



Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

January 1 through 14, 2015

BRIEFING

The following is a summary of Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest. This project status update covers the period from January 1 through 14, 2015.

LINKS

For project background and previously-reported information on project events, including photos and videos, as well as meeting notes and minutes please visit www.azgfd.gov/catalinabighorn.

Additional project information can be obtained by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CatalinaBighorns, the Arizona Game and Fish Department webpage at www.azgfd.gov/catalinabighorn, the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society webpage at www.adbss.org or by visiting the Catalina Bighorn Advisory Committee webpage at www.catalinabighornrestoration.org. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose.

TO SUBSCRIBE

If you would like to receive project updates as they are published please send your email address to jsacco@azgfd.gov.

LAMBS

During this reporting period, we made additional observations on 2 of the lambs previously reported.

Because females with new lambs are especially sensitive to disturbance, there are trail restrictions in place inside the Bighorn Sheep Management Area to minimize any negative impacts from human disturbance on the sheep. Both trailhead notices and volunteers on the trail have been reminding hikers of the potential adverse impacts to the sheep caused by dogs or by people hiking more than 400 feet off-trail within the bighorn sheep recovery area during lambing season. For additional information, please visit the U.S. Forest Service webpage at www.fs.usda.gov/coronado/.

RESEARCH FIELD NOTES

On January 9th and 10th the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Research Branch held a training session for volunteers who will assist in data collection as part of an on-going research project. The data that volunteers will help to collect is a measure of habitat visibility. Volunteers will visit sampling sites located throughout the Catalina Mountains and will use a visibility pole to measure the amount of visual obstruction due to vegetation, topography, and other terrain features. These measurements will be evaluated along with other data collected by researchers to meet 2 objectives: (1) evaluate which factors (such as vegetation characteristics) influence habitat use by bighorn sheep and (2) evaluate habitat and other factors that may influence bighorn sheep survival.

In total, 22 volunteers participated in the training and approximately 500 sampling points were assigned to volunteers. To avoid disturbing bighorn sheep during the critical lambing period, volunteers were assigned sampling points located outside the areas currently occupied by sheep and in areas where sheep have not been observed since the spring of 2014. Additionally, many of the points are located near established trails, which will help to limit off-trail disturbance. Research staff will be collecting similar data in areas used by bighorn sheep more recently. This research will help managers to understand which factors influence habitat use by bighorn sheep, as well as factors that may contribute to bighorn sheep mortality events. Understanding these factors is important, as this knowledge can be used to guide decisions related to habitat manipulations, habitat restoration activities, and translocation strategies

MORTALITIES

There were no known mortalities of collared sheep during this reporting period.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of January 14, 2015, 40 collared sheep are known to be alive.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

The next written briefing will be provided on January 30, 2015.

CONTACT

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