

ENROLLED ACT NO. 66, SENATE

SIXTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WYOMING  
2024 BUDGET SESSION

AN ACT relating to wildlife and livestock; providing legislative findings; requiring the game and fish department to relocate or remove bighorn sheep from the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit in response to specified federal action; providing for the reimbursement of costs for relocation or removal of bighorn sheep; requiring and authorizing attorney general action as specified; amending the duties of the wildlife/livestock research partnership board; providing appropriations; and providing for a delayed effective date.

*Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Wyoming:*

**Section 1.** W.S. 11-19-605 is created to read:

**11-19-605. Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep relocation and removal; legislative findings; reimbursement; attorney general action.**

(a) The legislature finds and declares that it is the state's policy to vigorously defend its interests in maintaining and enhancing viable livestock grazing operations on public lands in conjunction with the conservation and maintenance of healthy bighorn sheep populations in the state of Wyoming. These two (2) policies are mutually compatible as demonstrated since the adoption of the collaboratively developed Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep plan in 2004, which was codified into law under W.S. 11-19-604 in 2015. The legislature further finds and declares that:

(i) Reintroduction of bighorn sheep and management action to protect existing populations of bighorn sheep on federal public lands has been effectively

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accomplished in conformance with the Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep plan;

(ii) It is the policy of the state of Wyoming to accept any risk of contact between bighorn sheep and livestock in the vicinity of any bighorn sheep transplant or relocation and to hold livestock producers harmless in the event such contact occurs;

(iii) All wildlife in the state of Wyoming is the property of the state, and it is the policy of the state to provide an adequate and flexible system for control, propagation, management, protection and regulation of all Wyoming wildlife;

(iv) Any removal of bighorn sheep from the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit under this act shall not be attributable to domestic livestock grazing on federal bureau of land management administered lands. Rather, the removal of bighorn sheep shall be directly attributable to:

(A) Onerous federal regulation that unduly impedes the state of Wyoming's ability to manage wildlife and domestic livestock grazing in conformance with the Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep plan;

(B) Third-party action designed to use bighorn sheep as a means of eliminating domestic livestock grazing on bureau of land management administered lands within or in the vicinity of the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit.

(v) The provisions of this section shall be enforced by the state.

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(b) In conformance with the Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep plan in W.S. 11-19-604 and pursuant to W.S. 23-1-103, the game and fish department shall relocate or remove all bighorn sheep from the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit if any federal judicial action or federal agency action requires or indicates it may require the following:

(i) The elimination, reduction or suspension of domestic livestock grazing or trailing in the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit; or

(ii) Any changes to a United States bureau of land management resource management plan, grazing allotment plan or livestock grazing permit terms and conditions due to the presence of bighorn sheep in the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit or grazing allotment in that vicinity that is not in a designated bighorn sheep herd unit after July 1, 2024 without the consent of the grazing permittee.

(c) Any relocation or removal of bighorn sheep from the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit required by subsection (b) of this section shall commence as soon as practicable but not later than six (6) months after the Wyoming department of agriculture certifies to the governor that a condition specified in subsection (b) of this section is met. The governor shall notify the game and fish department that the removal of bighorn sheep from the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit shall commence in accordance with this section.

(d) The game and fish department shall be responsible for the expedient removal of bighorn sheep that stray outside the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit if that straying or foray is not into another designated bighorn sheep herd unit.

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(e) The state and its agencies shall coordinate and assist the Wyoming congressional delegation in pursuing changes to federal law, rules and policies in order to bring them into conformance with the policies and findings of the Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep plan created under W.S. 11-19-604.

(f) The Wyoming game and fish department shall not seek to change, alter or otherwise affect changes to domestic livestock grazing authorization on public and state lands due to the presence of bighorn sheep in the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit or grazing allotments in that vicinity that are not within an existing bighorn sheep herd unit.

(g) The game and fish department shall be reimbursed for the costs of relocation or removal of bighorn sheep pursuant to subsection (b) of this section from any available funds in the wildlife/livestock disease research partnership account created by W.S. 11-19-603.

(h) With the approval of the governor, the attorney general shall seek to intervene in any lawsuit if a federal action is contrary to the state's policy regarding Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep set forth in subsections (a) and (b) of this section or that is inconsistent with the Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep plan.

(j) With the approval of the governor, the attorney general shall file an action against any federal agency to stop the enforcement, administration or implementation of any federal agency rule, instructional memo, handbook or other action taken by a federal agency if the rule, instructional memo, handbook or other action is contrary to

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the Wyoming bighorn/domestic sheep plan or is otherwise contrary to law.

**Section 2.** W.S. 11-19-602(b) by creating a new paragraph (vii) and 11-19-603 are amended to read:

**11-19-602. Wyoming wildlife/livestock disease research partnership board created; membership; duties; purposes.**

(b) The board shall:

(vii) Allocate funds for monitoring, tracking and conducting disease surveillance before and following the introduction of bighorn sheep in the Sweetwater Rocks herd unit.

**11-19-603. Account created.**

There is created a wildlife/livestock disease research partnership account. Funds from this account shall be used only for purposes specified in W.S. 11-19-601 through ~~11-19-604~~ 11-19-605. Any interest earned on the account shall remain within the account.

**Section 3.**

(a) There is appropriated one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) from the general fund to the wildlife/livestock disease research partnership account for purposes of reimbursing the game and fish department for the costs of relocation or removal of bighorn sheep under this act. This appropriation shall be for the period beginning with the effective date of this act and ending June 30, 2030. This appropriation shall not be transferred

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or expended for any other purpose. Notwithstanding W.S. 9-2-1008, 9-2-1012(e) and 9-4-207, this appropriation shall not revert until June 30, 2030.

(b) There is appropriated fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) from the general fund to the department of agriculture for the rangeland health assessment program to conduct rangeland monitoring of the United States bureau of land management grazing allotments in the Sweetwater Rocks bighorn sheep herd unit vicinity. This appropriation shall be for the period beginning with the effective date of this act and ending June 30, 2030. This appropriation shall not be transferred or expended for any other purpose. Notwithstanding W.S. 9-2-1008, 9-2-1012(e) and 9-4-207, this appropriation shall not revert until June 30, 2030.

**Section 4.** This act is effective not later than fifteen (15) days after applicable federal law is enacted and the attorney general certifies to the secretary of state that federal law has been enacted that aligns with the purposes of this act. If no federal law is enacted that aligns with the purposes of this act, this act is effective January 1, 2026.

ORIGINAL SENATE  
FILE NO. SF0118

ENGROSSED

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**Section 5.** This act is effective July 1, 2024.

(END)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Speaker of the House

\_\_\_\_\_  
President of the Senate

\_\_\_\_\_  
Governor

TIME APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this act originated in the Senate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Clerk