



WILDLIFE CONFLICT RESOLUTION — RIO GRANDE GORGE, NEW MEXICO

Santos Grazing Allotment Agreement

Where conflicts between livestock and wildlife are prolonged and intractable, the National Wildlife Federation believes that public land grazing retirements can provide an equitable solution for ranchers and wildlife interests. In coordination with federal land managers, we negotiate with livestock ranchers to retire public land livestock grazing allotments that experience chronic conflict with wildlife, especially grizzly bears, wolves, bison and in New Mexico, bighorn Sheep. This market-based approach recognizes the economic value of public land livestock grazing permits and fairly compensates ranchers for retiring their leases. This approach establishes a new national model for resolving conflicts between livestock and critical wildlife habitat.

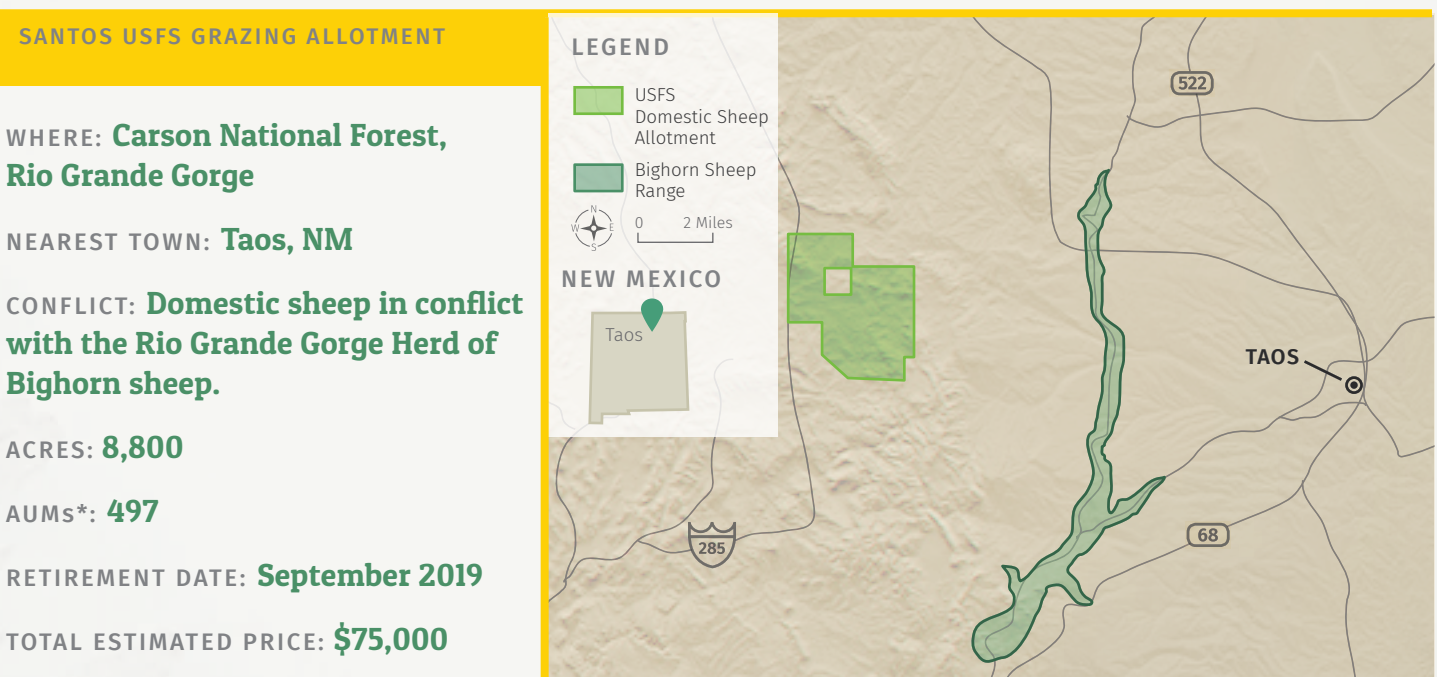
CONTACT

Bob McCready
Program Manager
720-340-1209
mccreadyb@nwf.org

The Opportunity

The Santos US Forest Service domestic sheep grazing allotment is located just west of the Rio Grande Gorge and Taos, New Mexico. The Gorge provides home to what many consider to be the most successful bighorn sheep herd in the United States. Although historically occupied by wild sheep as evidenced by the many petroglyphs in the Gorge, the species has long been absent. Thanks to transplants by the Taos Pueblo Tribe and New Mexico Game and Fish Department of a total of 47 bighorns in 2006 and 2007, the population has grown to 350 with some estimates as high as 400 animals. The presence of bighorn sheep in the Gorge is of great cultural and spiritual importance to the Taos Pueblo and because of its proximity to Taos and the ease of seeing them along the top of the Gorge walls, getting a glimpse of wild sheep has become a landmark stop for thousands of visitors that come to Taos and the Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument each year.

Unfortunately, domestic sheep carry a number of diseases that can and often do, decimate entire herds of bighorn sheep. The good news is that NWF has successfully negotiated a financial agreement with the rancher that holds the permit to this allotment allowing them to retire their grazing rights. This will permanently remove the risk of contact between these domestic sheep and bighorns and go a long way in eliminating the risk of disease among this iconic herd of bighorns protecting it for the people of the Taos Pueblo, the residents and visitors to Northern New Mexico.



*AUMS (ANIMAL UNIT MONTHS) IS A STANDARD MEASUREMENT OF THE AMOUNT OF FORAGE USED TO FEED A COW/CALF OR FIVE SHEEP IN ONE MONTH.

PHOTO CREDIT: Landscape (Flickr); Bighorn Sheep (Taos Pueblo); Petroglyphs (Dave Danner)