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BLM Releases Guidance to Improve Coordination and Management of Bighorn Sheep Habitat to Minimize Conflicts with Domestic Sheep and Goats

Policy is aimed at supporting healthy Bighorn Sheep populations

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today released policy guidance for the coordination and management of domestic sheep and goats, and wild sheep and their habitat on lands administered and managed by the BLM.

Specifically, Policy Manual 1730 sets forth guidance for the management of BLM lands where the potential for disease transmission exists by interaction between wild sheep and authorized use of domestic sheep and goats. Today's guidance announcement aligns policy with the BLM's current approach to make informed management decisions on domestic sheep and goat grazing. The policy is not expected to have a significant effect on existing grazing levels.

The BLM manages domestic sheep grazing allotments on Federal lands and is working with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), state wildlife managers, tribes and other partners to support sustainable bighorn sheep populations and habitat, and domestic sheep use on BLM-managed lands.

"This guidance helps ensure the health and well-being of our bighorn sheep populations, and their habitat," said BLM Deputy Director, Steve Ellis. "It is important guidance for us to use as we make land management decisions where these species may interact with domestic sheep."

The development of BLM Policy Manual 1730 is compatible with the USFS goal of "effective separation" – the spatial or temporal separation between wild sheep and domestic sheep or goats, resulting in minimal risk of contact and subsequent transmission of respiratory disease between animal groups.

Policy Manual 1730 will provide guidance to BLM field offices to analyze and assess risk, and to make informed decisions that minimize risk of contact between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats, so that BLM can assist the states, and other governmental and non-governmental partners, with efforts to sustain healthy bighorn sheep populations.

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to manage and conserve the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations under our mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield. In Fiscal Year 2014, the BLM generated \$5.2 billion in receipts from public lands.

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