

## Status of Utah's Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goats in 2008

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### Populations

Utah's desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) population is relatively stable. Approximately 2700 animals are estimated within Utah's borders. The overall population of the state is made up of 21 separate populations. Most of these populations are on public land and under the management authority of the State of Utah, except for 3 populations that are within National Parks boundaries and 1 population on Navajo tribal land. Seventeen of the 21 populations are stable, 3 are increasing and 1 is decreasing.

Utah's Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (*O. c. canadensis*) population is increasing. This is a result of multiple transplants into vacant habitat and tremendous growth in 2 of the populations. Approximately 2400 animals are estimated within Utah's borders, including the California subspecies. The overall population of the state is made up of 16 separate populations. Most of these populations are on public land and under the management authority of the State of Utah, except for 1 population that is within Dinosaur National Monument boundaries, 1 population on Ute tribal land and 1 population on Antelope Island State Park. Five of the 16 populations are stable, 7 are increasing and 4 are decreasing.

Utah's Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) population is increasing. Approximately 1,500 are estimated within Utah's borders. The overall population of the state is made up of 11 separate

populations, 4 of which are increasing and 7 are stable.

### Research

Much of the recent research on bighorn sheep has been a product of cooperation between the Utah Division of Wildlife (UDWR) and Brigham Young University (BYU). Multiple studies are wrapping up that include habitat use studies, disease studies, and a ram movement study. We just initiated a new study in cooperation with BYU, the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to look at desert bighorn sheep movement as it relates to OHV and other recreational uses of public land.

### Transplants

Since 1973, we have transplanted 771 desert bighorn sheep from sources within and outside the state of Utah. We have also transplanted 1019 (829 Rocky Mountain, 190 California) Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep since 1966. Recent desert bighorn sheep transplants include a 2006 transplant of 20 sheep to the Kaiparowits Unit from Fallon Nevada. In 2007, we moved a total of 30 sheep to the San Rafael, Dirty Devil unit, 15 from the San Rafael South Unit in Utah and 15 from the Escalante Unit in Utah. In 2008, we moved a total of 30 sheep from the La Sal Potah and North San Juan units to the South San Juan Unit.

For Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, we recently conducted several transplants to establish new populations and bolster

existing ones. To establish a population on the Oquirrh-Stansbury Unit, we moved 56 sheep from Antelope Island State Park in 2006 and supplemented it with an additional 36 sheep in 2008 also from Antelope Island. In 2007 we transplanted 55 sheep from Sula, Montana and 18 sheep from Forbes Colorado to the supplement the herds on the Wasatch and Central Mountains units. An additional 42 sheep from Bonner, Montana were taken to supplement the Goslin Mountain herd on the North Slope Unit. In 2009 we received 60 sheep from Augusta Montana to found a new population in the Lake Canyon area of the Wasatch Unit. Also in 2009, we moved 40 sheep from near Green River Utah 25 north to improve distribution and encourage expansion.

We transplanted 44 mountain goats in 2007 from the Tushar Mountains in our Beaver unit. Twenty four of these goats were released in Idaho's Salmon Region and 20 were released on Loafer Mountain in Central Utah. Both releases were part of an effort to establish new populations.