

**From:** [Saunders, Shellie FOR:EX](#)  
**To:** [Jeffreys, Jamie FOR:EX](#); [Corns, Paul GCPE:EX](#)  
**Cc:** [Manwaring, Richard G FOR:EX](#); [O'Donoghue, Eamon G FOR:EX](#); [Wood, Andrea D FOR:EX](#); [Iwanow, Melanie FOR:EX](#); [FOR Deputy Minister's Office FOR:EX](#)  
**Subject:** EWN - South Okanagan Bighorn Sheep Disease Diagnosis  
**Date:** February 27, 2023 4:35:46 PM  
**Attachments:** [273730 SOK\\_Early\\_warning\\_Psoroptes\\_2023.pdf](#)  
[image001.png](#)

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Good afternoon, attached is an EWN regarding the South Okanagan Bighorn Sheep disease diagnosis.



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**Ministry of Forests**

*Grateful to live, work & play on the traditional territory of the Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc Peoples*



## Early Warning Note

Date: Feb 17, 2023

CLIFF: 273730

File: 78010-30/SHE

Email to: Paul Corns, **Communications Director, GCPE**  
Email to: **Jamie Jeffreys, Assistant Deputy Minister**  
CC to: Rick Manwaring, **Deputy Minister**  
Eamon O'Donoghue, **Associate Deputy Minister**  
Andrea Wood, **Director, Executive Operations, DMO**  
Melanie Iwanow, **Manager, DMO**  
**FLNR Deputy Minister Inbox (FLNR.DMO@gov.bc.ca)**

From: Thompson Okanagan Region Resource Management  
Contact: Craig McLean

Ph: 778-622-6842

Issue: South Okanagan Bighorn Sheep disease diagnosis

Briefing Note to follow: No

### **Background:**

Bighorn sheep have a long history of social and cultural importance to First Nations, and are valued by British Columbians for viewing and hunting. Resident and non-resident hunting of bighorn sheep contributes an estimated nine million dollars to BC's economy annually. In the Okanagan valley bighorn populations have largely been separated east/west across the valley through urban sprawl, high fences and large lakes.

In 2011, Wildlife staff diagnosed *Psoroptes sp.* in bighorn sheep on the west side of the valley near Ollala and Keremeos, BC. There has been a 50% population decline in the infected herds since that time despite the implementation of scientifically rigorous direct management actions to mitigate disease movement and transmission.

Bighorn sheep populations on the east side of the valley in B.C. have no documented cases of *Psoroptes sp.* infection but they have been impacted by transmission of other infectious diseases including outbreaks of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* (M. ovi) and Blue Tongue virus in 2020 and 2021, respectively. The combined impacts of infectious diseases within South Okanagan bighorn sheep population have resulted in a documented decline of 30% between 2020 and 2023.

Wildlife staff have been working with Okanagan Nation Alliance and various First Nation communities since 2020 to monitor the various disease impacts on bighorn sheep and develop a long-term management plan for the South Okanagan.

In early 2023, the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Agency undertook a capture and testing program aimed at monitoring an ongoing M.ovi outbreak in sheep populations known to travel between the United States and Canada on the East side of the Okanagan Valley. This testing



revealed *Psoroptes sp.* is now also present in the eastern herd. Wildlife staff anticipate this outbreak may create additional challenges for an already stressed, culturally and economically significant species.

***Suggested Response:***

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