



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

January 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: 2026 Owyhee Bighorn Sheep Seasons

(Action)

Presented by: Hollie Miyasaki

Position/Title: Wildlife Staff Biologist

Agenda Item No.: 5D

Supervisor Approval: SR

Background:

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

Plans for the January 2026 Jacks Creek PMU augmentation include moving five rams and 25 ewes from John Day, Oregon to Jacks Creek. The five rams from John Day could improve genetic diversity of bighorn sheep in the Jacks Creek PMU by breeding with resident Jacks Creek ewes. The introduced rams will not have an opportunity to breed until after the fall 2026 hunting season. To increase the likelihood of John Day rams breeding with the Jacks Creek ewes and improving genetic diversity in the population, the Department proposes closing the 2026 bighorn sheep hunting season in Hunt Area 41 (Hunt #7002; 1 tag).

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Statute 36-104 authorizes the Commission to establish rules for the taking of wildlife consistent with state policy. Species management plans provide Commission direction for population and harvest management.

Public Involvement Process:

The Commission and 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 public also has the opportunity to comment on this topic at the November Commission public hearing.

Justification:

Commission action is required to change 2026 California bighorn sheep hunting season.

Staff Recommendation:

To protect the recently translocated Oregon rams from harvest prior to the rut and increase the chance that they breed with resident Jacks Creek ewes, thereby improving genetic



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diversity in the Jacks Creek bighorn sheep population, the Department proposes closing the 2026 bighorn sheep hunting season in Hunt Area 41 (Hunt #7002).

Suggested Motion:

I move the Commission adopt staff recommendations to close the 2026 California bighorn sheep hunting season in Hunt Area 41 (Hunt #7002).