

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

By
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It's really a pleasure today to welcome you to the Northern Wild Sheep Council meeting - particularly the out-of-state people who are attending. I would like to give you a key to the city, but of course I can't do that. However, if there are any services that I or any member of my department can provide, please let me know.

It really pleases me to see such a group of experts gathered here to exchange ideas and information on a big game animal that is such an important resource in Montana. Surely this meeting is bound to result in better information for all of us to operate under - a better understanding of bighorn management and the problems which I am sure we all face, many of us in common.

Of course, the one problem I know we all face is the threat of the antihunting movement that we see growing at such a rapid pace and increasing at an alarming rate. The only way I believe we can counteract something like this is to have good information on our populations, which is what we are here to provide today, and then exchange it with one another to get good public dissemination of that information to the hunting public - particularly to the young folks who are coming up and will be the hunters of tomorrow.

If we have a united organization and a united front to provide the public with the factual information they need, then they will provide for us the sport hunting we all enjoy. This is the place where the experts can gather and exchange information and ideas and fight about them and argue about them and stomp and shout - but the stomping, shouting and arguments should be confined to meetings such as this where I believe a difference of opinion is normal and logical, and not take the fights to the public, because if the experts begin to fight publicly in the media the do-gooders will move in and there will be nothing really harmed except the sheep. I think this is primarily what we are all interested in - the welfare of our wild sheep populations.

As an administrator, all I can ask is that I be provided with the very best information that is possible on which to base the management decisions that must be made, and I am sure a meeting such as this will go a long way toward providing myself and the various other administrators of the areas you represent the best information on which we can base our management decisions - so I think I will just say good luck in your meeting, and I'm looking forward to a lot of good things to come out of it.