

POPULATION DYNAMICS OF BIGHORN SHEEP IN HELLS CANYON

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Abstract: Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep were extirpated from the Hells Canyon area of Oregon, Idaho, and Washington by 1945. Since 1971, 15 bighorn herds have been established through relocation of 415 sheep from 10 source populations. Reintroduced populations have exhibited various growth patterns, including high rates of growth for several years followed by reduced growth, and all-age disease epizootics. We examine historic and recent survey and monitoring data, describe patterns of population growth and adult and lamb survival, and evaluate hypotheses about the effects of population density, weather, distance to domestic sheep, source population, and other factors on Hells Canyon bighorn population dynamics.
