



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia and Kings Canyon
National Parks

47050 Generals Hwy.
Three Rivers, CA 93271

559 565-3341 phone
559 565-3730 fax

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks News Release

For Immediate Release: September 30, 2011

Contact: Dana M. Dierkes

Phone Number: (559) 565-3131 (desk) or (559) 679-2866 (cell)

The National Park Service Completes Environmental Assessment for Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Research and Recovery Actions in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

The National Park Service (NPS) Regional Director Christine S. Lehnertz has approved the environmental assessment (EA) for proposed Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis sierrae*) research and recovery actions within Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks by signing a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) statement on August 8, 2011. The EA included an analysis of the no action alternative and three action alternatives which the public had an opportunity to comment on from June 14 to July 21, 2011. The NPS selected Alternative 4 - Implement Bighorn Sheep Research and Monitoring with Translocations with a slight modification. *The modification:* While the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is a cooperating agency in the NPS research project, they will not be issuing a permit to the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) to land a helicopter within Inyo National Forest wilderness, as originally proposed. Instead, the USFS will be conducting a separate analysis for CDFG actions as part of implementation of the *Recovery Plan for Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (Recovery Plan)* activities on USFS lands. This modification does not result in a change in any of the determinations of environmental consequences. For decision documents for this project, visit the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/SEKISHEEP>. In addition, copies of the decision documents have been sent to people who commented and provided a mailing address or e-mail address.

The public record of the environmental impact analysis and decision-making process for this project included the FONSI, EA, Errata, and wilderness minimum requirement analysis. Substantive comments which required an agency response regarding these concerns and/or editorial clarification or corrections to the EA are documented in an Errata prepared as an attachment to the EA.

- more on page 2 -

- continued from page 1 -

The activities evaluated in the EA meet the goals of the *Recovery Plan for Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (Recovery Plan)*, including monitoring the status of radio-collared bighorn sheep, scientific study of bighorn sheep habitat use and the impacts of wilderness recreational activities on bighorn sheep and their habitat, and the translocation of bighorn sheep into the Big Arroyo and Laurel creek areas of Sequoia National Park. The first research and monitoring captures are scheduled for October 2011. Translocations will begin as soon as feasible, possibly as early as 2012. In addition, information gained from the project will provide park management with additional information in the development of a new Wilderness Stewardship Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

-NPS-