



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Southern Nevada District Office
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130
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DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BUDGET AND PLANNING DIVISION

In Reply Refer To:
(NVS0052) 1210

OCT 09 2009

NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED ACTION
LANDS OF THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

**NORTH MCCULLOUGH WILDERNESS
MUDDY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS
SOUTH MCCULLOUGH WILDERNESS**

To Whom It May Concern:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is required to inform all affected or interested persons or organizations about any proposed action or unauthorized activity occurring within BLM Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas. In the past, the NDOW has conducted and been approved for bighorn sheep gathers within these designated Wilderness areas, in a manner identical to their current request. The following information is a request from the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to gather bighorn sheep for the 2009 calendar year.

Background

The BLM and the NDOW are committed to the maintenance and restoration of wildlife populations in Nevada within the jurisdictions of their respective agencies. Coordination and cooperation where jurisdictions involve designated Wilderness, is essential in order that BLM and NDOW may accomplish their respective missions relating to management of wildlife and their habitats as well as the Congressional mandate to manage Wilderness areas under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

According to the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-282) Sec. 208(b) Management Activities – “In furtherance of the purposes and principles of the Wilderness Act, management activities to maintain or restore fish and wildlife populations....may be carried out within wilderness areas designated by this title where consistent with relevant wilderness management plans, in accordance with appropriate policies such as those set forth in Appendix B of House Report 101-405, including the occasional and temporary use of motorized vehicles if such use....would promote healthy, viable, and more naturally distributed wildlife populations that would enhance wilderness values and accomplish

those purposes with the minimum impact necessary to reasonably accomplish the task.” And (c) Existing Activities – “...the State may continue to use aircraft, including helicopters, to survey, capture, transplant, monitor....wildlife populations.”

Annually, the NDOW conducts aerial surveys of desert bighorn sheep populations that occur on lands administered by the BLM in order to determine the status of bighorn populations and habitat conditions. The information is essential not only in evaluating whether herds can sustain removals, but in determining how many animals can be removed through capture operations.

Location

Muddy Mountains Wilderness

- Township 18S, Range 65E and Range 66E
- Township 19S, Range 64E, Range 65E, and Range 66E
- Township 20S, Range 64 E, Range 65E, and Range 66E

North McCullough Wilderness

- Township 23S, Range 61E and Range 62E
- Township 24S, Range 61E and Range 62E

South McCullough Wilderness

- Township 25S, Range 61E
- Township 26S, Range 60E and Range 61E
- Township 26S, Range 60E and Range 61E

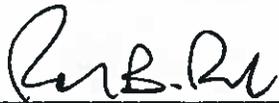
Proposed Action

The NDOW is proposing to remove and translocate a total of 20-50 bighorn sheep from the aforementioned Wilderness areas to the Delamar Mountains using a helicopter and aerial net-gun. The helicopter would be operated at altitudes generally below 300 feet AGL (above ground level) while the crew (3-5 people) attempts to locate animals and while ferrying to and from a base of operations. In capture mode, the pilot would maneuver the aircraft close to ground level in pursuit of fleeing animals. When alongside an animal, the net-gunner would deploy the net over the front (head and shoulders) of a fleeing animal such that the animal runs into an enveloping net. The capture phase may be completed in 2-5 days.

Once an animal is entangled in a net, the helicopter may hover close to the ground or land briefly allowing a handler to dismount. The handler works the animal out of the net, and applies hobbles and blindfold. After securing the animal in a transport bag, the bag would be fastened to a sling line that is attached to the underside of the aircraft. When ready for transport, the sheep would be sling-loaded beneath the aircraft to the base of operations. Bases of operations or staging areas would be located outside of designated wilderness boundaries. This action includes fitting some animals with radio-collars for monitoring.

Please submit comments to the District Manager for consideration and use in evaluating and processing the proposed action at the address below. Alternately, comments may be sent to lvwilderness@nv.blm.gov. All comments must be received by the closing date of this comment period on November 5, 2009. A decision on the proposed action and implementation is anticipated for November 2009. If you have any questions regarding this notification please contact Sendi Kalcic, Wilderness Planner at 702-515-5297.

Sincerely,



for Mary Jo Rugwell
District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Southern Nevada District Office
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130

Enclosure:
Figure 1. Map of Proposed Locations

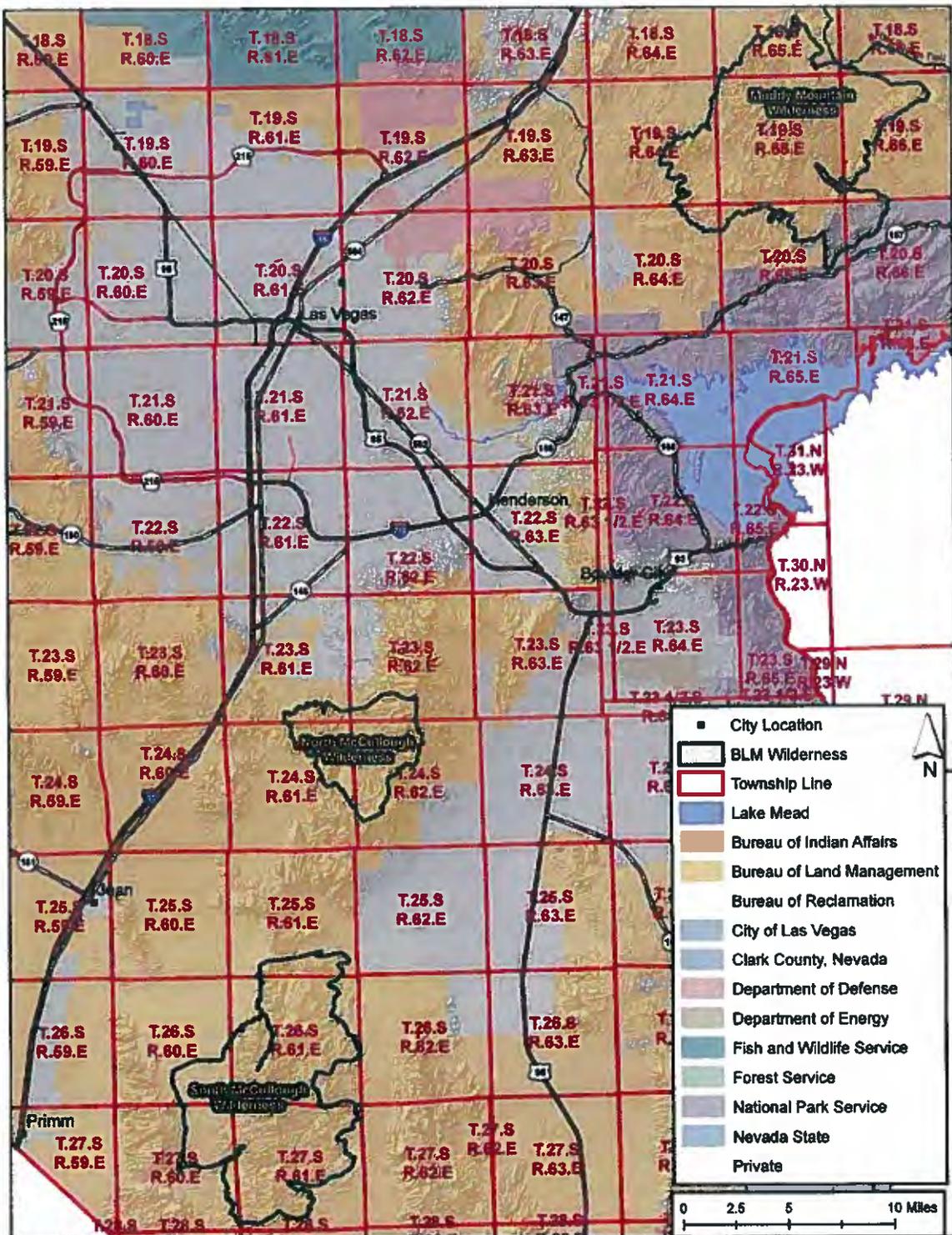


Figure 1. Map of Proposed Locations