



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: Black Rock Field 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 Survey and Capture of Bighorn Sheep within
Winnemucca District Wilderness and Wilderness Study
Areas**

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 prior to capturing bighorn sheep. 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).

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 aerial 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. Handling time for each animal is usually less than 5 minutes from arrival at base camp to the time they are loaded into the stock trailer. Once the release complement has been obtained and loaded into the trailers the sheep are transported to the release site, located outside of wilderness, and discharged into their new habitat.

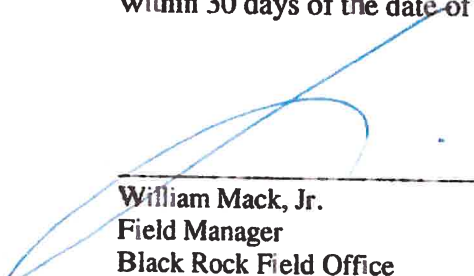
The activity would occur between the months of November 2016 and February 2017. The total activity is estimated to take 2-4 days but the exact month will be determined based on weather and other factors.

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 aerial 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 Winnemucca District Office address within 30 days of the date of this letter.



William Mack, Jr.
Field Manager
Black Rock Field Office
Winnemucca District

Date

11/21/16













David Kampwerth
Field Manager
Humboldt River Field Office
Winnemucca District

Date

11/21/16

NDOW Capture of Bighorn Sheep within Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas


Winnemucca District
 Bureau of Land Management
 5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd
 Winnemucca, NV. 89445
 Date: 11/21/2016

-  Wilderness & WSAs
-  Cities & Towns
- NDOT Roads**
- TYPE**
-  State Route
- Land Status**
- Abbreviation**
-  BIA
-  BLM
-  BR
-  FWS
-  PVT
-  WTR



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