populations, and subsequently recreational and hunter opportunity truly is.

During that fall 2022 draw cycle, the Department received 25,723 applicants for the opportunity to hunt those 140 bighorn sheep – an incredible increase over the past 15 years! Granted, a significant change to our draw system going to an online-only application process and the requirement to submit the permit-tag fee in full at the time of the application was removed and attracted many more applicants, but we all know this is a good thing!

---

---

## **Desert Bighorn Council Transactions Co-Editors**

Thank you to Carlos Gonzalez who has stepped up to co-edit the DBC Transactions with James Cain. We are still looking for submissions for the Transactions. Please send them to James Cain at [jwcain@nmsu.edu](mailto:jwcain@nmsu.edu)



## DBC Officers and Technical Staff Members

The Council officers and Technical Staff members are as follows:

Council Chair:	Froylan Hernandez
Secretary:	Erin Butler
Treasurer:	Kathy Longshore
Transactions Editor:	James Cain
Tech Staff Chair:	Patrick Cummings
Tech Staff:	Bruce Garlinger, Mark Jorgensen, Brian Wakeling, Amber Munig, Froylan Hernandez and Lindsay Smythe

*For more information about the Desert Bighorn Council, or to download a membership form, please visit our website at [www.desertbighornCouncil.com](http://www.desertbighornCouncil.com).*

Desert Bighorn Council  
5325 N. Stockton Hill Rd.  
Kingman, AZ 86409  
E-mail: [patrickcummings1002@gmail.com](mailto:patrickcummings1002@gmail.com)

