



# THE RAM'S HORN

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
ARIZONA DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP SOCIETY, INC.

VOL. 10

JULY 1976

NO. 3

## SOCIETY REQUESTS SUPPORT FROM MEMBERSHIP

With our Water Hole Projects completed for the year, and a good portion of the summer behind us, our thoughts turn to other avocations, fishing, camping, or just plain loafing. Yes we do deserve a good rest. . . but right now the Society needs the help of everyone of us, . . . Desperately!

The National Park Service has begun a long overdue effort to control the wild burro populations in the Grand Canyon. This action was brought about in part to response to requests from the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society. Many of our members have spent a great deal of time communicating with the Park Service, Congressmen and Senators in order to have this action initiated.

Now that the control program is underway, the Park Service will be under fire by the "Wild Horse Annie's" and many other well intentioned, but misinformed individuals and organizations.

Now is not the time to sit back. It is imperative that we write the Park Service, and let them know we wholeheartedly support their efforts to solve the problem of the wild burro. It is absolutely necessary that they have acknowledgement of our support. At the same time, please make carbon copies and send them to your Congressmen and Senators. It would be far better for all concerned to write as individuals, rather than as Sheep Society members.

While you are at it, you might have a friend, or associate do the same.

Address your letters to:

Merle E. Stitt  
Grand Canyon National Park Sup.  
P. O. Box 129  
Grand Canyon, Az. 86203

*Thank you,  
Ned Smith - President*



*Photo by Ned Smith*

## GRAND CANYON BURRO CONTROL

Grand Canyon National Park resumed wild burro control July 19.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management is expediting a special interim management plan in an effort to begin control work in certain heavily impacted areas by next summer to avoid a two-year wait for completion of management framework plans.

But there is still no word when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which now has sole management responsibility to protect desert bighorn sheep on the Kofa, Cabeza Prieta and Imperial and Havasu Wildlife Refuges, will act.

The Park Service responded quickly to requests from the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, the Maricopa County Audubon Society, the Arizona Wildlife Federation and other agencies, including the Western Regional Advisory Committee for the National Park Service as soon as its independent research report was received from Dr. Steven Carothers of the Museum of Northern Arizona.

The control program was initiated on a small scale under the direct supervision of Dr. Roy Johnson, park research scientist and former head of the biology department at Prescott College. It is hoped it can be expanded next winter into other areas of the park.

The initial steps to eradicate wild burros were taken by trained park personnel in three small canyons between Mile 128 Canyon and Bedrock Canyon. This area, just above Conquistador Corridor once was well populated with sheep on both sides of the river, but only the braying of burros breaks the stillness on the south side.

Reaction to the Park Service move was immediate.

"Great! I can hardly believe it," said John Russo of the Arizona Game and Fish Department, one of the foremost authorities on the desert bighorn.

"Hooray," responded Attorney General Bruce Babbitt, a lifelong lover of the Grand Canyon who annually returns to hike some of its back trails. "These animals are causing far too much damage to the vegetation and wildlife of the canyon."

Dr. Johnson said carcasses of the animals that are taken will be examined for disease and physical condition, and that transects will be established immediately on their damaged range in order to monitor its recovery and the response of other wildlife.

The Bureau of Land Management, which must manage federal lands under the constraints of the Wild Horse and Burro Act, but does not apply to the Park Service or the Fish and Wildlife Service, has delayed action to await the outcome of the lawsuit filed in New Mexico challenging constitutionality of that act.

However, Robert Buffington, state director, said that with partial completion of the research by Dr. Robert D. Ohmart of Arizona State University, BLM is beginning to put together an interim management plan to deal separately with the burro problem on certain heavily impacted areas.

"We hope to be able to initiate control measures by next summer," Buffington said.

Meantime, he said, it is hoped that Congress will take action to amend the Wild Horse and Burro Act so aircraft can be used to capture those animals where capture is

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P.O. Box 5241 Phoenix, Arizona 85010  
is the official publication of the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, Inc., and is published every other month for the Society's membership. Current Membership: 544

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possible. He pointed out that the proposed amendments also would permit BLM to give or sell the animals to private individuals with a clear title. At present the government cannot surrender ownership.

However, since the U.S. Supreme Court in a June 17 decision, upheld the constitutionality of the act, state wildlife officials may seek further amendment of the act to clarify the status of these animals. In writing the decision, Justice Thurgood Marshall apparently inadvertently classified them as wildlife. That is something that Congress has not done. Justice Marshall's error probably was predicated on the fact that they are classified as wildlife in New Mexico—a fact that has been of considerable embarrassment to other state game officials.

The principal issue in the New Mexico case was whether Congress acted within the Constitution in placing ownership of all wild horses and burros in the federal government.

The court upheld constitutionality of the act, but remanded back to the lower court the status of such animals found on private land.

*Ben Avery*

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