



# Bleats and Blats

Official Newsletter of the  
Desert Bighorn Council  
December 2021



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*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).*

*Happy Holidays!!*

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

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## Desert Bighorn Council Transactions Editor

At the 2023 meeting the Council will be looking for a new Transactions Editor. If you are interested please contact Mr. Cain now so you can shadow him. We are still looking for submissions for the Transactions. Please send them to James Cain at [jwcain@nmsu.edu](mailto:jwcain@nmsu.edu)

# Desert Bighorn Council Meeting 2021 Review

Approximately 132 people registered for the April 7-8, 2021 meeting, held virtually. The meeting's focus was "Past, Present and Future Threats: disease, exotic ungulates, and a change in mindset." Presentations video links can be found at <https://www.desertbighornCouncil.com/>

Congratulations to the Award Winners.

"In April 2021, the 56th Desert Bighorn Council was hosted by the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife. As a result of uncertainties associated with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting occurred in a virtual format. This year, each of the awardees received multiple nominations and letters of support from members of the Council. One organization and two individuals were selected for recognition based on their accomplishments on behalf of conservation, or service to the Desert Bighorn Council. The DBC Honor Plaque was presented to the Desert National Wildlife Refuge for its advocacy role and leadership of a multi-agency effort to ensure the integrity of the Refuge and its foundational role in the conservation of bighorn sheep habitat; Amy Sprunger accepted the Honor Plaque on behalf of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. The DBC Honor Plaque also was awarded to Clay Brewer in recognition of his leadership and many years of service to the Council. Pat Cummings was the recipient of the Council's Ram Award, which recognized his many contributions to the conservation of bighorn sheep while employed by the Nevada Department of Wildlife for more than three decades. The text engraved on each of these awards appears below.

The Desert Bighorn Council Honor Plaque is presented to the Desert National Wildlife Refuge for its leadership role in the conservation of desert bighorn sheep. The Desert Bighorn Council recognizes the Desert National Wildlife Refuge for its exemplary role and leadership in elevating the conservation of desert bighorn sheep to an unprecedented level and consistent with the purpose for which the refuge was created. To that goal an interagency management team was established in 2019 as a collaborative partnership among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nellis Air Force Base, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Under the leadership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the interagency management team developed and is now implementing an adaptive management plan designed to support a viable metapopulation of desert bighorn sheep and its habitat at the Desert National Wildlife Refuge in perpetuity. Presented at The 56<sup>th</sup> Desert Bighorn Council, April 2021.

The Desert Bighorn Council Honor Plaque is presented to Clay E. Brewer for two decades of dedicated service as a member of the Council's Technical Staff and for effective and enthusiastic leadership as Tech Staff Chair from 2015 to 2021. Presented at The 56<sup>th</sup> Desert Bighorn Council, April 2021.

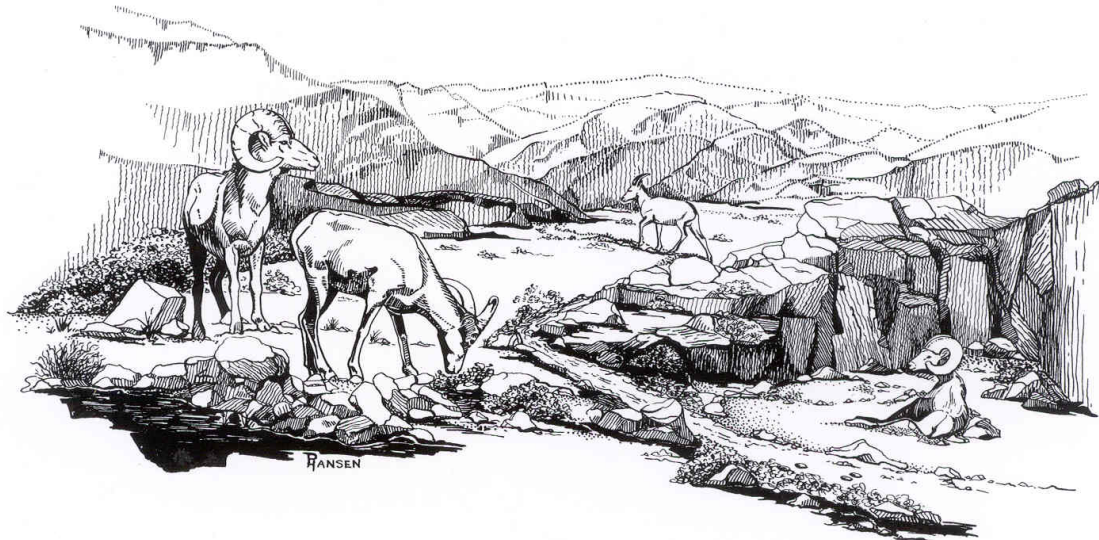
The Desert Bighorn Council recognizes Patrick J. Cummings with the Desert Ram Award for decades of service to the people of Nevada in your efforts to ensure the future of Desert Bighorn Sheep throughout the Silver State, and for many years of service to the Desert Bighorn Council. Throughout your career you have contributed unselfishly toward habitat enhancement, population assessments, translocations, disease surveillance, and research, and are greatly respected by your peers. You are well-known as a team player and your collaborative work with state and federal agencies throughout the West is widely recognized and greatly appreciated. Presented at The 56<sup>th</sup> Desert Bighorn Council, April 2021."

Recipients of the Scholarship were:

- \$5,000 to Olivia Grey with Sol Ross.
- \$5,000 to Ashley Evans with Colorado State.

At the business meeting the Council voted to hold the 2023 meeting in Texas. Watched for the location and dates to be announced. Thank you to all those who attended.

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## Unit 44A West Bighorn Sheep Ram Monitoring Project Status Report – August 2021

*Submitted By Amber Munig, written by David Kuhn*

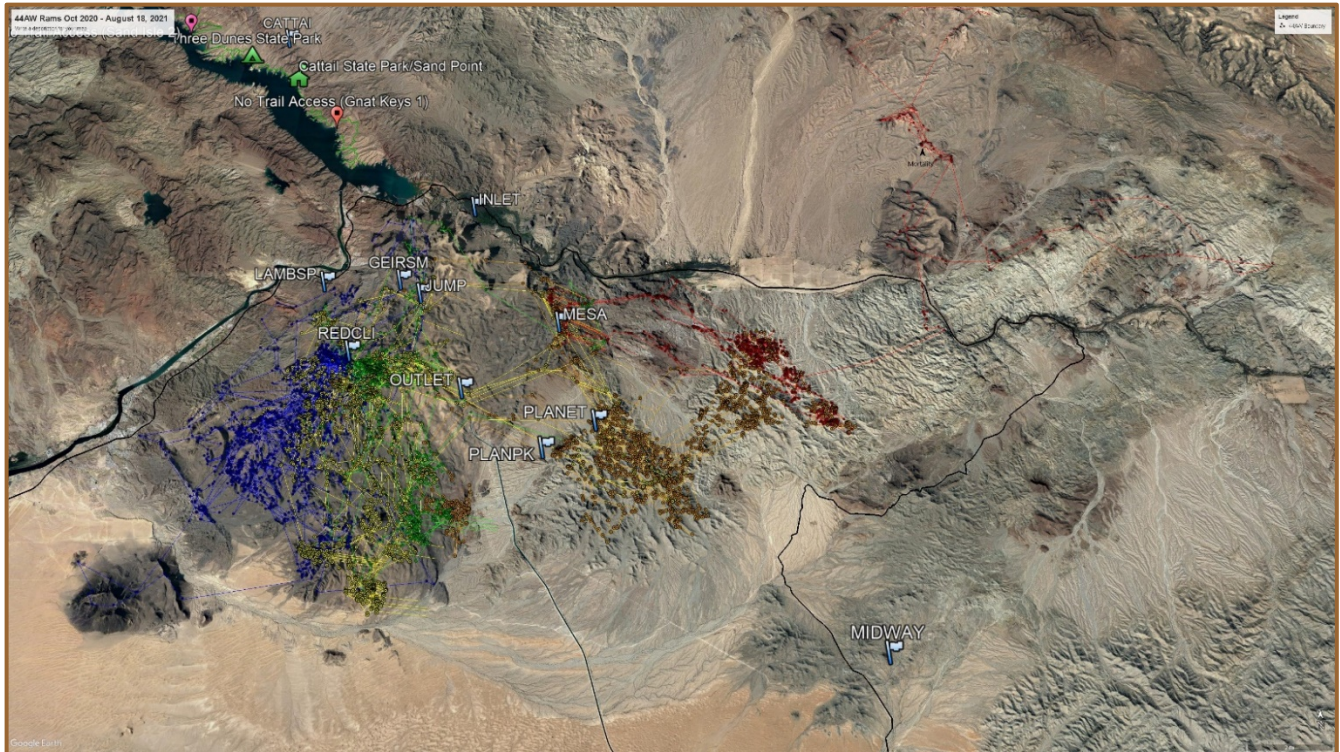
**Objective:** Investigate movements and determine if adult bighorn sheep rams occupy different areas within Unit 44A West or leave the unit at different times of the year, specifically between October and December.

**Approach:** Capture and collar 5 Class III or IV bighorn sheep rams and equip them with GPS collars. The collars were configured to collect 6 location points within a 24 hour period for 30 months (collar drop off scheduled for March 2023). Maintaining collared rams for multiple years allows the Department to determine if rams habitually move at certain times of year or if the movements are more random driven by forage and water availability.

Data from trail cameras placed on waters has been used in Unit 44AW and other units to supplement population survey data for many years. Trail camera monitoring will be conducted each summer the collars are active. The challenge with a trail camera monitoring project is that the project will only provide presence or absence of bighorn sheep; it will not inform movements nor population size. A minimum count of Class III and IV rams may only be obtained if unique animals can be identified from the photographs.



Progress: Region IV successfully captured and collared 5 bighorn sheep rams, ages from 5 to 10 years, on October 22, 2020, in Unit 44AW. There were no capture related mortalities and 1 mortality has been detected to date. Sometime between July 24 and 25, one collared ram ventured north of Unit 44AW into Unit 16A. On August 9, a mortality signal was detected for this ram, which was investigated on August 11 by 2 Region III personnel. The ram sustained injuries to his humerus bone and the injury appeared to have been at least a couple of weeks old according to our Department veterinarian, Dr. Anne Justice-Allen, when shown detailed photographs of the concerning area of injury. A separate mortality report has been written up.



**Mortality Report - Ram 45883 on August 19, 2021**  
**By: David Kuhn – Region IV Wildlife Specialist**

At about 0850 August 11, 2021, Brandon Foley (Region III Wildlife Specialist) and Emma Hunt (Intern) investigated a dead ram (collar ID:45883) with the estimated age of 8.5 was found at the exact location that was reported to David Kuhn through GPS collar mortality signal. The first mortality signal was alerted on August 9, 2021.

At first glance, the bighorn sheep seemed to be well intact with the ram lying on its right side and all body parts intact but appeared to be dead for well over 48 Hours (LOTS of Maggots).

Upon further inspection a large laceration was found at the neck/throat area and looked like turkey vulture scavenging at this area. There was also a large body cavity opening in the abdominal area. Some of the stomach was still intact but there was little of the intestines left. This also looked like turkey vulture scavenging.



The last significant thing noticed was a possible injury sustained to the front right shoulder that looked like a break near the upper humerus where the scapula, clavicle, and humerus meet. It appeared to be a possible break or dislocation. Possible damage from turkey vulture scavenging as well, making the injury appear more severe.

After speaking with Dr. Anne Justice-Allen, it was confirmed the ram had an injury to the humerus below the joint of the scapula. The injury appeared to be a couple of weeks old and was a factor in his death.

Emma and Brandon circled the area to about a 50-foot radius and could not find evidence of any other animals, scat or prints, in this area. The ram was not dragged, it appears to have died at this location and did not move. There was a fresh bedding area of one animal about 30 feet to the southwest of where the animal died; no other beds were observed close by.

The investigation concluded the cause of mortality was a result of the injury and not predation.

### **Mortality Report - Ram 45882 on September 7, 2021**

**By: David Kuhn – Region IV Wildlife Specialist**

A mortality signal was detected on August 30, 2021 from ram 45882 in Unit 44AW. This ram was aged at 10 years old upon collaring and 11 years old upon his mortality. He was located August 31, 2021 in the bottom of a canyon on the northern portion of the unit. Four vultures were present when I arrived at the mortality location but little damage had been done at this point. The ram appeared normal for the most part. His rear quarters/hips area seemed slightly thinner but nothing major. Nothing appeared out of the ordinary upon inspection. We speculate that cause of death could be natural causes.



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## A Sky High Ram

*Submitted By Kyle Meintzer*

One of the very first projects the California Chapter of WSF took on after it was founded in 2001 was convincing the California DFW to conduct a sheep survey in the White Mountains just east of Bishop, California near the CA/NV state line. We'd been hearing from people in-the-know that there might be 200 or more sheep there.

Together, with the help of Dr. Vern Bleich, who was essentially running the CDFW's sheep program back then, sheep surveys were conducted in two consecutive years by Cody Schroeder, a grad student of Dr. Bleich. Due to the high elevations, for safety issues helicopter surveys were not an option, so the surveys were done on-the-ground by Cody. As memory serves me, 279 sheep were counted in one year and 280 were tallied the other year. Both surveys were fully funded by the California Chapter of the WSF.

Why? Because that's what WSF chapters and affiliates do! If you are not a member of your local chapter or affiliate of WSF, join now! Conservation of wild mountain sheep and increasing hunter opportunity are big parts of their mission!

Those surveys led to the White Mountain unit being opened as a hunt zone in 2006 and since then, fifty lucky people have had once-in-a-lifetime desert bighorn sheep tags in the White Mountain unit. To my great surprise and delight, when the California draw results were posted in mid-June, I learned I would be one of them after twenty years of applying for California sheep. Wow!

Yes, I said desert bighorn sheep! At 13,000'! And they inhabit the high mountains far above the timberline, no less. Not surprisingly, people often ask me if these are 'California bighorn sheep.' They are not. Oddly, other than the occasional ram which wanders into California from southern Oregon or northwestern Nevada in search of a girlfriend, there are no California bighorn sheep in California. Go figure.

If you ever consider applying for a White Mountain unit tag, be in the best cardio-vascular shape of your life BEFORE you apply. If you are not already in serious cardio-vascular shape before you learn you've drawn a tag that will only give you two months to get in such shape. It's unlikely you'll be able to do that. Because if you draw, you'll be hunting tough terrain at ridiculously high elevations up to 13,000.' At 13,000', there is a serious shortage of oxygen. If you do draw, contact your personal physician immediately for advice.

I can't overstate this! At elevations that high, even long-time and very experienced people have had serious oxygen deficiency issues. One well-known California outfitter had a serious altitude related issue there not long ago, even though he'd not had any issues prior to that. He needed EMT help just to stay alive!

When I learned of that, I got a little concerned, so I called my physician for his advice and while I've had no history of altitude-related issues even though I'd taken a ram in Wyoming in 2016 at 11,600,' he recommended I take Diamox, which I did, solely as a precaution. Better safe than sorry.

Fortunately, I encountered no problems, although when I returned home just five days after I'd left, I saw I'd lost 4-5 pounds. All water, no doubt, because even though we'd not experienced long days of heat or tough physical exertion, I'd had no signs at all of dehydration. My weight returned to my pre-hunt weight within three days. The weight loss was undoubtedly just a high-altitude thing.

As it usually does, the 2019 California application booklet warned that people should not apply for the White Mountain Unit unless they were in "above average physical condition." After my hunt, I talked with Regina Vu, the DFW's Sheep Coordinator about that warning. She agreed the warning in the application booklet should likely be toughened up. I noted that a high percentage of men consider themselves to be in 'above average condition,' even though that's not mathematically possible. I told her, "Trust me, it's a 'guy thing.'"

Success rates in the Whites run less than 100% almost solely because some of the folks who draw this tag are unable to handle the physical challenge. These are Once-In-A-Lifetime tags, so if you draw, please, please, please, don't be one of those unfortunate souls!

When you apply for a sheep tag, your draw odds will seem to be impossibly long. But if you apply religiously over the years in several states and do your homework, the odds soon become weighted in your favor and at some point, you likely WILL draw a tag or more. As many have said before, if you don't apply, you cannot draw. As proof, since 2014 I've drawn sheep tags three times in three different states! So "Apply, Apply, Apply!"

I've also learned from personal experience that the more physically demanding a sheep unit is, the better your draw odds will be. Why? Because most applicants are unwilling to apply for physically challenging units.

When I learned I'd drawn the tag I contacted Jake Franklin, whom I immediately hired to guide me. Jake and I have now hunted on three sheep hunts and he's first class from start to finish. He's ethical, hardworking, great to be with, and, man, does he ever do his research!

Our crew packed into our spike camp the day before the season opened. Early that afternoon, Jake got kicked HARD just below the rib cage by a mule. How hard? He told me his first thought was that the mule had killed him. Seriously!

Fortunately, despite significant soreness and a day of nausea, he was able to continue. Since then, he'd learned he had a mildly lacerated liver which would likely mend, which it now has. Thank God the mule didn't hit him in the ribs or worse!

Late on Day One, we bedded four rams near the top of a canyon, one of which was clearly a book ram. Right after dawn the next day we found them and they began to move within range. We immediately moved as close as we'd dared to get. I cleared out a bunch of rocks and gravel so I could get comfortable shooting in a prone position while using my backpack as a rest.

Fortunately, within a few minutes the biggest ram turned and offered me a quartering away shot at 381 yards at a 25 degree downhill angle. When I shot, he tipped over immediately without taking a step and the hunt was over. We were at 12,800' when I pulled the trigger.

At that point, all we had to do was figure out the best way to get down to him, then how to get him back out. (ADVICE: Practice shooting using your backpack as a rest. I can pretty much guarantee you will not be packing in your Lead Sled!)

After we celebrated, we headed down to him and took dozens of pictures before boning him out, loading him up, then climbing back up. The climb back up reminded me of the Paul Simon hit song, '*Slip Sliding Away*,' because much of the climb involved taking steps forward only to have the rocks and stones under our feet slide back down an equal amount. Then it was, repeat, repeat, repeat.

When we got back to camp, everyone was freaking out about how cool the ram was. Same thing when I took him to the taxidermist the next day. The horns on the rams in the Whites tend to flair out, but also tend not to hold their mass. This ram flared out AND held his mass. Most of the rams also tend to rub their horns on pine trees. So the horns accumulate sap and turn dark where they get rubbed. That gives the ram amazing character and this ram was no different. We could actually feel and smell the sap.

At check in, Mike Morrison of CA DFW scored him at 172 5/8" gross, the exact same score I got when I measured him the next day. Sixty-three days later, his official Boone and Crockett score came in at 172 1/8" gross, 171 0/8" net. This was not only a once-in-a-lifetime tag, it was also a once-in-a-lifetime experience!

In addition to Jake, Chris Settelmeier and Andy Moeckel were along to help on my hunt, which was a big plus. Coincidentally, Chris lives not far from me in Reno, and while we were just casual acquaintances prior to this hunt, we'd never actually met to the point we really knew each other. As I would soon learn, Chris is exactly the kind of guy you want with you on a sheep hunt. And Andy was equally helpful in addition to being a terrific photographer. The biggest problem I faced in preparing for the hunt was that California has completely banned lead ammo for all hunting.

While I looked everywhere for non-lead ammo for my preferred rifle, a Nosler 6.5 x 284 Norma, no one had any in stock. So I had to switch to a Tikka .270 WSM and lucky me, Mark Fore and Strike in Reno had Federal Premium 130 gr. non-lead ammo in stock. (Coincidentally, both rifles I'd won in raffles at CA WSF banquets.) After a couple of trips to the Washoe County Regional Shooting Facility, I had it zeroed in to the best of my abilities.

I later learned I was actually the third non-resident to have his number come up in the CA draw. Given California had a maximum of two non-resident tags available in the 2019 draw that could have eliminated me. But fortunately for me, neither of the two non-residents who were drawn ahead of me got tags because by the time they were drawn, the tags in the units they'd applied for had already been fully subscribed.

That's one of the reasons I applied for the White Mountain Unit. It's physically challenging and at extreme altitudes. Hence, most folks don't want to deal with that. As a result, the Whites tend to have the best draw odds in the state.

Final Note: As we were heading back to our spike camp with the ram, Jake told me, "I failed." My immediate reply was, "What??? We just took an amazing ram! So how could you have failed?" His answer was that he'd never seen that ram previously and that he should have known he was there. Pretty incredible, but it should tell you how seriously Jake takes his job.





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## Utah DWR and partners - Desert Bighorn Sheep Nursery

[https://wildlife.utah.gov/news/utah-wildlife-news/1315-dwr-and-partners-launch-first-desert-bighorn-sheep-nursery.html?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://wildlife.utah.gov/news/utah-wildlife-news/1315-dwr-and-partners-launch-first-desert-bighorn-sheep-nursery.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

SALT LAKE CITY - The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is partnering with Young Living to create the first "nursery" for desert bighorn sheep in Utah in an effort to help grow the species' population in the state.

The new desert bighorn sheep nursery will be located on roughly 1,800 acres of private property - the SkyRider Wilderness Ranch - owned and managed by Young Living in Hanna, Duchesne County. The area provides a water source and good habitat for bighorn sheep, and it is properly fenced to prevent them from wandering off the property.

While Antelope Island has served as a nursery herd for several years for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, this will be the first nursery area for desert bighorns in the state.

"We are really excited about this area and the opportunity it will provide to grow our desert bighorn populations in Utah," DWR Once-In-A-Lifetime Species Coordinator Riley Peck said. "There have been some disease issues with our bighorn sheep populations in the past, and this fenced area will



provide a place for our herds to safely grow. This nursery herd allows us to have long-term viability of desert bighorn sheep in Utah. Whenever we have a need to supplement or create new populations in the state, we will have our own internal bighorn sheep population and can be self-sufficient in maintaining healthy herds. The benefit of this nursery area cannot be overstated."

"My great-grandfather told me when I was 10 years old, 'My boy, whatever you do in this life, leave something behind that will make this world a better place for those coming,'" Young Living Founder D. Gary Young said.

The DWR is partnering with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to get the initial desert bighorn sheep for the nursery herd. The nursery area can support roughly 150 bighorn sheep. Hunting will not be allowed on the property.

"We will maintain a viable number of desert bighorn sheep on this property and the additional animals will be relocated to other Utah areas to help supplement those bighorn sheep populations or to start new herds," Peck said. "We are so grateful to Young Living, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife and the Wild Sheep Foundation for their partnership in these crucial conservation efforts. We are very appreciative of the generosity of the Nevada Department of Wildlife for giving Utah hundreds of bighorn sheep over the years to repopulate our herds." There are currently around 2,800 desert bighorn sheep and 1,500 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in Utah.



*SkyRider Wilderness Ranch  
Photo courtesy Young Living*

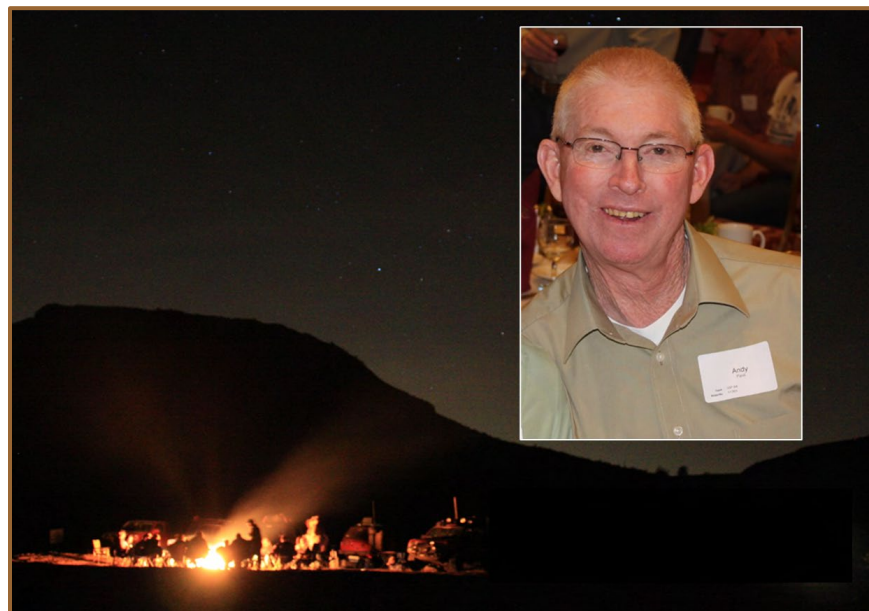
# In Memory of Andrew M. Pauli (1953-2021)

*Submitted by Vern Bleich*

Hunters and other conservationists familiar with California's Mojave Desert lost one of their strongest supporters on 8 April 2021 with the unexpected passing of California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Wildlife Biologist Andrew Pauli.

Andy was a dedicated sportsman, a true friend of hunters and other outdoorsmen, and he fulfilled his role as a wildlife biologist very capably. He did not have a penchant for notoriety, but his efforts on behalf of conservation were recognized widely. His work ethic, combined with his tremendous athletic ability and the outstanding eye-hand coordination developed during his athletic career, led to his being among the initial CDFG employees approved as aerial net-gunners. In 1989, he was honored for his service on behalf of desert wildlife by the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep with the Bicket-Landells Award, which was established in honor of BLM Wildlife Biologist Jim Bicket and Helicopter Pilot Don Landells who died while conducting a bighorn sheep survey at Clark Mountain on 6 October 1986. In 1996, he served as Chair of the 40th meeting of the Desert Bighorn Council in Holtville, California. Upon retirement, Andy was presented with the Service-Above-Self Award presented by the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep, and the California Wild Sheep Foundation recognized his many selfless contributions with its Above-and-Beyond Award.

Desert wildlife and bighorn sheep in particular—along with California's sportsmen and the public in general—have been the beneficiaries of Andy Pauli's many contributions to conservation. He was a kind and generous person, a dedicated employee, a fine naturalist and avid sportsman, and he was widely respected by his peers. He was humble and unassuming, he readily and willingly accepted the sometimes less-than-glamorous tasks to which he was assigned, and he loved his family dearly. His positive attitude, pleasing personality, and many contributions to the conservation of desert wildlife should not be forgotten. Andy will be missed by all that worked with him, knew him, or loved him. In his absence the desert will be less than what it had become, but it will remain far more than it would have been had he not landed there.





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## KUIU Funds Conservation in Arizona

<https://www.kuiu.com/blogs/our-story/conservation-direct>

Fall 2021 – KUIU sponsored bighorn sheep conservation in Arizona by providing \$165,000 to augment bighorn sheep populations. On a tour around the state; AGFD, ADBSS, KUIU and Leopold personnel captured rocky mountain bighorn sheep near Morenci, AZ and translocated them to East Clear Creek. Then traveled to the Mineral Mountains and Silverbell Mountains to capture desert bighorn sheep and translocate them to the Picacho Mountains; and then to the Plomosa Mountains for translocation into the Harcuvar Mountains.

Many Thanks to KUIU’s Conservation Direct initiative and the men and women who traveled to Arizona to make the project a success. Not only will desert bighorn sheep benefit from this effort but the AGFD funds that can be redirected other projects will benefit a number of wildlife species beyond this project. Take a look at their websites <https://www.kuiu.com/blogs/our-story/conservation-direct> to learn more.



## 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).*

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