



News Release

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Refuge Announces Plan for Management of Mountain Lions Focus on Conservation of Desert Bighorn Sheep Continues

The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service has completed a plan for managing mountain lions on Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Arizona. The announcement of the plan comes after over two years of analysis and planning that included participation by the general public and other agencies and organizations. Specifically, the management plan lays out a scientifically-supported process for lethal removal and/or translocation of individually-identified mountain lions that kill two or more bighorn sheep within a 6-month period.

Kofa National Wildlife Refuge was originally established in large part for the protection of the desert bighorn sheep. Unfortunately, sheep numbers declined significantly from a long-term average of 760 bighorn sheep to near 400 over the past 4 years. This nearly 50 percent population decline prompted the development of an investigative report co-authored by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Service. The resulting report outlined several management actions to address the declining population. Limiting mountain lion predation was a key management action identified for improving the status of the sheep on the refuge.

“We’ve taken a comprehensive look at the full array of factors impacting bighorn sheep on the Refuge and ways to overcome those impacts”, said Refuge Manager, Mitch Ellis. “We feel confident that judicious removal of offending lions is a tool that will help us in conservation of desert bighorn.”

Under this program, mountain lion removals would only occur to meet desert bighorn sheep population objectives. When the Refuge sheep population estimate is below 600, active lion control would occur. When the sheep population estimate is 600-800, limited lion removals may occur based on criteria outlined in the plan. When the sheep population is at or above 800, no lion removals would occur.

A copy of the Final Environmental Assessment and a library of all other documents pertaining to this decision are available by visiting: fws.gov/southwest/refuges/arizona/kofa.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.