



## IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

### **November 2025 Commission Meeting**

**Agenda Item:** Jacks Creek (Owyhee) Bighorn Sheep Augmentation

**Presented by:** Hollie Miyasaki

**Position/Title:** Wildlife Staff Biologist

**Agenda Item No.:** 16

**Supervisor Approval:** SR

### **Background:**

California bighorn sheep were released several times into the Jacks Creek portion of the Owyhees (GMU 41) starting in 1967, after native sheep were extirpated in the early 1900s. The population grew to a high of 360 animals observed during a helicopter survey in 1993. Following 1993, the number of bighorn sheep counted consistently declined until the most recent survey in July 2024 found 111 bighorn sheep.

IDFG has executed multiple projects to identify factors that may be causing the decline in bighorn sheep in the Jacks Creek population. These projects have included gathering and analyzing data on the quantity and quality of bighorn sheep forage, habitat availability, genetic diversity, health and disease surveillance, survival rates, and causes of mortality.

The Idaho Bighorn Sheep Management Plan 2022-2027 provides management direction and strategies related to predation, habitat, health, and translocations. After evaluating all the information IDFG has gathered from research projects in the Owyhees, we have determined that the Jacks Creek California bighorn sheep population would likely benefit from a population augmentation (i.e., adding bighorn sheep to the existing population) of California bighorn sheep. The overarching goal of this augmentation would be to increase the total number of bighorn sheep in the Jacks Creek PMU by improving the growth rate and genetic diversity of the population.

The strategy to date would involve the capture, collaring, disease testing, and transport of approximately 30 California bighorn sheep from a donor population in Oregon to the Jacks Creek population in winter 2025-26. Pending further approval from Oregon and successful completion of the initial effort, we would like to conduct a subsequent year of similar augmentation in 2026-27. Additional details on the Department's plan for stakeholder engagement and logistics of the sheep capture, transport, and monitoring will be presented at the meeting.

### **Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**

The Commission is charged with administering wildlife policy, and through the Department, is responsible for preserving, protecting, perpetuating and managing the state's wildlife (Idaho Code 36-103). Idaho Code 36-106 provides direction on stakeholder engagement steps to be taken prior to the translocation of bighorn sheep in Idaho. Idaho Code 36-408 states that no auction tag funding will be used for bighorn sheep translocations south of the Snake River and west of US 93.



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**Public Involvement Process:**

The Commission and the Department receive input from the public on bighorn sheep management throughout the year via social media, email, phone calls, public meetings and hearings, and other events. The Department has a plan in place to engage and inform stakeholders as identified in Idaho Code 36-106 prior to field work associated with the project. Public will also have the opportunity to comment on this topic at the November Commission public hearing.

**Justification:**

The information presented will inform Commissioners of bighorn sheep management actions in southwestern Idaho for incorporation in their decision making and engagement with the public.

**Staff Recommendation:**

NA. This agenda item is for Commission information.