



Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project
May 12, 2014 – May 25, 2014

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 May 12, to May 25, 2014. For project background and previously-reported information on project events, including photos and videos please visit www.azgfd.gov/catalinabighorn.

Additional project information can be obtained by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/azgafd#!/CatalinaBighorns>, the Arizona Game and Fish Department webpage at <http://www.azgfd.gov/catalinabighorn>, the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society webpage at <http://www.adbss.org> or by visiting the Catalina Bighorn Advisory Committee webpage at <http://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.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

No mortalities occurred during this reporting period. The original release of 31 sheep consisted of 21 adult females or ewes, three yearling/juvenile ewes, five adult males or rams, and two yearling/juvenile rams. Thirty of the released sheep were outfitted with satellite GPS collars to provide managers with up-to-date information to help make adaptive, data-driven decisions. As of May 25, 2014, 13 of the remaining 14 collared sheep are known to be alive; one of the collars maybe malfunctioning.

To date there have been 16 bighorn sheep mortalities. Fourteen of the sheep were killed by mountain lions, one died as the result of predation by an unidentified cat such as a small mountain lion or a bobcat, and another died from myopathy. To date, three lions associated with bighorn sheep kills have been removed, and the most recent of these lions was believed to have killed multiple sheep.

LAMBS

Biologists continue to monitor the population for new additions and to check on the lambs born earlier this year. To date five lambs have been observed during this season. As the lambing season draws to a close it is encouraging to note that the survivability of the known lambs has exceeded expectations. Seeing the continued development of the lambs is a source of cautious optimism as the project moves forward. 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. There is video of two of the lambs interacting available on the website. For additional information, please visit the U.S. Forest Service webpage at www.fs.usda.gov/coronado/.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

The next written briefing will be provided on June 13, 2014.

CONTACT

Mark Hart is the Public Information Officer for this project and can be reached at (520) 628-5376.

RESEARCH PROJECT FIELD NOTES

Research biologists have been compiling location data on all Catalina sheep and constructing databases to house the data. Now with almost 6 months of location data collected, it is exciting that we can start looking for patterns and marking out sheep use areas so that we can refine our habitat suitability sampling strategies and measurements for model construction. These data will help to characterize the attributes of vegetation structure, density and composition where sheep are found, and together with variables like topography (e.g., slope and ruggedness) and sheep group composition, will help define what factors place a sheep at risk of mortality. As well, we continue to monitor both individuals and small bands of sheep to observe and document ewes with lambs and observe the changes in group dynamics, sheep movements and behaviors.