

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)
COMPLIANCE RECORD FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS (CX)
U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

PART I. – PROPOSED ACTION
BLM Office: Tucson Field Office
CX

NEPA No.: AZ-G020-2015-0010-

Case File No.:

Proposed Action Title/Type: Bighorn sheep sampling

Applicant: Arizona Game and Fish Department

Location of Proposed Action: Ironwood Forest National Monument, Waterman and Silverbell Mountains complex

Description of Proposed Action: The Arizona Game and Fish department currently lack disease exposure and genetic information from the Silver Bell population of bighorn sheep. As a result, they are unable to make informed decisions about translocating bighorn sheep both, into this population to augment it, and out of this population to augment other populations. A science-informed decision-making process must guide these management efforts and having information about disease exposure and genetic diversity will be critical as we continue to proactively manage the states bighorn populations to increase their numbers. Beginning in the spring of 2015, Department personnel propose to capture approximately 20 bighorn sheep on BLM, private and State Trust lands in the Silver Bell and Waterman Mountain complex within the Ironwood Forest National Monument. Samples will be taken from bighorn to test for disease and to gather genetic information on genetic diversity. Bighorn will be marked with ear tags and approximately 5-10 rams would be collared with satellite GPS collars to track metapopulation dynamics (movements between mountain ranges) that may influence future management decisions. Bighorn would be captured using either dart guns, drop nets, or via helicopter and net guns, or a combination of the three. The helicopter staging area would take place off of BLM lands to eliminate any ground disturbance. Additional sampling may be necessary in the future depending on the outcome of these initial sampling efforts.

Bighorn sheep would initially be located from a helicopter and captured by using a net gun fired from the helicopter at close range. Pursuit of any individual bighorn sheep by helicopter would be limited to no more than five minutes. Immediately after firing the net, the helicopter would land nearby and one or two crew members would exit the helicopter and restrain the bighorn sheep. No chemical immobilization is required for this technique. Captured bighorn sheep would be processed at the capture site by the capture crew and the animal would be released on site after processing. Once a bighorn sheep is captured it receives a physical examination; age and body condition (i.e., body fat) would be measured, and blood and fecal samples would be collected to survey herd health by screening for exposure to diseases and parasite loads. An Arizona Game and Fish Department wildlife health specialist would participate in all captures and translocations and would ensure the health of all animals and attend to any health concerns. Select captured bighorn sheep would be fitted with VHF or VHF/GPS collars and marked with numbered and colored ear tags. VHF/GPS collars currently in use by the Arizona Game and Fish Department are programmed to drop off automatically after two to three years. Care would be taken to ensure that the collars are fit snugly and do not slide up and down the animal's neck.

Of the three most common techniques used to capture desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*), net-gun capture generally causes fewer and lower-level stress physiological parameters, the lowest mortality rate, and the lowest combined morbidity and mortality rate. Only one of 137 (0.7%) bighorn sheep net-gun captured between 1983 and 1986 showed signs of capture myopathy, and two (1.5%) died of injuries (Jessup et al., 1988). Ongoing netgun capture efforts in Arizona continue to have a capture mortality rate below 1%.

Helicopter landings will only be permitted at specified locations shown on map in the Watermans Mountains to avoid impacts to Nichol Turks-head cactus.

Attachment 4-2
AZ-1790-1
August 2013

Part II. – PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan(s): IFNM RMP

Decisions and page nos.: WH-012: As appropriate, BLM will coordinate the evaluation and implementation of proposals to enhance wildlife populations through partnerships with the AGFD and other agencies as necessary to determine what levels of wildlife introductions or habitat enhancements are appropriate for each desired plant community. Pg 44

Date plan approved/amended: Feb 2013

This proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with these plans (*43 CFR 1610.5-3, BLM Manual 1601.04.C.2*).

PART III. – NEPA COMPLIANCE DETERMINATION REVIEW

A. The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Select from dropdown: 516 DM 2, Appendix 1. 1.6 Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities;

And

B. Extraordinary Circumstances Review: In accordance with **43 CFR 46.215**, any action that is normally categorically excluded must be subjected to sufficient environmental review to determine if it meets any of the 12 Extraordinary Circumstances described. If any circumstance applies to the action or project, and existing NEPA documentation does not adequately address it, then further NEPA analysis is required.

IMPORTANT: Appropriate staff should review the circumstances listed in Part IV, comment and initial for concurrence. Rationale supporting the concurrence should be included in the appropriate block.

Part IV. – EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENTATION

PREPARERS:

DATE:

Darrell Tersey, Natural Resource Specialist	4/15/2015
Claire Crow, IFNM Manager	4/15/2015

/s/ Amy Markstein
 PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST

4/22/15
 DATE

The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215(a)-(l)) apply. The project would:

(a) Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

Yes	No	Rationale: The proposed action of conducting research on desert bighorn sheep will not impact public health or safety.
	X	
		Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u>

(b) Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

Yes	No X	<p>Rationale: The proposed action will not have significant impacts to natural resources or to historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u></p>
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(c) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].

Yes	No X	<p>Rationale: The proposed action does not have any highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u></p>
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(d) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

Yes	No X	<p>Rationale: This type of research has been conducted for many years and has shown that it does not have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u></p>
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(e) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

Yes	No X	<p>Rationale: This type of research has been conducted for year in arizona, therefore it will not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u></p>
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(f) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: This proposed project may have a direct relationship to other actions, but combined they are still insignificant and do not have cumulatively significant environmental effects. Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u>
(g) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: This proposed project will not have any impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office. Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u>
(h) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: The proposed project will not have impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species. There is not any designated Critical Habitat for these species in the project area. Conservation measures for avoidance of nichol Turks-head cactus will be included in the authorization. Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u>
(i) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: The proposed action will not violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u>
(j) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		

Yes	No X	<p>Rationale: There is not any low income or minority populations in the project area.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u></p>
<p>(k) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).</p>		
Yes	No X	<p>Rationale: The proposed project will not limit access to any locations within the project area.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u></p>
<p>(l) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).</p>		
Yes	No X	<p>Rationale: The proposed action will not introduce, continued the existence of, or spread any noxious weeds or nonnative invasive species known to occur in the area or involve any actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Preparer's Initials <u>DT</u></p>
<p>PART V. –COMPLIANCE REVIEW CONCLUSION</p> <p>I have reviewed this plan conformance and NEPA compliance record, and have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required.</p> <p>MITIGATION MEASURES/OTHER REMARKS: 1. Helicopter landings will only be permitted at specified locations shown on map in the Waterman Mountains to avoid impacts to Nichol Turks-head cactus.</p> <p>APPROVING OFFICIAL: _____ DATE: _____</p> <p>TITLE: _____</p>		

Note: The signed conclusion on this compliance record is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. A separate decision to implement the action should be prepared in accordance with program specific guidance.