



## United States Department of the Interior

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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

**STATE:** Nevada  
**COUNTY:** Humboldt County  
**OFFICE:** Humboldt River Field Office  
Winnemucca District  
5100 East Winnemucca Blvd.  
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

**WILDERNESS AREA**  
Calico Mountains Wilderness (NV-020-019)  
High Rock Lake Wilderness (NV-020-007)  
East Fork High Rock Canyon Wilderness (CA-020-914)  
Little High Rock Canyon Wilderness (CA-020-913)  
High Rock Canyon Wilderness (CA-020-913b)  
Pahute Peak Wilderness (NV-020-621)  
Pine Forest Range Wilderness (NV-020-600/600D)

**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) is being completed and will be made available to the public once it has been completed on the BLM's NEPA Register ([https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa\\_register.do](https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do)).

## **Description of the 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.

The activity would occur between the months of November 2015 and February 2016. 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**

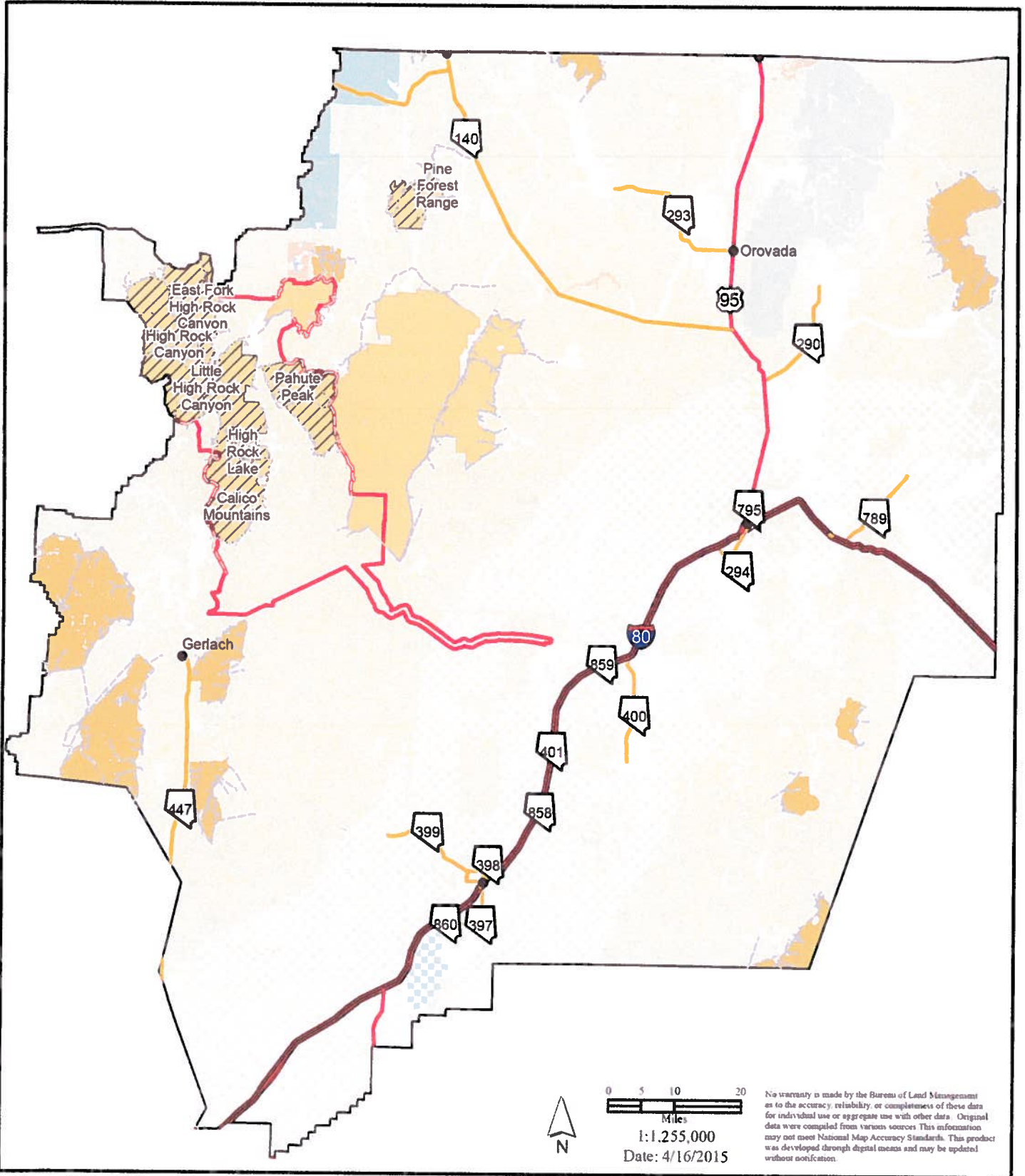
The exact location the bighorn sheep would be removed from would be determined after the fall survey. The bighorn sheep would be removed from the areas where bighorn sheep densities are very high and released in areas where bighorn sheep populations are low. Highest densities and concentrations of bighorn 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 within 30 days of the date of this letter.

  
Gene Seidlitz  
District Manager  
Winnemucca District

Date 4/27/15

# Proposed Bighorn Sheep Capture Locations



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

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

- Roads**
- Interstate
  - US Highway
  - State Route
  - Motorized Access Routes

- Winnemucca District**
- Proposed Capture Areas
  - BLM NCA
  - BLM WSA
  - BLM Wilderness\*

- Land Status**
- FS
  - BIA
  - BLM
  - BR
  - DOD
  - FS
  - FWS
  - NVST
  - PVT
  - WTR

\* Pine Forest Range Wilderness: General boundary depiction only; subject to provisions outlined in P.L. 113-291, Sec. 3064

