

Developing a management plan for mountain goats in British Columbia

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Abstract: A management plan for the mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) in British Columbia was completed in 2010. The purpose of the plan was to provide science-based advice to the province to help ensure mountain goats are conserved in perpetuity. The Province of British Columbia is responsible for the management of mountain goats within its boundaries and guidance is required to help inform appropriate management actions. Approximately one half of the world's mountain goats are found in British Columbia, therefore the province has a global responsibility to ensure their long-term persistence. The management goal for mountain goats in British Columbia is to maintain viable, healthy and productive populations of mountain goats throughout their native range in British Columbia. Management objectives include (1) to effectively maintain suitable, connected mountain goat habitat; (2) to mitigate threats to mountain goats; and (3) to ensure opportunities for non-consumptive and consumptive use of mountain goats are sustainable. Recommended management actions include ways to mitigate threats and specifically address issues pertaining to habitat, harvest, disturbance and access. Harvest recommendations focus on sustainable harvest rates of 1–3% of the population depending upon population size. Populations with less than 50 adults should have no harvest. Harvest of female mountain goats should be minimised because of their low reproductive rates, through education and changes in regulation. Mountain goats react more strongly to human disturbance and may be more sensitive to sustained muscle activity than most ungulates, particularly from the extreme physical exertion and stress caused by helicopter disturbance. Therefore, it is recommended that helicopters have a 2,000 m horizontal and 400 m vertical separation from all mountain goat habitat. A habitat risk matrix is provided as a key habitat recommendation and provides advice on the relative risk of physical disturbance to vegetation in and adjacent to important habitat for mountain goats. Increased access to mountain goat habitat can have implications to all forms of management and there is a need for integrated management decisions that capture all forms of resource development and recreational activities. Finally, there is a need for research to fill data gaps on mountain goats in British Columbia that could help address management decisions to benefit the conservation of the species.

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