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## COMMENTS CONCERNING THE WEMINUCHE LANDSCAPE GRAZING ANALYSIS

My husband, Skip Zeller and I would like to go on record saying that we agree basically with Alternative #4 with the caveat that the 7 vacant allotments stay vacant and closed forever.

- ❖ Those vacant allotments are slowly returning to wilderness. Let's keep it this way since we are no longer making new wilderness in the Weminuche.
- ❖ The sheep industry has been in decline since the 1940's and it seems ridiculous to hold land for grazing when the industry will continue to decline. (Harvest, Public Media)
- ❖ In the 1960's the average person ate 4.51 pounds of lamb then in 2011 it was less than a pound showing that the industry is indeed slowing. This decline of sheep numbers started the same time that the production of beef, chicken and pork became more efficient. Lamb couldn't compete with them (Harvest, Public Media). This being the case we should be retiring more allotments rather than keeping the option of re-opening them in the future.
- ❖ The USDA reports that in 1867 there were 45 million sheep grazing in the U.S. By the 1990's it had dropped to around 80,000. From 1987-2007 there was double digit decline. Let this industry slow and then disappear as it is proving it will eventually. It is a dying industry and hasn't kept up which is what happens when an industry cannot compete.
- ❖ The world meat consumption is Pork 40%, Beef 32%, Poultry 22% and Lamb and Mutton 6% (SHEEP101). Another indication that the need for sheep products probably won't be climbing in the future so there is no need for more grazing land.
- ❖ Australia and New Zealand's wool and lamb imports are up and they are known for their quality wool so why would our sheep industry show a growth and a need for more grazing? (Harvest Public Media).
- ❖ It seems that the recreation aspect of the usage of the Weminuche was underplayed in your presentation on March 12<sup>th</sup>. We are economically a positive influence by those who ride the train, buy gear and equipment, rent llamas and horse and guides, and come here to hike and stay in hotel, motels and buy food. I can attest that we would much rather have most of the Weminuche sheep free, which is also sheep excrement free, guard dog free, and sheep herder free. Hiking and walking are 23% of all visitors in the wilderness.

In conclusion I would like to say that I grew up in an industry that also uses Forest Service managed public land and pays for that service with permits and fees. The ski industry is another endangered business. As the climate changes and the winters become shorter the ski industry is having to quickly adapt. They are adding more summer activities and trying to capture all four seasons visitors. They have diversified to more winter activities besides skiing, snowboarding and snow biking. I'm mentioning this because I do understand what it is like to be an industry that could die off in the next 50-100 years if we don't adjust. I don't understand why the Forest Service feels they have to bend over backwards to make sure the sheep ranchers stay in business when they are not making many adjustments. That said, I have been impressed with a few of the ranchers that have

retrained their guard dogs to respond to ALL human commands and are trying to keep their sheep off of trails and heavily used areas by recreationists. But I also see as many violations of water ways and over grazing.

I was born into the ski industry and my father was involved since the 1940's and I see the risks and the need to constantly adapt. I sense that the sheep industry is still in the good old boys mentality and trying to hold on to a dying way of life. Please allow them to slowly fade away and let the wilderness return.

Interestingly, I work with a woman who owns with her husband a sheep ranch, they run 30 sheep on 20 acres and have made a living at it since 2000. They don't graze their sheep on National Forest. It can be done.

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