

## **1994 NWS&GC MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE: IDAHO'S MOUNTAIN BIGHORN SHEEP MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

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**QUESTION: Does your state or province have an identifiable sheep management program?**

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (department) has the statutory responsibility to conserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all wildlife within the state (Idaho Code, Section 36-103).

**QUESTION: How do/did you do management planning?**

Department personnel develop 5-year species plans which are approved by the department. These plans then are given widespread public review followed by commission action to approve or disapprove each recommendation. The technical plan includes 1) biological consideration, 2) habitat management, 3) harvest strategies, 4) management information requirement, 5) economic considerations, 6) trapping and transplanting, 7) issues and strategies, and 8) statewide management direction for each subspecies.

The department maintains biological surveys to determine population status (aerial herd composition counts). A monitoring program for pathogenic and parasitic organisms is maintained. Habitat considerations are requested of land management agencies to enhance conditions for bighorns whenever and wherever possible.

Harvest is only by controlled hunts with available permits limited annually to no more than 20% of legal rams observed on the most recent survey in each hunt area. Only rams with 3/4 curl or larger, or 4 years old or older, can legally be taken under the once-in-a-lifetime regulations for each subspecies, California and Rocky Mountain bighorn rams. The harvest of a ewe does not affect the once-in-a-lifetime rule for rams. Low drawing odds for permits are maintained with a regulation

prohibiting application for any other controlled hunt permit if you apply for a bighorn permit. A trap and transplant program has been very effective in reestablishing bighorn populations in vacant, suitable historic habitat.

**QUESTION: What are your management goals?**

The department's management goals are:

1. To increase bighorn populations to allow a corresponding increase in hunting opportunity and recreational viewing.
2. To establish new herds through transplants.
3. To promote nonconsumptive values of bighorns.
4. To continue bighorn disease research.
5. To survey all populations at least once every 5 years.

**QUESTION: What methods do you use to reach them?**

Population increase is achieved through harvest strategy, habitat enhancement by working with federal land management agencies, and transplanting into unoccupied, suitable historic habitat. Research for methods of disease and parasite control is ongoing. Popular articles are written to promote nonconsumptive use of the bighorn resource and to develop support for bighorn management and research programs.

**QUESTION: How much effort is devoted to reaching them?**

Six of the eight administrative regions in the state have bighorn populations. About 150 regional man-days (13 people) and \$34,000 are earmarked for

management each year. There is 1/2 man-year veterinarian research time, 1 man-year wildlife health technologist time, and 1/2 man-year wildlife technician time devoted to bighorn disease research each year.

**QUESTION: What is your operating budget for sheep management?**

The budgets for these projects and fund source include:

1. Veterinarian 1/2 year \$50,000(F&G)
2. Wildlife Disease Research \$41,300(P.R.)
3. Laboratory Services \$79,000(P.R.)
- \*4. Laboratory Construction \$100,000(P.R.)
5. Regional Personnel \$34,000(P.R.)
6. Statewide Personnel \$30,000(P.R.)
7. Statewide Personnel \$10,000(F&G)
8. Trap and Transplant \$35,000(F&G)
9. Trap and Transplant \$30,000(FNAWS)
10. Census \$50,000(F&G)
11. Harvest Survey/Pinning \$5,000(P.R.)
12. Controlled Hunt Draw \$10,000(F&G)
13. Regulations Develop/Print \$10,000(F&G)
14. Research Facility Upgrade \$6,500(FNAWS)
15. Mount Ram for Education 1,800 (900 donation; 900 FNAWS)
16. Purchase Transplant Trailer \$8,000(3,000 FNAWS; 5,000 Grand Slam Club)
17. Lab Technician 1/2 year \$8,800(Lottery Tag)
18. Wildlife/Domestic Research \$100,000

\* This was a one-time (1992) Commission authorization to expend \$100,000 (F&G).

**Other Agency Participation in Sheep Management in Idaho**

The Idaho Legislature in cooperation with the Idaho Woolgrowers transfers \$100,000 each year to the Idaho University Caine Veterinary Training (Agriculture Research) Center for work on disease research as it pertains to interactions between domestic animals and wildlife. Not counting the \$100,000 transferred to University of Idaho Agriculture Research, the department spent \$409,400 on bighorn sheep research/management in Fiscal Year (FY) 1994. The 1993 bighorn permit/tags, excluding auction and lottery tags,

provided \$22,755 income to the department (133 residents paid \$9,443 and 26 nonresidents paid \$13,312 for permit/tags). The department, license buyers, and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) fundraisers subsidized the bighorn management/research in Idaho in FY 1994 for \$486,645 or 95.5% of the program.

The Bureau of Land Management was involved in California bighorn research through FY 1993, but currently is not involved beyond Environmental Analysis (EA) for transplant sites. The U. S. Forest Service is doing an EA which, if approved, would remove domestic sheep allotments from Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. I have no data on exact time and cost of this project.

**Additional Funding and Foundation for North American Wild Sheep Participation**

The department obtains funding from FNAWS (and associated organizations) on an annual basis as needed in the form of direct grants. In 1993 we received \$54,000 in grants; \$46,700 was from FNAWS, \$5,000 was from the Grand Slam Club, and \$2,500 was from the Iowa Chapter FNAWS.

We also offer 1 tag for purchase at the annual FNAWS auction and 1 tag for marketing by the Idaho Chapter of FNAWS through a lottery. In 1993 the auction tag sold for \$31,000, and the lottery tag produced over \$11,000. The income from all FNAWS sources supplements our statewide management program.

**DISCUSSION**

The cooperation between FNAWS and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has been excellent. FNAWS has provided money for census, transplants, and emergency sampling when disease outbreaks occur. I personally believe FNAWS returns more dollars of those raised to field work, directly benefitting bighorns, than any other interested sportsman organization returns to any other species. The percentage of money raised by FNAWS returned to the state bighorn management/research programs will remain very high as long as this organization continues on their current course of few paid employees, intense fundraisers, and concern for the resource.