

**Worksheet**  
**Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)**  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

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OFFICE Black Rock Field Office, 5100 E Winnemucca Blvd., Winnemucca NV 89445

TRACKING NUMBER: DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2013-0006-DNA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: 6300 Wilderness Management; 6840 Special Status Species Management

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: NDOW Survey and Capture of Bighorn Sheep within Black Rock-High Rock Area Wildernesses and Wilderness Study Areas

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Calico Mountains, Little High Rock Canyon, Pole Canyon, Chukar Gulch, Warm Springs Canyon, Trough Mountain, Mahogany Mountain, Yellow Rock Canyon, High Rock Lake, East Fork High Rock Canyon, Little High Rock Canyon, High Rock Canyon Wilderness Areas, Pahute Peak Wilderness, North Black Rock Range Wilderness, Lahontan Cutthroat Trout ISA and Blue Lakes WSA. (Exact locations will be dependent on location of sheep at time of captures.)

APPLICANT (if any): Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW)

**A. Description of the Proposed Action with attached map(s) and any applicable mitigation measures.**

**Background:**

The California bighorn sheep herd inhabiting NDOW hunt unit 012 occupies an expansive amount of habitat in the Calico Mountains, Little High Rock Canyon, High Rock Canyon, Pole Canyon, Chukar Gulch, Warm Springs Canyon, Trough Mountain, Mahogany Mountain, and Yellow Rock Canyon. Highest densities and concentrations of bighorns are located within wilderness boundaries near Little High Rock Canyon, High Rock Canyon, and in the Calico Mountains. These locations would be the areas of primary focus for the capture. According to NDOW, the removal of 20-35 sheep would not impact the herd and may help increase productivity in those where the highest densities of sheep are found. Based on recent recruitment rates, it is estimated that it would take one to two years for the herd to replace the animals removed. The removal of 20-35 animals represents a 10-15 percent reduction in the population. Similarly to hunt unit 012, hunt units 032 and 034 may have similar activities occur within the Pahute Peak Wilderness, North Black Rock Range Wilderness, Lahontan Cutthroat Trout ISA, and Blue Lakes WSA, see "Proposed NDOW Bighorn Sheep Capture" map. According to NDOW, sheep would be captured in high density areas because there is a need for sheep to be released within low density areas. The DNA is

evaluating this capture proposal including aerial surveying and the addition of two locations that were not previously considered in existing NEPA documents; the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout ISA and Blue Lakes WSA.

**Proposed Action:**

Aerial survey and capture operations within Black Rock-High Rock Area Wildernesses and Wilderness Study Areas (the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout ISA and Blue Lakes WSA), see attached maps.

**Aerial Survey Operations:**

NDOW proposes to conduct aerial surveys during the months of August and September to determine the status of bighorn populations and habitat conditions. Information obtained from these flights would be used to evaluate whether herds can sustain removals, and to determine how many animals can be removed through capture operations.

**Bighorn Sheep Capture Operations:**

NDOW proposes to land a helicopter in designated wilderness in order to capture and relocate 20-35 bighorn sheep. The sheep would be taken from areas of high population density and released in areas needing population supplementation. Capture operations would occur over approximately 2-4 days November through February. Due to Native American Consultation concerns, helicopters would not land within the North Black Range Wilderness or the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout ISA.

NDOW contracts aerial net-gun capture services. The capture crew consists of a pilot and several members cross-trained in different aspects of large animal captures. The aircraft (MD500D or Bell 206 Long Ranger helicopter) is operated at altitudes generally below 300 feet above ground level while the crew attempts to locate animals, and in ferrying to and from a base of operations. In capture mode, the pilot maneuvers the aircraft close to ground level in pursuit of fleeing animals. The aircraft is maneuvered alongside an animal and at an opportune moment the pilot alters the lateral attitude of the aircraft presenting a larger target to the gunner.

Once an animal is entangled in a net the helicopter may hover close to the ground or land briefly to allow the handler(s) to dismount. A handler quickly works the animal out of the net, applies hobbles and a blindfold, and secures the animal in a transport bag. The transport bag is fastened to a sling line that is attached to the underside of the aircraft. Once captured, handled, and readied for transport, the sheep is ferried in a sling load fashion beneath the aircraft to the base of operations. Bases of operations or staging areas are confined to previously disturbed areas beyond wilderness boundaries.

Design measures included in existing EA #CA-370-05-01 and in this proposed action include:

- All staging areas would be located outside of wilderness
- Helicopter landings within wilderness would be minimized as much as possible; if sheep are available to capture outside of designated wilderness, they should be captured before using the wildernesses for captures.
- Captures would occur during times of low wilderness visitation (November through March) and would also be scheduled to avoid weekends and holidays.

Stipulations included in the Decision Record based on existing EA #NV-020-03-04 and recommended for this action include:

- Monitoring of the sheep population would occur during NDOWs normally scheduled monitoring flights.
- BLM would coordinate with NDOW to schedule monitoring flights during times that would have a reduced probability of impacting wilderness users.

## **B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance**

LUP Name: Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan Date Approved July 2004

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objective, terms, and conditions):

Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan; 2-14:

“The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) has jurisdiction for managing wildlife in the wilderness areas in compliance with Federal wilderness laws, regulations and policies including: the Wilderness Act of 1964, which outlines general management including wildlife management in wilderness; Wilderness Regulations found in 43 CFR 6300, which further specify what actions are prohibited and how BLM is to manage wilderness areas; and BLM Manual 8560 and Handbook 8560-1, that provide policy guidance for specific wilderness management issues.”

## **C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.**

Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area Wilderness Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA# NV-W030-2011-0001-EA) FONSI & Decision Record 12/21/2012 (pg 50 refers to BLM – NDOW MOU re: NDOW submittal of annual operations and maintenance schedule to BLM. Pg 52-53 cover wildlife relocation)

Capture of Bighorn Sheep within Black Rock-High Rock Area Wildernesses (EA# CA-370-05-01) FONSI & Decision Record 11/16/04

Environmental Assessment for the Release of California Bighorn Sheep in the North Black Rock Range Wilderness within the Winnemucca Field Office (EA# NV – 020-03-04) FONSI & Decision Record 12/18/2002

#### **D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria**

**1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA documents(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?**

Yes, the methods, mitigation, and conditions are unchanged from the existing EAs. The wilderness locations and capture operation plans are specifically addressed in EA #CA-370-05-01. The proposed additional locations as well as survey operations are in the same general vicinity and possess the same resources and special restrictions as described in EA #CA-370-05-01.

**2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA documents(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?**

Yes, the range of alternatives analyzed remains appropriate. The wilderness locations and capture operation plans are specifically addressed for in EA #CA-370-05-01. The methods, mitigation, and conditions are unchanged from the existing EAs. The proposed additional locations, as well as survey operations, are in the same general vicinity and possess the same resources and special restrictions as described in EA #CA-370-05-01.

**3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?**

Yes, the methods, mitigation, and conditions are unchanged from the existing EAs. The wilderness locations and capture operation plans are specifically addressed within EA #CA-370-05-0. The proposed additional locations, as well as survey operations, are in the same general vicinity and possess the same resources and special restrictions as described in EA #CA-370-05-01. Although greater sage grouse have become a candidate species since the preparation of the original EA, the proposed action would not be occurring during a sensitive period for the birds. This new circumstance would not substantially change the analysis based on the new proposed action.

**4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?**

Yes, the new proposed action is addressed in terms of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects within EA #CA-370-05-01. The methods, stipulations, and conditions are unchanged from the existing EAs. The proposed additional locations are in the same general vicinity and possess the same resources and special restrictions as described in EA #CA-370-05-01. Although greater sage grouse have become a candidate species since the preparation of the original EA, the proposed action would not be occurring during a sensitive period for the birds.

**5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?**

No, because the EA #CA-370-05-01 Decision Record requires that future captures will continue to be shared with the public in our normal 30 day notification of proposed action (NOPA) process. The 30 day NOPA process began March 26, 2013 and will go through April 29, 2013. The WMP has an additional public outreach requirement. In order to inform visitors of impending activity, capture dates would be posted on the BLM website a minimum of two weeks in advance. The WMP specifies that when feasible, specific project implementation would occur during periods of low visitor use.

**E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted**

<b>Name /Title</b>	<b>Resource/Agency Represented</b>	<b>Signature/Date</b>	<b>Comments (Attach if more room is needed)</b>
Kathy Ataman	Cultural Resources	/S/ Kathryn Ataman 5/1/13	
Kathy Ataman	Paleontological Resources	/S/ Kathryn Ataman 5/1/13	
Joey Carmosino	Recreation	/S/ V J Carmosino 5/1/13	
Mark Hall	Native American Religious Concerns	/S/ Mark E Hall 4/30/13	See reverse
Melanie Mirati	Wild Horse & Burro	/S/ M Mirati 5/2/13	
Kristine Struck	Wilderness Study Areas	/S/ Kristine M Struck 5/1/13	
Kristine Struck	NCA	/S/ Kristine M Struck 5/1/13	
Kristine Struck	LWC	/S/ Kristine M Struck 5/1/13	
Kathy Cadigan	T&E (Plants & Animals)	/S/ K Cadigan 5/1/13	
Kathy Cadigan	Special Status Species (Plants & Animals)	/S/ K Cadigan 5/1/13	
Kathy Cadigan	General Wildlife Habitat	/S/ K Cadigan 5/1/13	
Rob Bunkall	GIS	/S/ Rob Burton 5/1/13	
Lynn Ricci	NEPA Coordinator	/S/ Lynn B Ricci 5/2/13	
Mark Turney	Public Outreach	/S/ M Turney 5/2/13	No Outreach/ Release Rqrd.

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

**Conclusion** *(If you found that one or more of these criteria is not met, you will not be able to check this box.)*

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM' compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

/S/ K.Cadigan  
Signature of Project Lead

/S/ Lynn B Ricci  
Signature of NEPA Coordinator

/S/ Kathryn Ataman, acting for  
Signature of the Responsible Official

5/14/13  
Date

**NAC suggested mitigation:**

“The BRFO will notify the Ft. McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe and the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe on the general location where the sheep are released. This will be to the level of Township and Range. This notification will be in the form of a certified letter.”

In order to meet the NAC suggested mitigation, NDOW would need to provide the Townships and Ranges of where sheep were released in writing (e-mail or letter) to the Black Rock Field Manager.

**Note:** The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.