

S H E E P
MOUNTAIN
ALLIANCE



*a citizens' group
for the defense
& preservation
of southwestern
Colorado's high
country*

Box 389
Telluride
Colorado 81435

NEWS ALERT

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Contact Person: Art Goodtimes
728-4488

SHEEP MOUNTAIN WON'T BE LOGGED

Putting to rest a widely and vigorously opposed timber harvesting proposal, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Monday disclosed that agency's decision to allow no commercial logging on Sheep Mountain for at least the next ten years.

The USFS previewed their decision at a special Monday meeting with members of the Sheep Mountain Alliance, a community group which formed in opposition to the logging proposal. At the meeting, the USFS stated that it was withdrawing its proposal to log some 3.1 million board feet of timber on Sheep Mountain, and will instead manage the region as a semi-primitive roadless area and wildlife habitat. The mountain, which sits on Lizard Head Pass south of Telluride, will be withdrawn from the USFS ten year timber harvesting plan.

Responding to the public comment that was "widespread and pretty overwhelming," Atencio said, "the public told us and our own biologist told us that this is a key wildlife area."

Atencio also said that the decision was driven by resource data that "said there's no reason to go in" and economic analysis that said "we're going to lose bucks on this thing."

Signed by Forest Supervisor William Sexton, the document states, "A case cannot be made for harvesting the area at this time. Stands are healthy, wildlife habitat is near optimum conditions, recreation opportunities meet current needs, and stream courses are capable of accommodating only very small

increases in water yield. This project would cost more to prepare and offer than it could be expected to generate in benefits."

As explained by USFS specialist Jim Furnish, removal of Sheep Mountain from the suitable timber base means the area, at least for 10 years, will not be relied upon to meet San Juan National Forest's annual proposed timber yield quota of 24 million board feet.

Responding to hundreds of letters received in opposition to the sale, the decision document said further, "Public opposition to this project has been voluminous and intense... I [Sexton] appreciate the sincerity and deeply-held values people ascribe to this area. I believe it is appropriate to make an effort to manage this area in a manner more consistent with my perception of the public's stated needs."

The Telluride citizens group, Sheep Mountain Alliance, which is affiliated with the Western Colorado Congress, spearheaded the campaign to save Sheep Mountain from logging.

Alliance president Jack Pera was delighted by the USFS decision. "I think they would have preferred to make a cut," Pera said, "so you have to give them credit for paying attention to what we said."

Expressing his thanks to the hundreds of area residents who supported the Alliance's campaign, Pera also commended the Forest Service for its sensitivity to public opinion. "We have a lot of praise for the Forest Service," Pera said. "They were willing to meet with us and negotiate."