



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

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March 9, 2017

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests

Attn: Plan Revision Team

2250 South Main Street

Delta, CO 81416

gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us

RE: Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests At-Risk Species Assessments - Desert Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep

Dear Plan Revision Team:

Thank you for the opportunity to continue CPW's participation in the Assessment Phase of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest (GMUG) Plan Revision project. Please consider the following comments for the Desert Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Assessments:

Desert Bighorn Sheep Assessment

Page 1, Section 1 - *Ovis canadensis nelsoni*, not mexicana as per Buchalski, Michael R.; Sacks, Benjamin N.; Gille, Daphne A.; Penedo, Maria Cecilia T.; et al. (2016). "Phylogeographic and population genetic structure of bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) in North American deserts". Journal of Mammalogy. Retrieved 26 March 2016.

Page 1, Section 3 - There has been some debate about the nomenclature for desert bighorn sheep populations. The most recent literature (Buchalski 2016) identifies both Nelso (*O. c. nelsoni*) and Mexican (*O. c. mexicana*) as valid subspecies based on genetics and distribution. Their mapping identifies the desert bighorn populations used for transplants in Arizona and Utah as *Ovis canadensis nelsoni*.

Page 1, Table 1 - Colorado State List Status, add Colorado Bighorn Sheep Management, Addendum, Tier 1 species for desert bighorn sheep.

Page 2 - Please note that the GMUG falls within S-56 (Black Ridge) GMU boundary and in proximity to the desert herd, but it does not overlap.

Page 3 - Breeding season primarily occurs from July through September in Colorado, but can occur throughout the year. Newborn lambs have been observed in S62 from January through May.



Page 4 - The last sentence of the first paragraph refers to Rocky Mountain bighorns, not desert bighorns. As mentioned earlier, rut primarily occurs from July through September.

Page 5, second Paragraph - Most of this refers to Rocky Mountain bighorns. CPW has not documented substantial seasonal range differences from summer to winter in S-62. CPW will be analyzing collar data currently being collected to confirm these findings.

Page 5, Section 6, first bullet - Any analysis of converting cattle allotments on the GMUG to sheep allotments needs to consider proximity to desert bighorn sheep herds S-62 and S-56.

Page 7, first bullet, Disease Epizootics - Please see Attachment 1 - GMUG Bighorn GMU Population Estimates and Disease Occurrence for updated population estimates and disease occurrence for all desert bighorn and Rocky Mountain bighorn GMUs within or adjacent to the GMUG planning boundary. Please contact CPW if you have any questions related to this information.

Page 7, last bullet, Interagency and Cross-Boundary Management Coordination - S-56 is within DAU DBS-60 and S-62 is actually DBS-62.

Page 13, Section 9 - Please see Attachment 2 - Desert Bighorn Habitat Suitability GIS layers and Attachment 3 - Desert Bighorn Sheep Suitable Habitat Modeling in Colorado, a white paper describing how the desert bighorn suitability model was developed.

Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Assessment

Page 1, last paragraph - There are 18 hunted and non-hunted Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep GMUs that overlap the GMUG. While not all occupied ranges of the 18 bighorn populations are completely overlapped by the boundaries of the GMUG, forest service staff should evaluate impacts of management actions to bighorns in these GMUs with close proximity to the GMUG. Please see Attachment 1.

Page 7, first bullet, Harvest - Please refer to the table provided in Attachment 1 for information on which units are hunted or not. S26 and S70 are now hunted. The only non-hunted herds are S52, S80, and S81.

Page 12-13, Section 9 - CPW can provide habitat suitability GIS layers and defined seasonal habitat maps for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep if needed.

Conclusion

CPW appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Assessment Phase of the GMUG Forest Plan Revision project. If you have any questions or would like clarification on any comment in this letter please contact Southwest Energy Liaison, Jon Holst at 970-375-6713.

Sincerely,



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