

## POSITION STATEMENT OF THE IUCN/SSC CAPRINAE SPECIALIST GROUP ON THE SALE OF "SPECIAL" AUCTION OR RAFFLE HUNTING PERMITS FOR TROPHY MALES

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Special permits for bighorn sheep have been widely discussed during symposia of the Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council, and were the object of a resolution published with the 1988 proceedings. Following the extension of this practice to the province of Alberta in 1995, I suggested to the Caprinae specialist group of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), of which I am a member, a position statement. As special permits appear likely to be used increasingly as a fund-raising technique, the IUCN Caprinae group should formulate a position on this matter. We want to bring special permits to the attention of the international conservation community and to encourage a debate on the use of funds generated by these permits. We are particularly concerned with how special permits may affect conservation of caprin species in Asia. The statement commends the involvement of non-governmental organizations and stresses that funds generated by special permits should go towards conservation programs. A concern shared by the IUCN group and the NWSGC is that the funds generated by special permits may be used for projects of dubious value, with no clear management or conservation goals.

I drafted a statement and circulated it to IUCN SSC caprinae group members within North America. After comments by some member I redrafted the statement and sent copies to all group members (about 30) as well as to 8 long-standing members of the NWSGC, chosen partly upon their geographical distribution. Many of these people had direct experience with different aspects of special permits, and 5 of them commented on the position statement. Those comments were extremely useful. Of the 12 or so IUCN group members that sent me comment, only one was against the statement. At the 1996 meeting in Silverthorne, the NWSGC chairman suggested that the position statement be included in the Proceedings, and this suggestion was accepted during the business meeting. Therefore you will find here the exact text of the statement and its introduction, as it will be published in the newsletter of the IUCN caprinae specialist group.

### History and definition of special permits

Beginning in the early 1980s, several US states with huntable populations of bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) have each auctioned one or more special hunting permits each year. At least one state, Colorado, has auctioned a special mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) permit. These permits are sold to the highest bidder. Special permits (often referred to as "Governor's permits" in the USA) have been offered by Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, California. The practice extended to the Canadian province of Alberta in 1995 and to Mongolia in 1996. Most auctions are organized by the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, a non-government group that then either directly administers the funds obtained through the auction, or keeps a percentage while handing over the rest to state or provincial wildlife management agencies. An alternative type of special permit is a raffle, where interested individuals buy one or more of a limited number of tickets sold at a fixed price. A single ticket is then drawn in a lottery. The owner of the winning ticket obtains the special permit.

In this statement, "special permit" refers to hunting permits sold through an auction (the number of permits is fixed but their price is not known until the auction) or through a raffle (the total number and unit price of tickets are set). The explicit goal of special permits is to raise large amounts of funds. Therefore, special permits are distinct from the 'normal' game licenses that are sold at a fixed price as part of regular management programs. Special permits are usually made available in addition to hunting opportunities provided through regular seasons, draws etc., and can include special privileges, such as extended seasons or a wide choice of hunting areas. Some recent special permits for bighorn sheep have fetched over US \$200,000, and the revenue generated by these permits may increase in the future. Special permits bear some resemblance to hunting permits

for caprins that are sold at very high prices by several countries to foreign hunters. In both cases, obtaining the highest possible revenue appears to be the goal of the permit.

A very informative discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of special permits was presented by G.L. Erickson in 1988 in the Proceedings of the Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council. The Council published its recommendations in the same Proceedings. Those recommendations provided guidelines for how the system should be run and for how the money generated by the auctions should be allocated.

Particularly in view of the increasing international scope of this activity, it is opportune for the IUCN/SSC Caprin Specialist Group to express its opinion on special permits. The objective of this position statement is to briefly consider the positive and negative aspects of special permits, and to issue guidelines to ensure that this practice has a positive effect upon the conservation of wild caprins. Sales of special permits could be of interest as a fund-raising method to IUCN specialist groups concerned with other taxa subject to sport hunting.

## **POSITION STATEMENT**

WHEREAS special permits can provide substantial funds for the conservation, management and study of wild caprins.

WHEREAS special permits illustrate the economic value of live wild caprins, and therefore encourage the protection of their populations and habitat.

WHEREAS the practice of issuing special permits is presently mostly limited to North America but may be of interest to other caprinae range states.

WHEREAS special permits may contribute to the perception of caprins as "trophy" animals, valued almost exclusively for the size of the males' horns.

WHEREAS properly-publicized raffles could raise substantial amounts of funds.

WHEREAS it is extremely important that the large sums raised by special permits be used only for wildlife management or conservation.

## **THE IUCN CAPRIN SPECIALIST GROUP:**

APPLAUDS the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the administration of special permits.

CONDEMNS the use of funds generated by such special permits for uses other than conservation (including education on conservation issues), management, and study of wild caprins and their habitat or, within reasonable limits, administration of the special permit program.

RECOMMENDS AGAINST the auctioning of special permits to hunt caprins whenever raffles are a viable alternative.

SUPPORTS the use of raffles to draw single special permits to hunt caprins to raise funds for conservation, provided such raffles are conducted according to the following guidelines:

THE NUMBER of special permits must be limited to one per species per jurisdiction (a geographical area under the control of a wildlife management agency, such as a country, state, province or territory) per year, and must not have adverse impacts on the species or on the availability of huntable animals to other hunters.

**CRITERIA** used for setting the number of special permits must be based exclusively on scientific principles and conservation objectives. The authority responsible for setting regulations pertaining to special permits must seek the input of wildlife managers and scientists, as well as of interested parties such as local hunter and conservation groups, landowners, indigenous groups and any traditional users of the species concerned.

**REGULATIONS** detailing the area and season of the hunt must be clearly specified and must be enforced. Holders of special permits should not be given hunting privileges not allowed to other hunters, such as permission to hunt in protected areas, special hunting seasons during the rut, or permission to use weapons, vehicles, bait stations or other hunting techniques that are normally not permitted.

**ALL FUNDS** from the raffle, other than reasonable amounts needed for administration and publicity, must be used for conservation activities such as research, habitat protection, land purchase for conservation, censuses, enforcement of wildlife law and educational programs.

**CRITERIA** for awarding of funds, or for use of funds by government agencies, must be made public before special permits are sold, and must be respected. These criteria must include ways to assess whether conservation objectives will have been met by the programs that will be funded. If funds are awarded through competition to non-government groups or researchers, competitions rules must be clear, based on scientific and conservation priorities, and must be respected.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS** accounting for the use of all funds generated by the raffle must be available to the public.

**PUBLICITY** on the use of funds must be made available to prospective raffle ticket buyers and to the general public.