



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

JohnDay Fossil Beds
National Monument

541-987-2333
fax 541-987-2334

32651 Highway 19
Kimberly, OR 97848

www.nps.gov/joda
joda_interpretation@nps.gov

John Day Fossil Beds National Monument News Release

December 3, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Paul Ollig, (541) 987-2333

NEWS10-04

10 CALIFORNIA BIGHORN SHEEP REINTRODUCED INTO JOHN DAY FOSSIL BEDS NATIONAL MONUMENT

KIMBERLY, OR. – On December 2, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODF&W), in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep released 10 bighorn sheep into John Day Fossil Beds National Monument and adjacent lands managed by the BLM. The sheep were captured from a helicopter using net guns from the lower canyons of the John Day River, and were transported more than 100 miles by truck to the release site near the Foree Unit of the monument, nine miles north of the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center.

The cliffs and steep side hills of the monument and surrounding lands were once one of the last strongholds of bighorn sheep in the upper John Day River valley. Bighorn sheep were extirpated from the area due to over-harvest and diseases associated with domestic sheep early in the 20th century. Their reintroduction to the cliffs and canyons surrounding John Day Fossil Beds National Monument represent a critical step in re-establishing a healthy bighorn population throughout Oregon.

The release of these animals is a culmination of over 12 years of work between the National Park Service, ODF&W, adjacent private ranchers and others. Everyone involved in the reintroduction project has high hopes for the success of this population. State and federal wildlife biologists agree that the habitat here is some of the best available for this species.

Not only will this reintroduction restore these animals to their historic range, it will also provide a new experience for visitors to the monument. Now, a hike along the monument's trails holds the exciting prospect of spotting these icons of the rugged mountains of the American West. "Reintroducing such a charismatic animal into its native habitat is extremely exciting and fulfilling," said John Day Superintendent Jim Hammett. "I anticipate hearing the echo of rams banging heads each fall. It is a sound you can never forget and it is what national parks are all about."

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.