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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Ms. Hennessey[hellip]I'm writing in support of the Idaho Fish and Game collaring project on the Salmon River, and its use of helicopter support to capture and test bighorns to assess the health of these sheep relative to their potential infection by *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi). Collaring will give scientists more information about bighorn movement as well. Rational management for the long term requires biologists to identify if infection exists so strategic plans can be implemented to limit the risk to other healthy sheep. Bighorn rams tend to go on walkabout thus taking their disease with them to infect other healthy bighorns, potentially exponentially. This the Department hopes to preclude. Great success in clearing Movi in Hell's Canyon shows the need for active disease assessment and management of it if found. Scientific work on these iconic species to ascertain their health and then manage the disease issue cannot be executed without the aid of helicopters. In respect for the wilderness designation, the Department will employ careful and judicious helicopter use both in terms of spatial and temporal access. Failure to apply professional scientific management actions on these bighorns, especially if they are diseased, could cause other healthy sheep to be affected and spread the disease even further. Please allow the judicious use of helicopters for the purpose of ensuring healthy sheep in the Salmon River drainage. Thank you very much for your consideration to the Idaho Fish and Game Department's request. Karen Gordon