

From: Brigitte Dorner [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2021 1:56 PM
To: Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee
Subject: sheep in the OCP

Dear trustees,

as a Lasqueti resident and scientist, I feel uncomfortable with the revised wording that addresses sheep in the OCP. While gathering knowledge is probably something most in the community can get behind, “studying the ecological impacts of the sheep as an invasive species” imposes a pretty specific angle to that mission. Quoting from Wikipedia, an invasive species is ‘an introduced organism that negatively alters its new environment’. If, as an ecologist, I was hired to conduct a study intended to assess ecological impacts of an invasive species of particular concern, my understanding would be that my employers would primarily want me to focus on documenting and quantifying the negative alterations that triggered the concern, with an eye on whether they are serious enough to warrant an eradication campaign or other mitigating measures. By using this particular phrasing, the OCP is making an implicit assertion that negative ecological alterations are the primary effect of the local sheep population worth knowing more about. My sense is that a lot of people in the community, including myself, would beg to differ. In addition to the emotional connection they seem to inspire in many residents, the Lasqueti sheep manage surprisingly well in a very challenging environment, without imported feed or eco-toxic parasite treatments, which makes them a potentially unique genetic resource for low-input zero-mile agriculture. There is no doubt in my mind that their grazing has detrimental effects on aspects of the local ecosystem, but they also provide ecological services I value, ranging from fire-proofing the landscape to controlling potentially invasive introduced plant species and providing an important food source for humans as well as raptors and range of other predators and scavengers.

I am personally not convinced that a LINC-led sheep census will be able to answer the kinds of questions people are presumably interested in: a census may give us a rough estimate of how much biomass the local sheep consume, but won’t tell us how their impact relates, compares, and interacts with that of the deer, or to that of human land use decisions, for example, or what would happen if we reduce their population size or remove them altogether. Although I’d personally be keen to see more in-depth studies that increase our understanding of the ecological and socio-economic role the sheep play in our landscape, I am also not convinced that scientific studies will ultimately do a lot to help the larger Lasqueti community find common ground on the sheep question, since the differences in opinion seem to me to stem more from a divergence in value judgements than from a disagreement about the nature of ecological relationships. However, if knowledge-gathering is the mission du jour, I believe the relevant section in the OCP should

encourage studying and documenting everything we as a community value and don't value about the sheep in a holistic way, rather than singling out the invasive species perspective.

Sincerely,

Brigitte Dorner