

WYOMING GOVERNORS BIG GAME LICENSE COALITION

PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT or CLOSEOUT REPORT

Date Submitted: 12/13/07 Date Project Closed: _____

Project Title: Resource Selection, Seasonal Distribution, Movement and Recruitment of Bighorn Sheep in the Teton Range of Northwest Wyoming

Project Contact Name: Dr. Matt Kauffman, Alyson Courtemanch

Project Type (Please check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Habitat Management | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Population Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Disease |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Conservation/Easements | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Education | |

One Paragraph Project Description (Please provide a one-paragraph description – concise, but adequate – to be used in press releases and other informational or promotional material):

The Teton Range bighorn sheep herd resides year-round at high elevation in Grand Teton National Park and on the Bridger-Teton and Caribou-Targhee National Forests. It is Wyoming's smallest and most isolated native herd- a remnant population of perhaps 100-125 sheep derived from a much larger bighorn sheep complex that historically lived in northwest Wyoming. The population's hold on the future is tenuous owing to its small size, likely isolation and the combined effects of loss of historic winter ranges, habitat alteration due to fire suppression and threats posed by increasing recreation in and near important seasonal ranges. The overall goal of this study is to improve our understanding of how and why bighorn sheep use the Teton landscape through identifying locations, characteristics, and use patterns of seasonal habitats and movement corridors by collecting data from radio-collared ewes. Additionally, we aim to map historic bighorn sheep distributions in the Tetons, assess the avoidance of seasonal habitats by bighorn sheep due to human activities, evaluate the effects of retiring domestic sheep allotments of the herd, determine lamb production and survival to mid-summer for the sample of radio-collared ewes, and determine causes of mortality incidents. This study will provide critical information on the bighorn sheep herd to inform wildlife management strategies in the future.

Briefly describe project and summarize achievements and benefits (to date if project not closed):

This project has continued to gain support from government agency collaborators, funding partners, and the Teton Range Bighorn Sheep Working Group. We have secured special use permits to conduct research in Grand Teton National Park, Jedediah Smith Wilderness, and Caribou-Targhee and Bridger-Teton National Forests. Additionally, we have secured a special use

permit with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and research approval from the University of Wyoming Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

We have ordered and received the Telonics GPS store-on-board radio-collars for the sample bighorn sheep, assembled capture kits, and produced maps of potential bighorn sheep winter range in the Teton Range from past aerial surveys and a VHF radio-collar study (early 1990's). Captures are scheduled to take place from December 12-15th 2007, and we are currently waiting for safe weather conditions to conduct the capture.

The graduate student (Alyson Courtemanch) will begin attending classes at the University of Wyoming in January 2008. Because funding necessary to allow capture and collaring to begin was not in place until mid-fall 2007, the graduate student postponed classes until Jan 2008. Also, because other funders were found, the equipment costs (GPS Radiocollars) were shared by those funders as well. For these reasons, we have not yet spent the 25 K granted to us, and **we are requesting that these funds be extended an additional year.**

Costs: \$101,115 (FY 2008)

Coalition Contribution: \$25,000

WGFD Contribution: \$0 (although in-kind labor has been provided)

Partners Contribution: \$93,050

Partner Names:

Grand Teton National Park (Rocky Mountain Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit)

Wyoming Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS)

Grand Teton National Park Foundation

Bridger-Teton and Caribou-Targhee National Forests

Teton County Conservation District

Total Project Cost: \$202,282 (FY 2008 –2011)