

**March 7, 2017**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Board of Supervisors**

**Item #12a-**  
**Direction to Staff re**  
**Conway Ranch RFP**  
**Tony Dublino**

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Friday, March 03, 2017 2:56 PM  
**To:** Leslie Chapman; Helen Nunn  
**Subject:** Fwd: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse any formatting errors!

Thanks, Shannon

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Nanci Cotton <[nanciz@cox.net](mailto:nanciz@cox.net)>  
**Date:** March 3, 2017 at 2:18:27 PM PST  
**To:** <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Cc:** <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>, <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>, <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>, <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>, <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

Mono County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to support the protection of our endangered Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (SNBS). Please terminate domestic sheep (and goat) grazing at Conway Ranch to prevent the serious threat of infecting the SNBS with domestic sheep diseases.

The adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is especially true for this situation. As I'm sure you know, our iconic native bighorns lack resistance to the diseases of domesticated sheep. One round of illness could cause a catastrophic die-off that would devastate the genetic diversity of the SNBS. There is no cure for extinction.

Again, please end domestic sheep and goat grazing at Conway Ranch to support the recovery efforts for the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nanci Cotton

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 04, 2017 6:39 AM  
**To:** Leslie Chapman; Helen Nunn  
**Subject:** Fwd: Bighorn sheep and Conway Ranch

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse any formatting errors!

Thanks, Shannon

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** lynn or mark <[lynnimarkl@hotmail.com](mailto:lynnimarkl@hotmail.com)>  
**Date:** March 3, 2017 at 7:54:38 PM PST  
**To:** "[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)" <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>, "[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)" <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>, "[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)" <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>, "[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)" <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>, "[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)" <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>, "[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)" <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Bighorn sheep and Conway Ranch

Dear Supervisors,

I urge the Board to act to insure the maximum protection of the local populations of Bighorn Sheep. Domestic sheep grazing in the habitat of Bighorn's is a known cause of Bighorn mortality via the transference of disease. Sheep grazing at Conway Ranch needs to be eliminated to help insure the health of our Bighorn herd.

Sincerely,

Mark Langner  
Coleville, Ca

March 4, 2017

Mono County Board of Supervisors  
P.O. Box 715  
Bridgeport, CA 93517

Subject: Domestic Sheep Grazing has no place in Mono County

Dear Mono County Board of Supervisors:

Last summer, I joined Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep expert John Wehausen on a trip to see the elusive and endangered bighorn sheep for the first time. Seeing these animals, even when they were in plain sight just above us, was a challenge at first—what looked like a rock would suddenly move, and there was a bighorn! We saw an entire herd of them, some even with small lambs, and I was awestruck at how they live in such harsh, rocky environments and how nimble they can be on the talus slopes. These majestic animals are a symbol of the Sierra and Mono County, but this population is threatened every time domestic sheep are permitted to graze just below the bighorn habitat.

Domestic sheep are carriers of a respiratory disease that domestic sheep are immune to, but is fatal to bighorns. All it takes is a single contact between a domestic sheep and a bighorn for the bighorn to become infected. Once the bighorn returns to his herd, he can then quickly infect the entire herd, killing that herd. As long as domestic sheep grazing is allowed near bighorn habitat, the bighorn will remain endangered, as it is too easy for an entire herd to be wiped out after just a single encounter with a domestic sheep.

Yosemite National Park has spent a considerable amount of time and money to reintroduce Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep to their native range. Mono County should support the efforts of the park by banning sheep grazing on Conway Ranch to eliminate the threat of disease from domestic sheep on the bighorn population. Mono County should also follow the lead of federal agencies who have closed allotments to domestic sheep grazing due to the risk of disease transmission to bighorns.

Beyond the importance of protecting this cherished and iconic species, which is found nowhere else on Earth, allowing the continued grazing of domestic sheep also does not make sense financially. Can the county afford the rigorous environmental analysis that will be required if domestic sheep grazing is continued? Even if the lessee pays for this analysis, is this the best use of County staff and resources? It is also likely that the County will end up in costly litigation if domestic sheep grazing is allowed to continue, which the County could lose, putting additional burden on taxpayers.

Now is the chance for Mono County to determine the future of the Sierra Nevada Bighorn sheep. I urge the Board of Supervisors to terminate domestic sheep grazing on Conway Ranch to protect this iconic, endangered animal that deserves the highest protection, especially in a county where our motto is "Wild by Nature." Thank you for your time and I hope you consider my comments on this issue that is important to me.

Sincerely,

Andrew Youssef

Lee Vining Resident

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 04, 2017 12:27 PM  
**To:** Leslie Chapman; Helen Nunn  
**Subject:** Fwd: Domestic Sheep Grazing Licence

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse any formatting errors!

Thanks, Shannon

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Robert Di Paolo <[rdd11@humboldt.edu](mailto:rdd11@humboldt.edu)>  
**Date:** March 4, 2017 at 11:08:02 AM PST  
**To:** <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>, <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>, <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>, <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>, <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>, <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject: Domestic Sheep Grazing Licence**

To the Mono County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing with regards to the domestic sheep grazing on Conway Ranch. I am concerned that continued sheep grazing on Conway Ranch will jeopardize the well-being of the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (SNBS) at a financial cost to Mono County.

The SNBS are a unique and endangered species found only in our backyard. A tremendous interagency effort has been taken to restore the SNBS to their historic ranges in Yosemite National Park and Mono County should support this effort. The opportunity for people to see these animals in the wild could be a major attraction for visitors to Mono County..

Domestic sheep grazing poses the greatest risk to the recovery of the SNBS. SNBS populations can be decimated from diseases introduced by domestic sheep and goats, as has been well documented. Domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch could completely undermine the recovery efforts of the SNBS.

I am also concerned that renewing sheep grazing leases could come at a great financial cost to Mono County. Before sheep grazing leases are renewed, an environmental analysis should be conducted to understand potential impacts on the SNBS. Even with an extensive environmental analysis, the high risk of disease transfer to SNBS could lead to a lawsuit against the

County. Renewing grazing leases therefore will likely be an expensive and time consuming process, resources that could be better spent elsewhere.

In the interest of the SNBS and the County, I hope you will consider management options for Conway Ranch that do not include domestic sheep.

Thank you for your time.

Robert Di Paolo

PO Box 392

Lee Vining, California

93541

March 5, 2017

Shannon Kendall, Clerk  
Mono County Board of Supervisors  
PO Box 715  
Bridgeport, CA 93517

Dear Ms. Kendall

I am a resident of Chalfant Valley writing to oppose domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch. It has been widely established that such activities were a major factor in decimating the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep (SNBS) populations of the high country. How is it possible that after decades of work and millions of dollars spent to restore populations of this magnificent creature, we are willing to risk it all for such a negligible benefit to the county?

Any revenues the county collects from grazing permits pale compared with the money generated by the tourist trade. How many people come to Mono County in hopes of seeing domestic sheep? How much will the county have to pay when lawsuits are brought against it for recklessly endangering this protected species?

I strongly urge the county to protect this unique asset by ceasing domestic sheep grazing activities in this area, and to instead focus on uses that pose no threat to SNBS.

Thank you

Betsy McDonald  
PO Box 165  
Bishop, CA 93515

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 05, 2017 11:02 AM  
**To:** Helen Nunn; Leslie Chapman  
**Subject:** Fwd: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse any formatting errors!

Thanks, Shannon

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** hoffmann <[hoffmann@qnet.com](mailto:hoffmann@qnet.com)>  
**Date:** March 5, 2017 at 10:00:00 AM PST  
**To:** Shannon Kendall <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Cc:** Stacy Corless <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>, Larry Johnston <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>, Fred Stump <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>, Bob Gardner <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>, John Peters <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

March 5, 2017

Ann Hoffmann  
25669 Highway 6 PMB H  
Benton, California 93512

(via email)  
Mono County Board of Supervisors  
PO Box 715  
Bridgeport, California 93517

Dear Supervisors,

Thirty-six years ago, 1981, my husband, Walt, and I took a day's journey into Birch Canyon, located at the northern end of Hammil Valley. We accompanied John Wehausen searching for big horn sheep. We surely saw signs of sheep, however, I do not remember seeing individuals as we climbed up the creek bed's side walls. What sticks out in my memory is the local rancher racing up the dirt roadway concerned that folks were nearby his water source. So as then, it is now. We humans parse out divisions while the wild animal searches for food, water, shelter and space, fighting to survive perils we humans throw into that animal's path.

I will be attending and hope to learn more about the current issue of domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch at the March 7 Supervisors' meeting through information being provided by US Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. That's the



“parsing,” part of the issue, the listening, reading, evaluating, deciding the fate of big horn sheep populations living in and about Lundy Canyon, so close to domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch.

For my personal part, the “gut” part of living in this world, I urge the Mono County Board of Supervisors to terminate domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch. Protection of wildlife and open space is the number one priority

Sincerely,

Ann Hoffmann

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 05, 2017 3:49 PM  
**To:** Leslie Chapman; Helen Nunn  
**Subject:** Fwd: Conway Ranch Sheep Grazing Permit Re-Issuing

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse any formatting errors!

Thanks, Shannon

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Sherryl Taylor <[sherrylmtaylor@gmail.com](mailto:sherrylmtaylor@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** March 5, 2017 at 2:28:32 PM PST  
**To:** <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>, <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>, <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>, <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>, <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>, <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Conway Ranch Sheep Grazing Permit Re-Issuing

Dear Mono County Supervisor:

During the past 20 years that I have lived in the Sierras, I have encountered Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (SNBS) three times. It was amazing to see these iconic animals in the wild. Some of the bighorn sheep I encountered are part of the Lundy Canyon herd. Federal and State wildlife biologists have stated that these bighorns are close enough to domestic sheep presently grazing on Conway Ranch to acquire respiratory diseases that could decimate the Lundy Canyon Bighorn herd. I am writing to urge you to allow the sheep grazing leases on Conway Ranch to expire and reissuing of the leases to not occur. After decades-long efforts to re-introduce the SNBS to its habitat, the risk of infection from domestic sheep and decimation of the herd is too great to leave to chance. What a shame it would be to lose the SNBS from our area! And how unfortunate it would be for Mono County to face financial loss from law suits that might occur if the herd is lost. I urge you to allow the domestic sheep grazing lease on Conway Ranch to expire.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sherryl Taylor  
340 Fir Street  
P.O. Box 1638  
Mammoth Lakes, CA

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 05, 2017 7:07 PM  
**To:** Leslie Chapman; Helen Nunn  
**Subject:** Fwd: domestic sheep at Conway Rancy  
**Attachments:** 3-5-17 BOS letter.pdf; ATT00001.htm

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse any formatting errors!

Thanks, Shannon

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Lisa Isaacs <[lijm.isaacs@gmail.com](mailto:lijm.isaacs@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** March 5, 2017 at 5:55:32 PM PST  
**To:** <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>, <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>, <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>, <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>, <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Cc:** <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** domestic sheep at Conway Rancy

Honorable Supervisors,

I have been relatively quiet of late when it comes to community matters, but I feel the issue currently before you concerning domestic sheep at Conway Ranch just too important of an environmental issue to not weigh in. Therefore, please accept and consider this letter with the relevant agenda item up for consideration by the Board of Supervisors this Tuesday, March 7.

I urge you to end the practice of and allotment for domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch – a property where domestic sheep graze in close proximity to the mountain habitat of endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. I have arrived at this view in large part due to my personal experience with the habits of domestic sheep. As a child, my family had a small herd of domestic sheep. They constantly tried to break out of their fenced pasture and occasionally succeeded. After one such break out, the entire herd disappeared into the surrounding hills. We never saw or *herd* from again. Additionally, on two separate occasions over the past few years, I have come across lost domestic sheep wandering alone in the Sierra. My point is that domestic sheep are kind of like viruses: you can do your best to control them, but a few always escape and run wild.

Sheep – domestic and wild – are grazers and therefore, natural roamers. In such close grazing proximity as exists at Conway Summit, it's only a matter of time before both come in contact with each other if the present situation continues. As we have all learned over time, when such encounters occur, it's the bighorn sheep that suffer the most, and Mono County will be held responsible. As a Mono County resident and voter, I do not want these majestic wild animals harmed by government folly, and as a Mono County taxpayer, I do not want to bear the cost of litigation likely to be brought against Mono County.

Over the years, I have enjoyed seeing Rocky Mountain bighorns in Colorado and Montana. I have also hiked up our local Warren Canyon several times hoping to see a herd of bighorn sheep

that others have seen in this location, but I have yet to spot them here. Still, one day soon, I would love to see Sierra bighorns in my own 'backyard.' Yosemite National Park has made a tremendous commitment to, and huge strides toward, restoring and recovering these native animals. I would like to see Mono County follow suit in protection of these animals. Sierra Nevada bighorns and their relatives are an iconic image of mountain habitats world over. As our local decision makers, please act now to protect and restore their numbers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

*Lisa*

Lisa Isaacs  
P.O. Box 1303  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

cc: [skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)

March 5, 2017

Mono County Board of Supervisors

P.O. Box 715

Bridgeport, CA 93517

Sent via email to [skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov) & to Board members

Re: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep & Conway Ranch Grazing Request for Proposals

Dear Members of the Board,

I respectfully request that the Board take action to end domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch. There are three reasons I support this action: 1) there is ample scientific evidence to justify the action; 2) such action would be consistent with similar actions taken by federal agencies that have been confronted with the issue of risk of contact between domestic sheep and bighorn sheep; and 3) there is strong public support in favor of protecting the native and endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep that reside near Conway Ranch and, consequently, ceasing domestic sheep grazing on the Conway Ranch property.

There is extensive published and peer-reviewed evidence regarding the significant risk domestic sheep pose to wild bighorn sheep by transmitting deadly disease. Some of this material has been presented to the Board by the wildlife agencies responsible for recovery of the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. Other information is available via public websites including <http://bighornhealth.org/> and <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/snbs/Literature.html>. This information represents the widely accepted state-of-knowledge on bighorn sheep disease science. I support the conclusion of the scientists at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the risk of disease transmission from sheep at Conway Ranch is simply too high to justify allowing continued sheep grazing there.

Federal agencies responsible for issuing domestic sheep grazing permits have also recognized the threat posed to bighorn. The U.S. Forest Service and BLM have closed and/or modified numerous grazing permits in order to ensure adequate separation of domestic sheep from bighorn sheep and reduce the risk of contact. The U.S. Ninth Circuit court also recently acknowledged the threat posed by domestic sheep to bighorn sheep in a decision issued in March, 2016. (See <https://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2016/03/02/14-35445.pdf>.) While the court's decision was procedural in nature the court also upheld the legitimacy of the scientific analysis conducted by the Forest Service to determine that closure of certain allotments was warranted. (Note also that the bighorn sheep that occur in the Rocky Mountain States which were the subject of the Court's decision are not a federal endangered or threatened species, unlike the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep.)

The public strongly supports protecting Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, as evidenced by the numerous letters the Board has received (see March 7, 2017 packet). Members of the public from near and far have asked Mono County to terminate sheep grazing and either allow cattle

grazing or simply allow the current sheep grazing lease to expire and not issue a new grazing permit. Some people have experienced the thrill of seeing wild bighorn in nearby Lundy Canyon or Parker Pass, while for others just knowing they are present is sufficient. These sheep are an iconic emblem of the High Sierra and of Mono County, and the effort to recover them deserves Mono County's full support.

I thank Mono County for its longtime commitment to ensuring this stunning piece of property remains undeveloped. By acquiring the Conway Ranch and placing a deed-restricted conservation easement on it, Mono County has ensured that the property will remain open space and wildlife habitat in perpetuity. However, as a taxpayer I have concerns about the County's fiscal investments in Conway Ranch (past and anticipated), which appear to be substantial. I hope Mono County will examine at a *future* meeting the costs vs. benefits of continuing to own and oversee the management of the Conway Ranch property, and ultimately make a decision that is best for this beautiful piece of land and for Mono County.

Thank you for your efforts and for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sally Miller".

Sally Miller  
P.O. Box 22  
Lee Vining, CA 93541

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 4:31 AM  
**To:** Leslie Chapman; Helen Nunn  
**Subject:** Fwd: Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse any formatting errors!

Thanks, Shannon

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Jane Kim <[jane@inkdwell.com](mailto:jane@inkdwell.com)>  
**Date:** March 5, 2017 at 10:24:59 PM PST  
**To:** <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>, <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>, <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>, <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>, <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>, <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Cc:** Virginia Chadwick <[ginniebeth@me.com](mailto:ginniebeth@me.com)>  
**Subject:** Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep

Dear Mono County Board of Supervisors,

Thank you for all that you do for Mono County. I am from San Francisco and Mono County is truly one of the most spectacular regions in all of California. While the ongoing balance between wilderness and humanity is certainly not an easy one to strike, I am impressed and heartened that the residents of Mono County are dedicated to finding a balance where they can. I write to all of you today to express my hope that the balance between wild Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep and grazing domestic sheep can be found.

My first experience with the east side was seven years ago. I spent a summer in Yosemite National Park as a science visualization fellow through the Sierra Nevada Research Institute. It was during this experience that I discovered Sierra bighorn sheep. I had no idea that the Sierra Nevada had any bighorns much less ones so special and unique to this range. I fell in love and my love for these animals forged a deep connection with this part of California. The mountains would be incomplete without the bighorn sheep and it would be a shame to see them disappear especially if there was something that we could have done to keep them here, healthy and thriving.

I appreciate you considering this as you weigh your decisions, thanks again.

Very best,  
jane

---  
JANE KIM  
Artist | Founder  
[www.inkdwell.com](http://www.inkdwell.com)

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 8:18 AM  
**To:** Helen Nunn; Leslie Chapman  
**Subject:** FW: Protect the Sierra Nevada Big Horn Sheep

**From:** Malcolm Mosher, Jr. [<mailto:mmjr@me.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 7:43 AM  
**To:** Shannon Kendall <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>; Larry Johnston <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>; Stacy Corless <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>; Bob Gardner <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>; Fred Stump <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>; John Peters <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Protect the Sierra Nevada Big Horn Sheep

Dear Mono County Supervisors,

While we like the pastoral setting of sheep grazing on the Conway Ranch property, we value the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (SNBS) more. The risks of disease spreading through domestic sheep to the SNBS is just not worth the cost of an endangered species. We in the Lee Vining area have a unique gift in having the rare opportunities to see the SNBS in the wild. Where so much effort has been put into restoring them, transference of disease could wipe them out, not only in the Lundy Canyon area but also into Yosemite. These risks of disease are well documented, and I am sure you know them. With an abundance of other pasturing available for domestic sheep along the 395 corridor, please act on behalf of the SNBS and the residents of Mono County, as well as visiting hikers from all over the globe, in taking steps to ensure the survival of the SNBS by keeping domestic sheep out of Conway Ranch.

Sincerely,  
Malcolm and Ellen Mosher  
1054 Lundy Lake Road  
Lee Vining, CA 93541



**William Taylor**

P.O. Box 7363

Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Phone 760 709-6964 E-mail wthomsontaylor@gmail.com

March 2, 2017

Mono County board of Supervisors  
C/O Clerk of the Board  
PO Box 715  
Bridgeport, CA 93517

Subject: Presentation on Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

Honorable Supervisors Corless, Johnston, Stump, Peters, and Gardner,

Thank you for taking comments on the subject of Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep and the grazing leases on the Conway Ranch. I have read the correspondence related to this item and share the concerns expressed by both the California and United States Departments of Fish and Wildlife regarding the threat posed to the Sierra Nevada Bighorn from contact with domestic sheep.

The reestablishment of the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep has been a priority for both the California and U.S. Departments of Fish and Wildlife as well as the regional federal land management agencies. An enormous amount of energy and money has been put into the program and the result has been improvement in the health of the local bighorn populations. The presence of bighorns symbolizes the wild nature of the region and seeing sheep is a thrill for anyone lucky enough to have an encounter them in the wild. Any threat to the recovery program, even if remote, risks diminishing the image of the Eastern Sierra and Mono County as a place that has maintained environmental integrity.

While domestic sheep grazing has been a contributor to Mono County's economy for over 150 years and grazing on the Conway Ranch provides income to the county, the current leases will soon be up for renewal. That renewal should take into consideration potential impacts to the Conservation Values as referenced in the Conservation Easement and the Baseline Documentation Report in addition to the overall impact to the image and marketability of the region. The adjacency of Sierra Nevada Bighorn habitat to the Conway and Mattly ranches is listed in the section of the Baseline Report that covers the Conservation Values. While grazing is permissible, it is secondary to the preservation of the Conservation Values.

Based on the value of the Sierra Nevada bighorn as a part of the experience and image of our region, consistency with the goal of no impairment to the Conservation Values as stated in the Conservation Easement, and the large

investment on the parts of the land and wildlife management agencies to make the wild sheep reintroduction successful, I ask that you not renew the grazing leases for domestic sheep and continue to consider alternate management and use options for the property.

Thank you for your time and for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'B' and 'T'.



BERKELEY  
CARLSBAD  
FRESNO  
IRVINE  
LOS ANGELES  
PALM SPRINGS  
POINT RICHMOND  
RIVERSIDE  
ROSEVILLE  
SAN LUIS OBISPO

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** March 6, 2017

**TO:** Mono County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Malcolm Sproul

**SUBJECT:** Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep and the Conway/Mattley Ranch

I am writing to encourage the Board to remove domestic sheep grazing from the Conway/Mattley Ranch to prevent the likelihood of disease transmission from domestic sheep to the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep (SNBS) which use the nearby Lundy Canyon area. Domestic sheep carry respiratory pathogens that can cause fatal pneumonia when transmitted to wild bighorns. Major die-offs from diseases contracted from domestic sheep were most likely the primary cause of the decline in Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep numbers, ultimately resulting in their listing as endangered at the State and Federal level. The only effective method to prevent disease transmission is to prevent contact by separating SNBS and domestic sheep in time and space. The Conway/Mattley Ranch is one of the highest risk locations for contact between SNBS and domestic sheep. I urge you, as the managers of the Conway/Mattley Ranch, to end domestic sheep grazing at this location to remove this threat to the endangered SNBS.

The Conway/Mattley Ranch is subject to a conservation easement to protect its wildlife and open space resources. Domestic sheep grazing is an incompatible use with the purposes of the easement due to its demonstrated impact on an endangered wildlife species. Domestic sheep could easily be replaced by cattle grazing. Cattle grazing is a compatible use that is frequently used on conservation easements to assist with meeting wildlife management goals.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 10:55 AM  
**To:** Helen Nunn; Leslie Chapman  
**Subject:** FW: Restore and Conserve Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

**From:** Glenn Hockett [<mailto:glhockett@bresnan.net>]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 10:50 AM  
**To:** Shannon Kendall <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>; Stacy Corless <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>; Larry Johnston <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>; Fred Stump <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>; Bob Gardner <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>; John Peters <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Restore and Conserve Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

Dear Mono County Board of Supervisors:

Please retire domestic sheep use of the Conway property in order to prevent the likelihood of a deadly disease being transmitted from domestic sheep to the endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep in the area. A population of bighorn resides nearby in the Lundy Canyon area. The Conway property was procured by the County in 2000 via federal and state grants and is managed per a conservation easement to protect wildlife and open space; other uses such as livestock use are allowed but not required. Here are some key points to consider:

- Continued domestic sheep use isn't worth the risk to the bighorn and the cost to Mono County.
- Other management options for the Conway property should be considered in detail including a focus on wildlife and native species restoration, conservation and management.
- The Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep are an endangered species and iconic image of the Sierra Nevada. The SNBS is found nowhere else in the world. This is a National Treasure.
- The SNBS should be embraced and promoted by Mono County for their tremendous wildlife value. These iconic and remarkable animals are a draw for tourists, hikers and wildlife photographers from around the United States if not the world.
- Yosemite National Park has gone to great effort and expense to restore SNBS in their native range. Mono County should support the efforts of its neighbor agency and work with Yosemite to help recover and protect these magnificent animals.
- I have never seen a Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, but I hope to someday in the future. Please do all you can to ensure that opportunity is preserved.
- Continued domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch threatens the recovery of this unique species.
- There is a large body of evidence published in peer-reviewed literature that documents the fatal health risk that domestic sheep (and goats) pose to bighorn sheep.
- Domestic sheep use was identified as one of the primary issues of concern in the SNBS recovery plan that could adversely affect bighorn recovery efforts. The time to act is now.
- Courts in other states have recognized the high risk of disease being transferred from domestic sheep to wild bighorn, and federal agencies have closed allotments to domestic sheep use as a result.
- It is fiscally and ecologically appropriate to remove the impact of these domestic sheep and to consider bighorn sheep recovery and conservation a primary goal.
- Because of the high risk of disease transfer to bighorn, if the County allows domestic sheep use to continue it will likely end up in costly litigation, which the County may lose at added expense to taxpayers.

- The County should explore options for management of the Conway property that are fiscally and ecologically responsible, such as wildlife and native species restoration and conservation.

Thank you for considering these comments from a concerned citizen and wildlife advocate in Montana who hopes to see a Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep someday soon.

Sincerely,

Glenn Hockett  
745 Doane Rd.  
Bozeman, MT 59718  
(406) 586-1729

March 6, 2017

To: The Mono County Board of Supervisors

Re: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep and Grazing Request for Proposals at Conway Ranch

From: Ilene Mandelbaum

Dear Members of the Board,

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, I am hoping that the Board, having reviewed the materials submitted by the state and federal wildlife agencies and hearing their presentations, and after receiving considerable input from the public and your constituents, will decide that the domestic sheep grazing lease on Conway and Mattly Ranches should permanently expire. I urge the Board to add language to make it clear that Mono County acts to ensure that it does not impede the recovery of the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep, the remarkable endangered species in our backyard.

Mono County has accomplished much to ensure that the Conway and Mattly Ranches will remain as open space and managed for conservation values in perpetuity. This undertaking has come at a mounting cost, however, and may require too great a budgetary commitment in the future. I believe that the active management that this property deserves will require more than the current level of staffing and funding.

For instance, I believe the next logical step in considering future activities on the ranches is to reflect on the "Desired Conditions" for this uniquely important landscape in the Mono Basin. I hope these goals will be defined to be more than maintaining forage for livestock, but will also include the recovery of the biologically diverse native meadow ecosystems, healthy landscape linkages for migratory and nesting species such as mule deer and sage grouse, improved water quality and water holding capacity and restoration of degraded portions of the property, such as eroding ditch systems, disturbed fish rearing areas and deteriorating historical structures.

At this time, I do not believe that issuing RFPs for other types of livestock grazing, and the accompanying CEQA analysis, would be the best next step for meeting the above goals. Such an approach would be too narrowly focused on the impacts of a singular proposed activity, without encompassing the full range of goals for the property.

The Conway Ranch Conservation Easement provides broad objectives, but the botanical and biological baseline information cited is limited and dated, and there is little direction for actions to achieve environmental goals. This has resulted in little guidance for subsequent Operations Plans which, by default, can only look at maintaining the status quo. While livestock grazing could be used as a management tool, and would help support the irrigation activities needed to maintain green meadows, inviting such proposals is pre-mature to developing a sufficient understanding of current conditions and the conditions that need to be achieved.

I think it would be helpful to investigate the many ranchland, farmland and meadowland restoration projects going on in Sierra Nevada watersheds at present. Efforts include the recently formed Sierra Meadows Partnership and Sierra Meadows Strategy and ongoing efforts to rehabilitate agricultural

lands in the East Walker River Watershed. These are large collaborative efforts, which call for thorough field investigations of current conditions and analysis of potential and achievable desired conditions and restoration goals. These projects are being carried out through the partnerships of various interested agencies, conservation organizations and academic institutions, with the participation of botanical, range, wildlife and ecological restoration specialists. Often, ecologically sustainable farming and ranching activities can be considered as part of these projects.

When the Conservation Easement was being developed, I and others urged that a comprehensive management plan be undertaken with agency and public participation. At that time, the US Fish and Wildlife Service offered to search for funding for such an effort, (letter in the Board packet to Mono County, 2014). I believe that both the Bureau of Land Management and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife would also be interested in offering assistance, being strongly motivated to manage for species of special interest in their adjoining public lands.

Another approach would be to explore acquisition of the ranches by an entity that can take on the considerable commitment that active management requires. For instance, there are thousands of acres of State Wildlife Areas being managed by the State of California in Mono County. These locations were acquired because of their significant wildlife habitat and recreational values. Conway Ranch would certainly rise to this category of justification for public stewardship.

Sometimes it is essential to change a management priority in light of compelling information that a continuing activity jeopardizes a higher goal. I hope the Board will realize that its commitment to the recovery of the Sierra Nevada Big Horn Sheep outweighs its desire to support domestic sheep grazing at this particular location. Once the Board has acted to remove the threat posed by its lease for domestic sheep grazing, I hope that it will take the time to consider the best path forward for the future of this important landscape.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Ilene Mandelbaum  
PO Box 89  
Lee Vining, Ca 93541

March 5, 2017

Mono County Board of Supervisors  
PO Box 715  
Bridgeport, CA 93517

Dear Supervisors Corless, Gardner, Johnston, Peters, and Stump,

I am writing to urge you to vote tomorrow to *not* renew the domestic sheep grazing leases for Conway and Mattly ranches in the Mono Basin. Continued domestic sheep grazing isn't worth the risk to the bighorn and the cost to Mono County.

At the Mono Lake Committee, where I work, I have coordinated John Wehausen's Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep field seminar for ten years, which draws visitors from all over California. Participants arrive full of anticipation, spend the weekend watching the animals in the field supplemented by John's encyclopedic knowledge, and leave full of awe for this important species. The recovery efforts that John describes give people incredible hope, in a similar way that the story of Mono Lake does—we humans can set some things right, when we try. That's a life-changing message.

As a place that promotes itself as "Wild by Nature," Mono County should support the protection of Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, an embodiment of that wildness. Luckily for Mono County, the best way to protect bighorn sheep is straightforward: do not renew the current grazing leases, and do not allow domestic sheep or goats to graze on Conway and Mattly ranches in the future.

With the overwhelming scientific evidence of the fatal health risk that domestic sheep and goats pose to bighorn sheep, as well as precedents set in other states of grazing allotments being closed to protect bighorn, the decision to not renew the Conway and Mattly sheep grazing leases should be an easy one.

Continued domestic sheep grazing at Conway Ranch threatens the recovery of Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, to the direct benefit of just one rancher. In this scenario, Mono County assumes the risk of wiping out an entire endangered species and the possibility of litigation, for a nominal financial return. If litigation surrounding this issue increased my taxes here in Mono County, I would be quite upset.

Please consider other management options for the Conway Ranch including wildlife management—which is one of the priority uses from the original grants used to purchase the property—or cattle grazing. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Elin Ljung  
1700 Old Mammoth Rd, Unit G105  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546



## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 2:07 PM  
**To:** Leslie Chapman; Helen Nunn  
**Subject:** FW: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

**From:** Monte Weddle [<mailto:susanandmonte@att.net>]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 2:01 PM  
**To:** Shannon Kendall <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>; Stacy Corless <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>; Larry Johnston <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>; Fred Stump <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>; Bob Gardner <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>; John Peters <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep

**TO:** the honorable Mono County Board of Supervisors:

**RE:** BIG HORN SHEEP at Conway/Mattly Ranch

Several years ago, I saw a herd of Bighorn Sheep in the Anza-Borrego desert. It was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. I have yet to see the Sierra Nevada Bighorn sheep, but it is definitely on my "Bucket List."

As supervisors you will be deciding whether or not to allow domestic sheep to graze at the Conway/Mattly Ranch. Because of the risk of deadly bacteria possibly spreading to the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep, I urge you not to allow domestic sheep to graze at that location. It simply is not worth the risk. The Sierra Nevada Bighorn sheep are found no where else in the world. All it takes is one contact between a domestic sheep and a Bighorn to wipe out an entire herd of Sierra Nevada Bighorns.

I have many friends who come to visit Mono county in order to attend field trips, fish, and hike. They spend lots of money in Mono county so that they can escape the huge cities where they live. I encourage you to use the Conway/Mattly Ranch area in ways that will enhance tourist recreation. It is a prime spot for birding, biking, and hiking trails. By encouraging wildlife adventures which are so abundant in Mono county, you will also be stimulating the spending of tourist dollars.

Thank you for your hard work and for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Susan J. Weddle  
198 Parker Drive  
Twin Lakes, Bridgeport CA

619-224-7813  
760-932-7676  
[susanandmonte@att.net](mailto:susanandmonte@att.net)

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 3:29 PM  
**To:** Helen Nunn; Leslie Chapman  
**Subject:** FW: SNBS / Conway Ranch

**From:** Ron Walashek [<mailto:jilchadwick@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 06, 2017 3:26 PM  
**To:** Shannon Kendall <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>; Stacy Corless <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>; Larry Johnston <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>; Fred Stump <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>; [bgardner@mon.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mon.ca.gov); John Peters <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>; Virginia Chadwick <[ginniebeth@me.com](mailto:ginniebeth@me.com)>  
**Subject:** SNBS / Conway Ranch

Hello Shannon,

I have been a supporter of the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation for several years. I urge the board to support and protect the SNBS by discontinuing sheep grazing at Conway ranch.

The iconic Bighorns are a draw for many hikers, wildlife enthusiasts, and photographers, and I feel that allowing sheep grazing at Conway Ranch is not worth the risk of reducing their numbers. I've been inspired by the efforts of Yosemite National Park to increase the Bighorn herds in their range; I would like to see Mono County protect the SNBS from domestic, sheep borne disease so generations to come can experience the wonder and excitement of seeing these magnificent animals.

Thank You,

Jil Chadwick

6 March 2017

Re: Agenda Item on the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep and RFPs for Grazing on Conway and Mattly Ranches

Dear Mono County Board of Supervisors,

Herein is a short story about wet meadows, dense cottonwoods, and a vision of the future.

Thirty years ago (late 1980s) or so, and under the auspices of the Mono Lake Committee (MLC), I dedicated myself along with other staff members to prevention of a development proposed for construction in the Conway Ranch meadows. I walked the Conway Ranch and the lower Meadows multiple times, examining the deep black soil, water-loving plants, and hydrology to confirm that much of the ranch consists of jurisdictional wetlands. After Trust for Public Lands (TPL) purchased the property, I lead birdwatching groups to the meadows (Golden Gate Audubon Society; our group generally consist of older people that stay in motels and dine in local restaurants).

Dense cottonwoods. I would like to respectfully remind the board that much of Conway Ranch would remain a wetland even if flood irrigation ceased because of the ranch's natural springs and topographic location, and that this is a good point in time to examine the best use of water for habitat potential in the Mono Basin. Conway has senior water rights on Mill and Virginia creeks, and as you know the water that runs down Wilson Creek emanated from Mill Creek. Return of water to Mill Creek is an important element of long-term planning for restoration of the Mono Basin, and would result in a dense gallery forest of cottonwoods, high-quality wildlife habitat, and a gorgeous band of fall color for leaf-peeping tourists. From MLC Newsletter Fall 1996: "TPL...has acquired an option to purchase the Conway Ranch and associated Mill Creek water rights and would like to convey them to Mono County for open space preservation, development of a fish-rearing facility, and the *rewatering of Mill Creek* (italics mine)". A grant application was made to the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

Sage grouse. Like others, I share a concern that allowing (littleshorn) sheep grazing may result in disease transmission in bighorn sheep. I am also concerned about the future of sage grouse that use Conway Ranch. I would like to respectfully remind the board that sage grouse are impacted by grazing cattle as well as by grazing sheep. A desired condition analysis needs to be prepared by the county that analyzes all livestock grazing before any new grazing permits are issued. A superficial review of the scientific literature suggests that sage grouse populations inhabiting heavily grazed mountain big sagebrush communities may have declined because intense grazing reduced grasses and forbs (such as native wildflowers) necessary for nesting cover (Pedersen et al. 2003), and that cattle grazing increases likelihood of ravens using the grazed area which results in increased egg predation (Coates et al. 2016).

Many thanks,

Emilie Strauss  
Berkeley, CA

Literature cited.

Pederson, E.K., J.W. Connelly, J.R. Hendrickson, and W.E. Grant. 2003. Effect of sheep grazing and fire on sage grouse populations in southeastern Idaho. *Ecological Modeling* 165:23–47.

Coates, P. S., B. E. Brussee, K. B. Howe, K. B. Gustafson, M. L. Casazza, and D. J. Delehanty. 2016. Landscape characteristics and livestock presence influence common ravens: relevance to greater sage-grouse conservation. *Ecosphere* 7(2):e01203. 10.1002/ecs2.1203.

## Helen Nunn

---

**From:** Shannon Kendall  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 07, 2017 11:15 AM  
**To:** Helen Nunn; Leslie Chapman  
**Subject:** Fwd: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep and Grazing Proposals at Conway Ranch

Sent from my iPhone, please excuse any formatting errors!

Thanks, Shannon

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** <[kduvall@cebridge.net](mailto:kduvall@cebridge.net)>  
**Date:** March 7, 2017 at 11:04:02 AM PST  
**To:** <[scorless@mono.ca.gov](mailto:scorless@mono.ca.gov)>, <[ljohnston@mono.ca.gov](mailto:ljohnston@mono.ca.gov)>, <[fstump@mono.ca.gov](mailto:fstump@mono.ca.gov)>, <[skendall@mono.ca.gov](mailto:skendall@mono.ca.gov)>, <[bgardner@mono.ca.gov](mailto:bgardner@mono.ca.gov)>, <[jpeters@mono.ca.gov](mailto:jpeters@mono.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep and Grazing Proposals at Conway Ranch

Dear Mono County Board of Supervisors,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Conway Ranch domestic sheep grazing lease issue. As you know, the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep are an endangered species. The northern recovery unit contains 2 populations of bighorn sheep, the Mt. Gibbs and Mt. Warren herds.

By allowing domestic sheep to continue to graze on Conway Ranch, which is close to Lundy Canyon, Mt. Warren and not far from Mt. Gibbs, there is too much risk of the domestic sheep introducing bacteria which results in fatal pneumonia in bighorn sheep. This bacteria has been shown to appear in remote bighorn territory in the Mohave Desert and no one knows how it travels. Much of the Sierra Nevada bighorn population has been lost from past contact of domestic sheep and bighorn sheep.

Please vote no on the proposed domestic sheep lease on Conway (and Mattly) ranches to help the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep progress to recovery. Please let the lease expire. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Duvall  
91 Ocean View  
Bishop, CA.

Cole Hawkins  
PO Box 331  
9636 Hwy 167  
Lee Vining, CA  
93541  
3-7-17

760-937-4527

Dear Supervisors,

I am writing you to urge you reject anything that would reintroduce domestic sheep and sheep grazing into the Conway and Mattly Ranch areas.

I have seen them in Lee Vining, Lundy, and Virginia Lakes Canyons over the last 30 years. One year, John Weyehausen led campers from our Music and Ecology Camp up the Lundy Canyon trail until he spotted several Bighorn Sheep. He trained scopes on them and we had quite the view. The Bighorns are truly magnificent animals to see in the wild.

I have owned a house in Mono in the Mono Basin since 2000. My family farmed citrus in southern and central California for about 70 years. Most of my working life was on the ranch. I served on the Board of the Tulare County Farm Bureau as chair of their water committee. I earned a PhD from Texas A&M in 1998 in Wildlife and Fisheries Science and have been teaching college Biology for the last 19 years.. My wife, Priscilla and I have had a Music and Ecology Camp here for about 14 of the last 17 years, students, and often their families, have come from around the state to spend a week in Mono County.

A great deal of work has been put into managing and preserving the Nevada Bighorn Sheep. My impression is that their numbers are high enough that the return to a fairly healthy self sustaining population in the Sierras is possible. I also know that their numbers are low enough that the loss of one or two herds would push them much closer to a genetic bottle neck (loss of genetic variation, inbreeding, and potential fatal population declines.) This history of Bighorn and domestic sheep intermingling has generally ended poorly for our native Bighorns.

From an ecological, visual, educational standpoint, moderate cattle grazing at the proper time of year, would be a more practical grazing regime for for the Conway/Mattly ranch area than the far riskier sheep grazing. I am especially interested in the wildlife and botanical values of this area.

Thank you,  
Cole Hawkins, PhD

Supervisor Fred Stump  
Mono County Board of Supervisors

March 2, 2017

Dear Supervisor Stump,

There is wide agreement by scientists and public land managers that domestic sheep pose a serious risk to the health of Sierra Bighorn Sheep, which indicates that the time has come to end sheep grazing on Conway and Mattly Ranches after almost 150 years. The water spreading that has been done by sheep ranchers over the years is what has made these properties into the green meadows and fields that are beloved by so many today. These green fields and meadows also support the threatened greater sage-grouse and many, many other species of birds and wildlife. If the water management ends, the County could face a scenario where valuable natural resources are impacted by poor management (see Rosaschi Ranch).

Putting cattle on Conway Ranch could be a sustainable enterprise but would bring its own set of challenges including potential soil erosion and water quality concerns. Cattle would require increased fencing, which is detrimental to the greater sage-grouse and other wildlife.

Back in the late 1990s, Mono County stepped up to raise money and save Conway Ranch from becoming a fly fishing resort surrounded by a golf course and hundreds of residential units. I believe that the agencies and organizations who are advocating for Mono County to remove sheep grazing should step up now and assist the County collaboratively in determining the best future for these beautiful properties. The expertise and resources of the agencies and organizations in the Mono Basin and broader Eastern Sierra could go far in helping create and fund a sustainable plan for the property post-domestic sheep. The Conservation Easement and associated Management Plan provide a useful framework for collaboration and cooperation in ensuring the best outcomes for these lands.

Sincerely,

Karen Ferrell-Ingram  
140 Willow Road  
Swall Meadows, CA 93514

12a