



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Winnemucca District Office
Black Rock Field Office
5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445
Phone: (775) 623-1500 Fax: (775) 623-1503
Email: wfoweb@blm.gov
www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo.html

MAY 08 2014

In Reply Refer To:
(6300, 6510)
NV020.00

NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION LANDS IN WILDERNESS

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)

PROPOSED ACTION: NDOW Capture for Relocation of 20-50 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 Supplement No. 9). 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 bighorn sheep 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. A Documentation of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) was completed in May of 2013, but the capture efforts were not completed during that year.

Description of the Proposed Action

NDOW has proposed to capture a total of 20-50 California bighorn sheep from several different wilderness areas 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 bighorn sheep would be removed from the areas where bighorn sheep densities are very high and released in areas where bighorn 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 a helicopter. The aircraft would be operated at altitudes below 300 feet above ground level, while the crew attempts to locate bighorn sheep 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 bighorn sheep. The aircraft would then be maneuvered alongside a bighorn sheep, and the gunner would deploy the net over the front (head and shoulders) of the bighorn sheep. Once the bighorn sheep 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 bighorn sheep out of the net, and apply hobbles and a blindfold as the bighorn sheep's limbs and head are freed. After securing the bighorn sheep 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 bighorn sheep 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 bighorn sheep's health. Additionally, blood, nasal pharyngeal, and fecal samples would be taken from most bighorn sheep to evaluate and document the health and status of the bighorn sheep. This information could be used to better assess the conditions of the bighorn sheep population within wilderness. Total handling time of each bighorn sheep at base camp would typically be less than 5 minutes.

The activity would occur between the months of November 2014 and February 2015. 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 (EA) 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

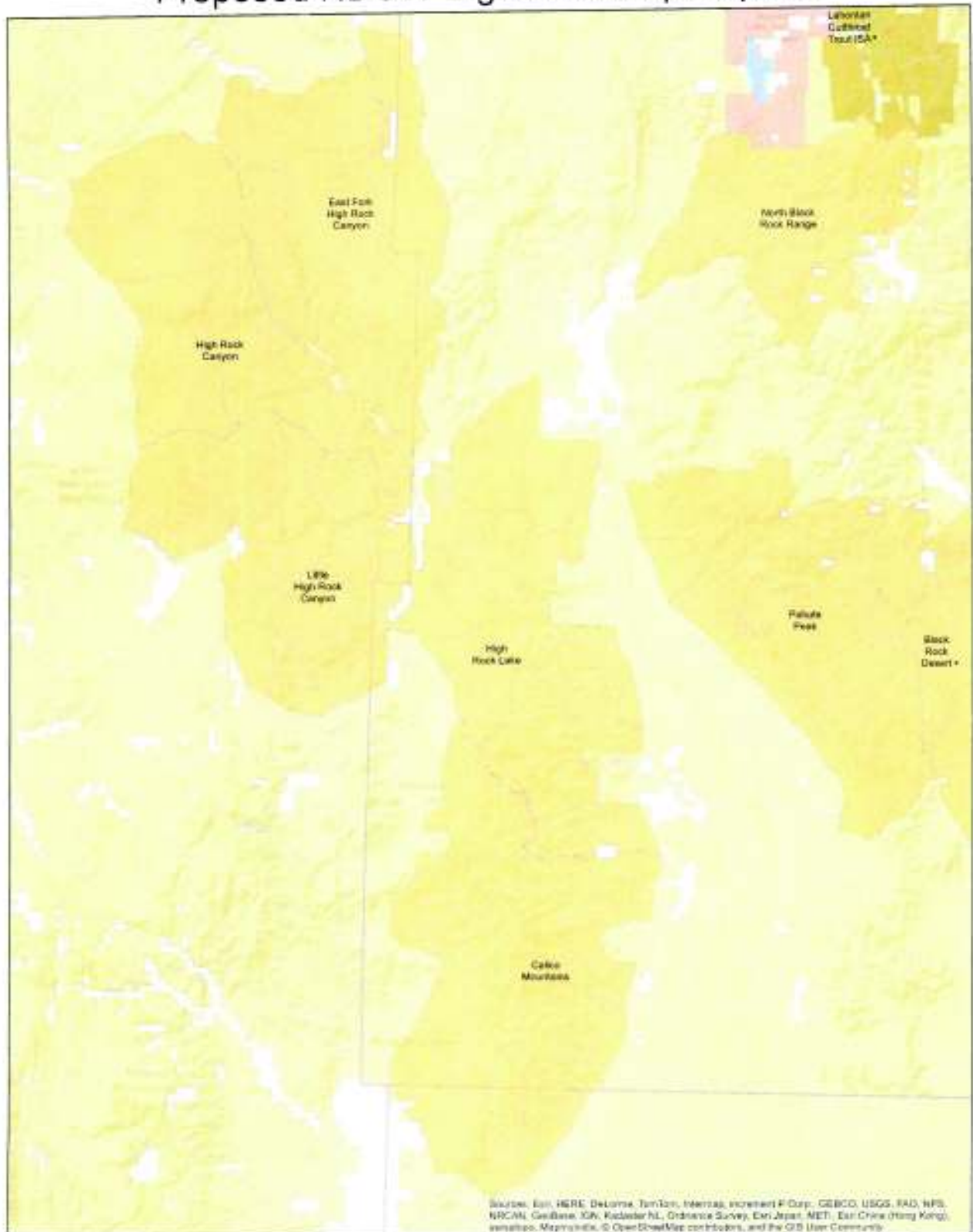
The exact location the bighorn sheep would be removed from would be determined after the fall survey. The bighorn sheep would be removed from the areas where bighorn sheep densities are very high and released in areas where bighorn sheep populations are low. Highest densities and concentrations of bighorn 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 the Black Rock Field Office Manager at the address above by June 9, 2014.


Gene Seidlitz
District Manager
Winnemucca District


Date

Proposed NDOW Bighorn Sheep Capture



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GEBCO, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Swisstopo, Mapbox Labs, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



Wisconsin District Office
 Bureau of Land Management
 500 E. Wisconsin St.
 Wisconsin, WI 53402

Legend

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| County Boundary | B/A |
| BLM Wilderness | BLM |
| Wisconsin Study Area | P/T |
| | WTR |

* Black Rock Wilderness and Lebanon Culbreth Trout Habitat Study Area are not included in the proposed action



May 8, 2014

Wisconsin is a state in the Great Lakes region of the United States. It is bordered by Minnesota to the west, Iowa to the southwest, Illinois to the south, Michigan to the southeast, and Lake Superior to the north. The state capital is Madison. The largest city is Milwaukee. The state is known for its dairy industry and its role in the American Civil War.