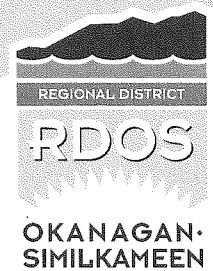


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August 13, 2010

File No.:0400.20

The Honourable Steven Thomson  
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands  
PO Box 9043 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

The Honourable Barry Penner  
Ministry of Environment  
PO Box 9047 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Ministers:

**Re: Wild and Domestic Sheep Conflict**

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California Bighorn sheep are iconic to the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen and are an important cultural species to First Nations, an integral part of the biodiversity of our unique region and a significant economic and recreational resource through wildlife viewing and hunting in the Okanagan-Similkameen.

In 1999 the Bighorn sheep in the South Okanagan were decimated by an outbreak illness passed from domestic sheep to wild sheep called the Mannheimia bacteria. This causes a pneumonia-like illness in the wild sheep which is 80 to 100% fatal. In a few months after this outbreak in our region the population of the sheep went from 450 to 150.

It has taken a decade and significant financial investment to successfully recover the wild Bighorn sheep of the South Okanagan. In the past 18 months or so, a number of wild California Bighorn sheep were spotted within enclosed pastures alongside domestic sheep in the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys.

It is currently provincial policy that wild sheep that come in close contact with domestic sheep or goats are destroyed before they can return to their herd and potentially pass along the bacteria. In the last 18 months at least 6 Bighorn sheep have been destroyed due to contact to domestic animals. Wild sheep are dying off adjacent to British Columbia, and it is a matter of time before this occurs again here without proper management.

On behalf of the Regional District Board, I request that your Ministry work with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen towards and acceptable solution to mitigate and address the risk to the wild California Bighorn sheep populations due to contact with domestic species.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Ashton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dan Ashton  
RDOS Board Chair

Cc: Readers File  
Bill Newell  
MoE  
B. White, South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program Manager