



# United States Department of the Interior

Sketch



**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**  
Winnemucca District Office  
5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard  
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445-2921  
Phone: (775) 623-1500 Fax: (775) 623-1503  
Email: NV\_WFO\_Webmail@blm.gov  
www.nv.blm.gov/winnemucca

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**MAR 26 2013**

## **NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION** **LANDS IN WILDERNESS**

RECEIVED  
D.C.M.R.  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
2013 MAR 27 AM 11:03

**STATE:** Nevada

**COUNTY:** Washoe, Humboldt, and Pershing

**OFFICE:** Winnemucca District Office  
5100 East Winnemucca Blvd.  
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

**WILDERNESS AREAS:** Calico Mountains Wilderness (N74468)  
High Rock Lake Wilderness (N74465)  
East Fork High Rock Canyon Wilderness (N74464)  
Little High Rock Canyon Wilderness (N74466)  
High Rock Canyon Wilderness (N74467)  
Pahute Peak Wilderness (N74462)  
North Black Rock Range Wilderness (N74463)  
Lahontan Cutthroat Trout ISA  
Blue Lakes Wilderness Study Area  
Alder Creek Wilderness Study Area

**PROPOSED ACTION:** NDOW Capture for Relocation of 20-35 California Bighorn Sheep Utilizing a Helicopter

### **Background**

The BLM and the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) manage wildlife in wilderness under a Memorandum of Understanding (BLM MOU 6300-NV930-0402). NDOW is attempting to restore populations of California bighorn sheep in areas where they have been eliminated or reduced by human influences. NDOW typically conducts aerial surveys to determine the status of bighorn sheep populations and habitat conditions during the months of August and September. Information obtained during these surveys is used to determine how many animals can be relocated and where the most appropriate locations are for both removal and augmentation.

Relocations utilizing a helicopter have occurred in previous years in the same locations. Most recently, in fall 2009/spring 2010, bighorn sheep were captured from the area for release in the North and South Jackson Mountains Wildernesses. The capture and release were both conducted successfully and safely.

## Description of the Proposed Action

NDOW has proposed to capture a total of 20-35 California bighorn sheep from several different wilderness and wilderness study areas (WSA) in the BLM Winnemucca District. The exact location the bighorn sheep would be removed from would be determined after the fall survey. It is proposed that the sheep would be removed from the areas where sheep densities are very high and released in areas where sheep populations would benefit from augmentation. The removal would represent a 10 to 15 percent reduction in the population selected. Based on recent herd recruitment rates, it is estimated that herd numbers would be fully replaced within one to two years.

The captures would occur by net gunning the bighorn sheep from helicopter. The aircraft would be operated at altitudes below 300 feet above ground level, while the crew attempts to locate animals and in ferrying personnel to and from the base of operations. In capture mode, the pilot would maneuver the aircraft close to ground level in pursuit of the animals. The aircraft would then be maneuvered alongside an animal, and the gunner would deploy the net over the front (head and shoulders) of the animal. Once an animal is entangled in a net, the helicopter would land briefly to allow the handler to dismount from the aircraft. The handler would quickly work the animal out of the net, and apply hobbles and a blindfold as the animal's limbs and head are freed. 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. Once captured, handled and readied for transport, the animal would be ferried in sling load fashion beneath the aircraft to the base of operations. Bases of operations and staging areas would be located outside of the wilderness boundaries. Biologists and veterinarians would monitor each individual animal's health. Additionally, blood, nasal pharyngeal, and fecal samples would be taken from most animals to evaluate and document the health and status of the animals. This information could be used to better assess the conditions of the bighorn sheep population within wilderness. Total handling time of each animal at base camp would typically be less than 5 minutes.

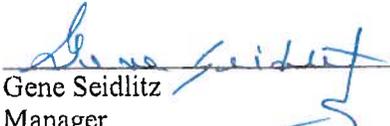
The activity would occur between the months of November 2013 and February 2014. The total activity is estimated to take 2-4 days but the exact month will be determined based on weather and other factors.

The environmental impacts have been analyzed in a previous Environmental Assessment CA-370-05-01 which included a Minimum Requirements/Tools Analysis. The EA concluded that the effort would assist in the long-term health and stability of California bighorn sheep populations in the northern Great Basin by supporting reintroductions and augmentations of a native species that has been largely extirpated by human impacts. The use of a helicopter was determined to have a smaller impact on wilderness values than other potential capture methods.

## Location

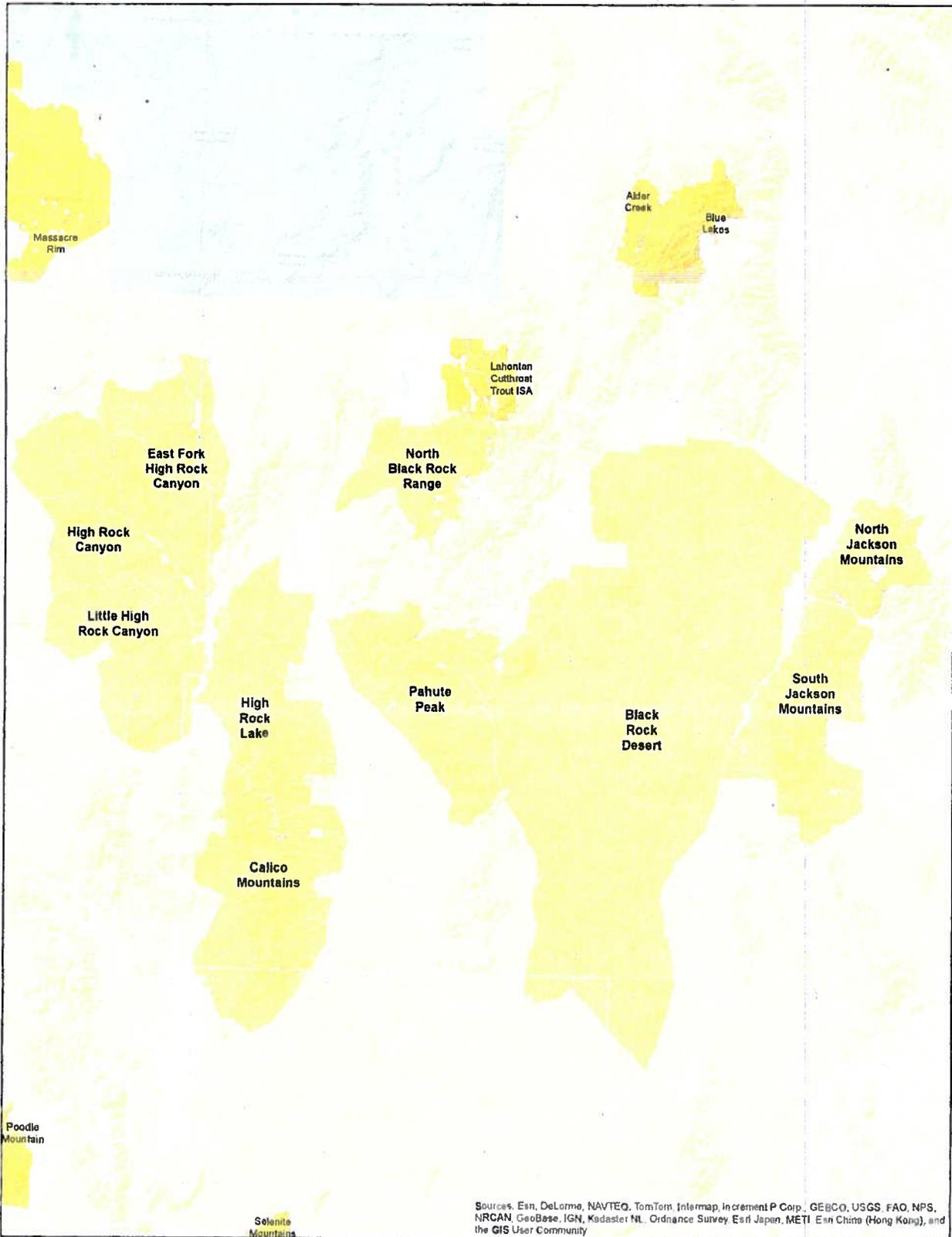
The exact location the sheep would be removed from would be determined after the fall survey. The sheep would be removed from the areas where sheep densities are very high and released in areas where sheep populations are low. Highest densities and concentrations of bighorn sheep are typically found within the wilderness boundaries near Little High Rock Canyon, High Rock Canyon, and in the Calico Mountains.

Please send your comments on the proposed activity to Gerald Dixon, Black Rock Field Office Manager at the address above by April 29, 2013.

  
Gene Seidlitz  
Manager  
Winnemucca District

3/25/13  
Date

# Proposed NDOW Bighorn Sheep Capture



**Legend**

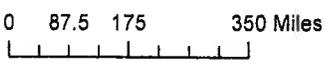
- Wilderness
- Wilderness Study Area
- County Boundary

**Land Status**

**Agency**

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Private
- Water

Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, InCREMENT P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBasis, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), and the GIS User Community



March 20, 2013

Winnemucca District Office  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd  
 Winnemucca, NV 89445



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