

**KINGMAN FIELD OFFICE SCOPING FORM**

1. DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2014-0033 -DNA

S:/BLMshare:Nepa/eaais/wildlife/BighornCaptureRelease 2012-2017/2014 Capture Release DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-0033-2014/BighornCaptureRelease PeoplesCny 2014 current

NEPA Document Number

Document Location

**Land Description:** Capture Area: Black Mountains, Mohave County, Arizona, Game Management Units (GMU) 15D; Release Area: Poachie Mountains, GMU 16A

**Applicant:** Arizona Game and Fish Department Region III

**INVOLVEMENT:** Indicate in the left column which disciplines need to provide information into the EA.

Needed Input (X)	Discipline	Signature
	Lands	
	Minerals	
X	Range	<i>[Signature]</i> 7/9/14
X	Wild Horse and Burro	<i>[Signature]</i> 7-9-14
	General Recreation	
X	Cultural and Paleontological Resources	<i>[Signature]</i> 07/09/14
X	Wilderness	<i>[Signature]</i> 7/09/14
	Soils	
	Surface and Groundwater Quality/Water Rights	
	Air Quality	
X	Wildlife	<i>[Signature]</i> 7/9/2014
X	Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals	<i>[Signature]</i> 7/9/2014
X	Migratory Birds	<i>[Signature]</i> 7/9/2014
	Surface Protection	
	Hazardous Materials	
X	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	<i>[Signature]</i> 7/9/2014
	Visual Resources	
	Socio-Economics/Environmental Justice	
	General Botany/Noxious Weeds	
	Energy Policy	

Writer: *Rebecca L. Peck*

Date: 5/19/2014

Environmental Coordinator: *[Signature]*

Date: 7/10/14

Field Manager: *[Signature]*

Date: 5/19/2014

**OFFICE:** Kingman Field Office (KFO), AZ-310

**NEPA DOCUMENT NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2014-0033 -DNA

**PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE:** Black Mountains and Poachie Mountains Bighorn Capture and Release 2014.

**LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** Capture Area: Black Mountains, Mohave County, Arizona, Game Management Units (GMU) 15D; Release Area: Poachie Mountains, GMU 16A (Maps #1 and 2)

**APPLICATION (if any):** Arizona Game and Fish Department, Region III

**A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures:**

The proposed project is to capture desert bighorn sheep in the Black Mountains, south and north of Route 66, in Game Management Unit (GMU) 15D and relocate them to GMU 16A, in the Poachie Mountains (Maps 1 and 2). Capture and translocation of the desert bighorn sheep would take place in November 2014, with estimated dates of November 3-9.

**Capture:** The proposed project would involve the capture of approximately 40 bighorn sheep. The desired transplant ratio is one ram per three ewes or, 10 rams and 30 ewes. Only Class I and II rams would be removed for translocation. If possible, all 40 sheep will be moved at one time; however it may be done in two different releases.

The capture operation would take 2-5 days to complete, assuming no weather or logistical delays occur. The fall time frame would provide suitable conditions for a successful capture as air temperatures are low, bighorn sheep are not in late stages of pregnancy, and lambs are no longer dependent on ewes.

The net-gun method would be used to capture bighorn sheep. The net-gun method involves using a gun to shoot a net at bighorn during low-level helicopter overflights. This may be done with the assistance of spotters located on the ground. Once a bighorn is captured the helicopter would land, or, capture personnel would exit the aircraft while it is hovering. The captured animals would immediately be blindfolded, hobbled and if possible, the capture net would be removed. From the capture location to the capture staging area, the bighorn would be transported by helicopter, either carried inside the ship or slung underneath. At the staging areas the bighorn would be processed. Each bighorn would receive an ear tag, and a blood and genetic sample may be taken. If available, up to ten bighorn would receive a tan-colored GPS or VHS collar. Following processing, all bighorn would be loaded into the transport boxes and transported by truck and trailer to the release site. Captures would be conducted by the AGFD and volunteers. Capture operations would be scheduled to occur during weekdays, however there is potential that capture during a weekend day may occur due to weather or scheduling problems.

The bighorn would be captured in GMU 15D (Map 1) which is comprised of non-wilderness and wilderness public lands. Approximately 70% of the capture area is within the Mount Nutt and Warm Springs wildernesses. Whenever possible capture would occur outside of the wilderness and landing in wilderness would be avoided when possible. Depending upon where individual bighorn are net-gunned, there may be as few as 25 landings of the helicopter, or as many as 40 landings within the wilderness. All other landings will take place outside of wilderness. The capture areas include BLM, Arizona State Trust land, and private land however capture operations would not occur on or affect any private land. If needed the helicopter may land on Arizona State Trust land.

**Release:** Bighorn would be released in the Poachie Mountains, in GMU 16A (Map 2) from an existing road outside of wilderness. No helicopter would be needed for the release. Bighorn would be released the same day of capture or held overnight and then transported to the release location the next day (Map 2). Bighorn would be released within at least two hours of dusk or at daybreak. Bighorn are expected to head west towards escape terrain into the Arrastra Mountain wilderness located 2 miles away.

**Staging and Camping:** There may be up to three staging areas needed for the capture area (Map 1) however it is likely that only one staging area would be needed. Map 3 shows the location of the primary staging area. Up to 30 people (agency and volunteers) may be present at each staging area. At the capture staging areas, dry camping would occur for up to 3 nights. Anywhere from 10-15 people may camp at one of the staging areas as local people would go to their homes for the evening. Camping and staging areas have been selected in areas that are already disturbed, along dirt or maintained roads, or within washes. The staging areas would be left free of trash.

**Monitoring:** If funds are available up to 10 of the bighorn sheep would be radio collared at the capture staging area and monitored at the release location. Following the capture and translocation the AGFD would monitor the released bighorn either through satellite uplink (GPS collars), or from monthly telemetry flights (VHS collars).

**GPS:** Since the GPS collars being deployed have satellite uplink capability, and monitoring would be conducted primarily from a remote computer, there would be no regular telemetry flights over wilderness or non-wilderness. After approximately two years, the collars would drop off the bighorn at which point AGFD personnel would recover the collars by hiking or riding horseback in from the ground. Under rare, extenuating circumstances (up to 4 times annually) a telemetry flight may be scheduled for monitoring problematic collars. During such a flight, the plane would remain 2,000 feet above ground level (agl). If mortality signals are received, AGFD personnel would hike or horseback ride to the signal within approximately 48 hours.

**VHS:** If VHS collars are used there would be monthly telemetry flights by fixed-wing aircraft for the first 6-12 months. After approximately two years, the collars would drop off and AGFD personnel would recover them by hiking or riding horseback to the collar location. During flights the plane would remain 2,000 feet agl. If mortality signals are received, AGFD would hike or horseback ride into the signal within approximately 48 hours.

**Notifications:** The livestock grazing permittees for the Black Mountain, Boriana B, Happy Jack Wash and Santa Maria Ranch allotments would be notified of the capture and release dates.

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

LUP Name: *Kingman Resource Management Plan/EIS*  
Date Approved: March 1995

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 (objectives, terms, and conditions):

RMP Decision number and narrative:

SM\*02 Special Management - Manage the twelve "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern" designation according to the goals and objectives in the RMP pages 95 to 111. Evaluate land use authorizations, including all the existing activity plans, for compatibility with goals and objectives of the area of critical environmental concern.

WL\*01 Wildlife - Continue implementation and revision of the Habitat Management Plans in coordination and cooperation with the state wildlife agency and interested publics (page 79, Objectives and Planned Actions section).

BM\*21 Black Mountain ACEC - Promote opportunities for scientific research of ecological and cultural resources (page 99, Objectives section).

BM12 Black Mountain ACEC - Maintain balanced resource development while providing for public demand and sensitive resource needs. Protect and enhance special status species habitat. Protect cultural resources. Manage wilderness to maintain wilderness values and characteristics (page 99, Goals).

BM15 Black Mountain ACEC - Improve and maintain habitat while providing for the needs of wild burros, desert bighorn sheep, and other wildlife species and livestock (page 99, Objectives).

\* SM = Special Management Areas; WL = Wildlife; BM = Black Mountain

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

*Black Mountain Ecosystem Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (AZ-025-95-032)*, 1996 (BME Plan)

-pg. 36 #4, BME Plan: Initiate coordination with agencies and individuals that are responsible for management of land adjacent to the Black Mountain ecosystem to delineate and designate movement corridors between the Black Mountain and other ecosystems.

-pg. 49 #4, BME Plan: Discusses procedures for wildlife population and capture of wildlife in wilderness. Capture may occur as often as every year. Two methods may be used: net-gun, and remote chemical injection. Methods described in Appendix 4 (Capture methodologies for Bighorn Sheep) pg. 102 BME Plan.

-pg. 102, Appendix 4, BME Plan: Capture sites discussed were: Wherever bighorn occur, inside or outside of wilderness.

*Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the Reintroduction and Supplemental Releases of Desert Bighorn Sheep in Mohave, Yavapai, Coconino, and La Paz counties. Environmental Assessment (AZ-030-2001-0035)*. BLM Kingman Field Office, Arizona: This document analyzes capture and release of bighorn sheep within the Kingman Field Office, BLM.

*Transplant of desert bighorn sheep into the Artillery Mountains, 1994. Environmental Assessment (AZ-025-94-057)*. BLM Kingman Field Office, Arizona: This document analyzes capture and release of bighorn sheep within the Kingman Field Office, BLM.

**C. NEPA Adequacy Criteria**

**1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(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?**

Documentation of answer and explanation:

The proposed action is the same as analyzed in *Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the Reintroduction and Supplemental Releases of Desert Bighorn Sheep in Mohave, Yavapai, Coconino, and La Paz counties. Environmental Assessment (AZ-030-2001-0035)* as the EA evaluated multiple releases per area over a 20 years period (pg. 6). Telemetry which is proposed in the new action was also proposed in the existing NEPA document. If GPS collars are available telemetry procedures would occur via satellite downlink versus overflights as proposed in the original EA. If GPS collars are unavailable then telemetry would be conducted using VHS collars as described in the existing NEPA document. Telemetry via satellite downlinks would be less obtrusive to wilderness values than the VHS collars that were originally proposed. Monitoring by GPS collars is done remotely from an office via a computer versus wilderness overflights. The number of captures in the new proposal (up to 40 bighorn) would be smaller (up to 70) than proposed in the existing NEPA document. This results in fewer hours of flight, fewer overflights and landings.

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

Documentation of answer and explanation: Yes, the range of alternatives remains the same given current environmental concerns, interests and resource values.

1.) Capturing animals outside and inside of wilderness, and 2.) Capturing animals outside of wilderness only, and 3.) The No Action alternative. The current environmental concerns, interests and resource values are unchanged from 1994.

**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?**

Documentation of answer and explanation: There are no new circumstances or information that would change the analysis of the proposed action (MRDG\_2013).

**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 exiting NEPA document?**

Documentation of answer and explanation: Yes, bighorn sheep would still be affected by capture and release. There would still be the direct effects of capture and release and indirect effects from wearing the collars. Data from the collars would be used to determine movements, movement areas, habitat use, and mortality events (the collars give off a mortality signal). Part of the capture area is within the Black Mountain Ecosystem Management Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The Black Mountain Ecosystem Management plan evaluated the impacts of bighorn capture and monitoring. The impacts of capturing and monitoring are essentially similar or the same as analyzed. Wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would still be temporarily affected by the use of aircraft during the capture. The original proposal evaluated impacts for up to 50 helicopter landings. This proposal would have as few as 25 landings and as many as 40 landings, thus fewer landings. Bighorn would be released from an existing road, outside of wilderness, therefore *no* helicopter would be needed for the release as described in the original EA. Impacts associated with telemetry activities would be less than the original project if GPS telemetry via remote satellite downlink is used. Telemetry flights with aircraft would rarely occur with GPS telemetry. If the GPS telemetry is not used then the impacts from monitoring would be the same as those analyzed under the existing NEPA document.

**5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associate with existing NEPA documents adequate for the current proposed action?**

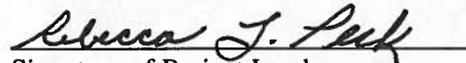
Documentation of answer and explanation: Yes, the original NEPA document was sent out to over 500 individuals and groups which represented those concerned with wilderness impacts, wildlife impacts, and grazing management impacts. There have been no issues or complaints from the individuals or groups following implementation of the original proposed action as well as following subsequent captures that have occurred in years 1995, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2013.

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

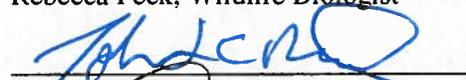
<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Resource/Agency Represented</u>
Luke Apfel	Wildlife Manager	Arizona Game and Fish Dept.
Chad Benson	Wild Horse and Burro Specialist	Bureau of Land Management
Mike Blanton	Range Specialist	Bureau of Land Management
Erin Butler	Game Specialist	Arizona Game and Fish Dept.
Matt Driscoll	Outdoor Recreation Planner, Wilderness	Bureau of Land Management
Ramone McCoy	Outdoor Recreation Planner, Wilderness	Bureau of Land Management (retired)
Rebecca Peck	Wildlife Biologist	Bureau of Land Management
John Reid	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Bureau of Land Management
Tim Watkins	Archaeologist	Bureau of Land Management

**Conclusion**

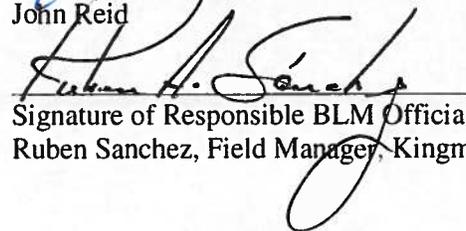
Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal found in NEPA Document Number: DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2014-0033 -DNA conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM's compliance with the requirement of the NEPA.

  
 Signature of Project Lead  
 Rebecca Peck, Wildlife Biologist

7/9/14  
 Date

  
 Signature of NEPA Coordinator  
 John Reid

7/16/14  
 Date

  
 Signature of Responsible BLM Official  
 Ruben Sanchez, Field Manager, Kingman Field Office

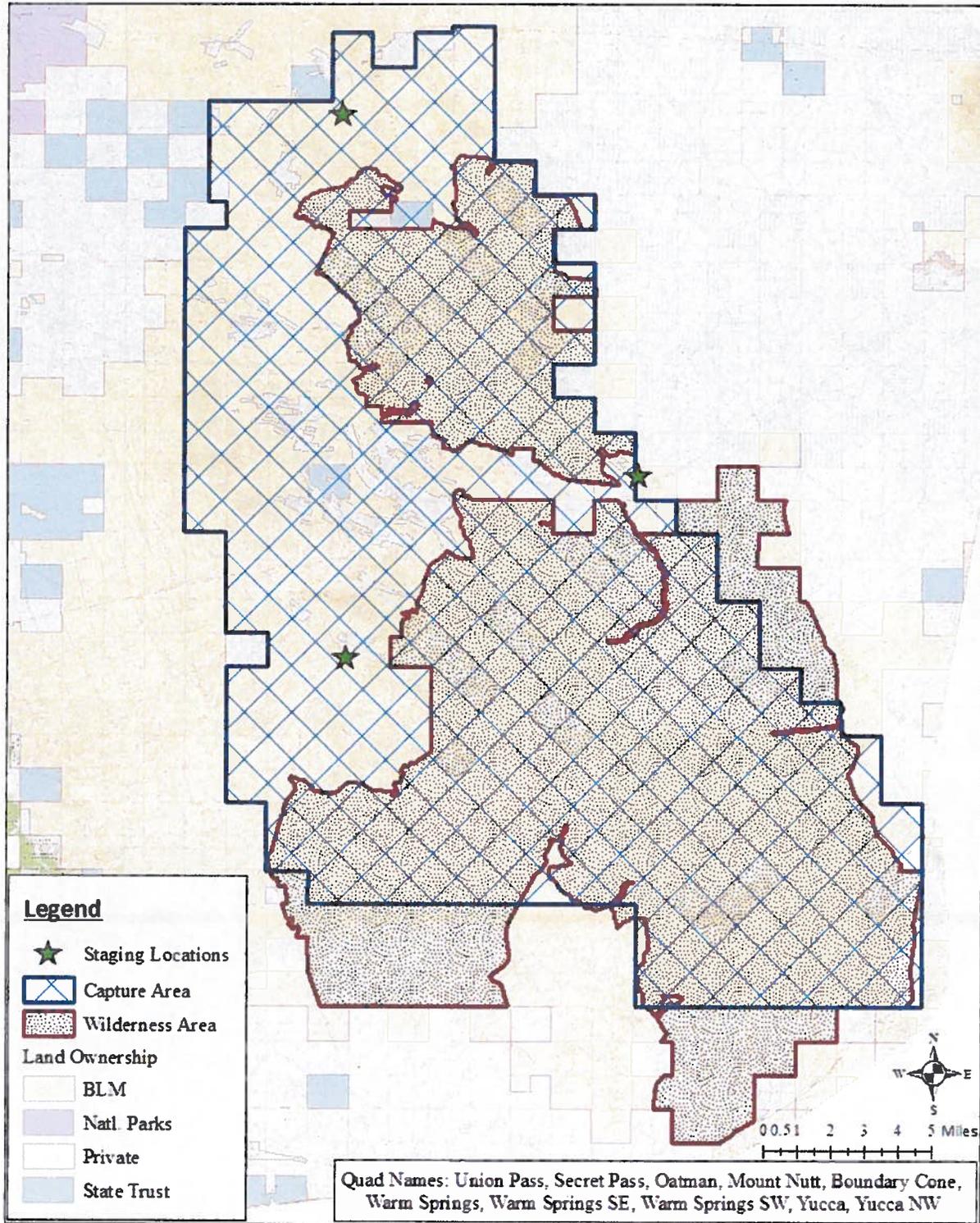
7/9/2014  
 Date

**References**

Peck, Rebecca 2009. Biological Evaluation of Federally Listed Species, State Listed Species, and Migratory Birds. Bureau of Land Management, Kingman Field Office, Arizona.

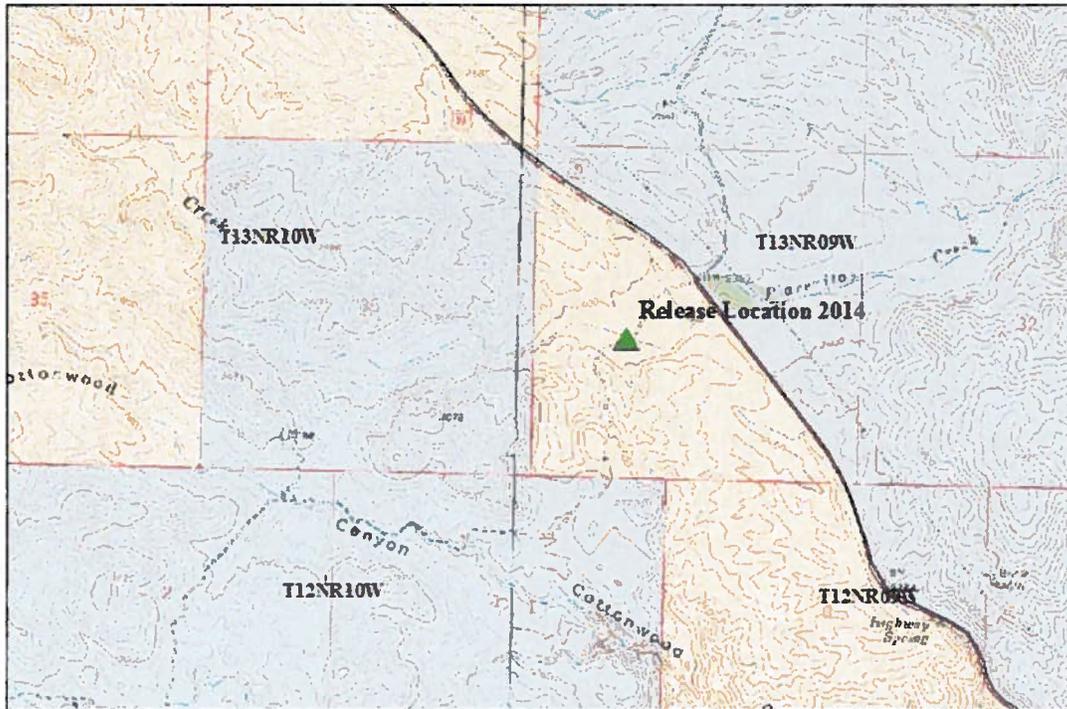
Bureau of Land Management 2013. Minimum Requirements Decision Guide for the Black Mountain and Poachie Mountains Bighorn Capture and Release. Bureau of Land Management, Kingman, Arizona.

# Map #1: Black Mountains Bighorn Sheep Capture Area

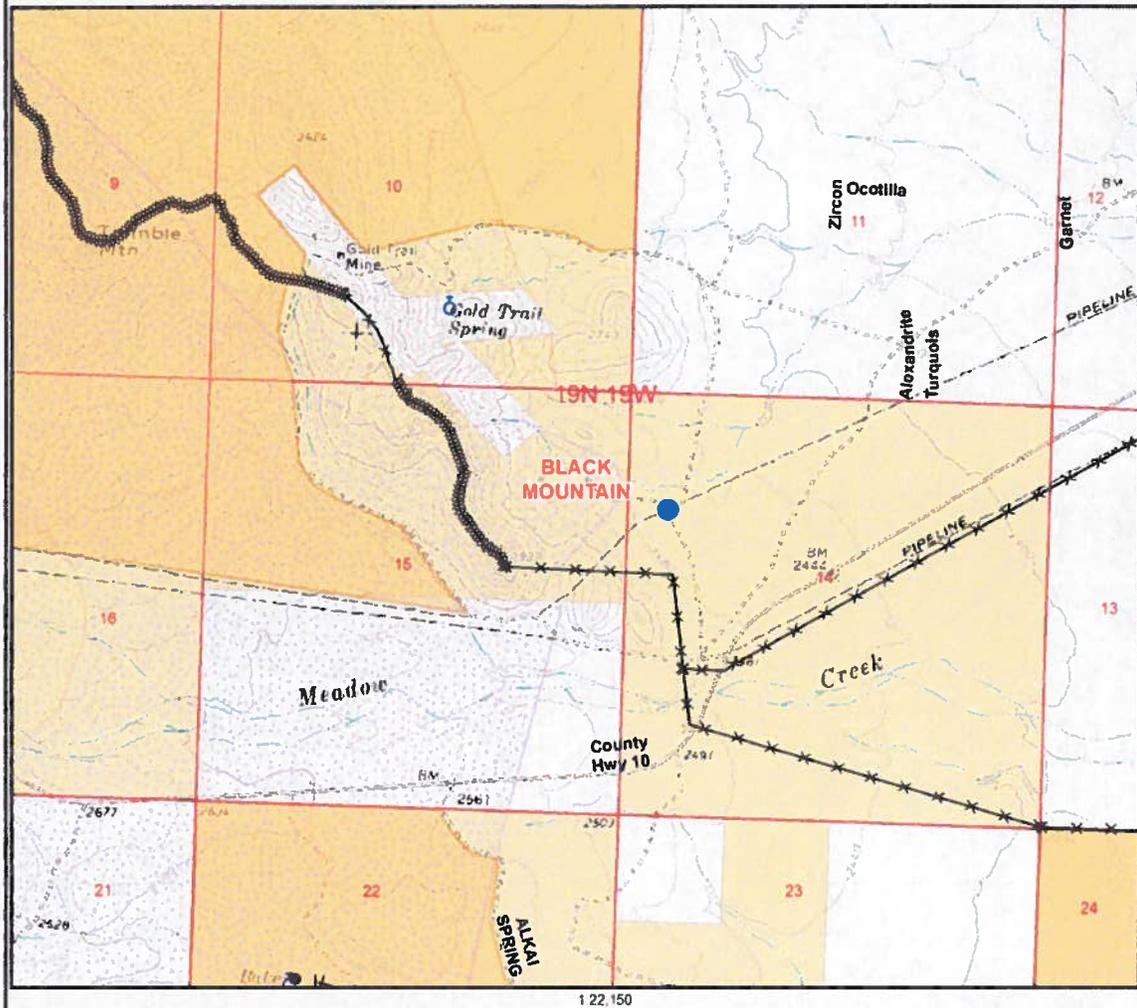


**Map 1. Proposed capture areas and staging areas for the 2014 bighorn sheep capture in the Black Mountains, Arizona.**

Map #2: Proposed Release Site 2014



Map 2. Proposed 2014 bighorn release area in the Poachie Mountains, Arizona



Map 3. Proposed capture staging/camping area for the 2014 in the Black Mountains, Arizona.