



100178

## MEMORANDUM

5 October 1991

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From: John D. Wehausen

To: Files

Subject: Mountain Sheep observations of the Wheeler Ridge population and south of Bishop Creek

I was able to allocate part of my budget this year to have Rob Ramey and Laura Brown assist with Sierra sheep work for a month mostly in July. My original intention was for them to concentrate largely on the the Wheeler Ridge population to update our data there. However, because of the difficulty we found in developing an adequate sampling of the Mount Baxter herd, they ended up with only a small amount of time to allocate to Wheeler Ridge between July 18th and 26th; but their findings are noteworthy. They put in 6.5 days on the Wheeler Ridge, during which time they logged 5 groups of sheep constituting 31 different individuals (11 adult ewes, 2 yearling ewes, 4 lambs, 1 yearling ram, and 13 rams). Two of the ewes had radio collars and yellow ear tags (#373 on one), both of which must be from the 1986 augmentation. No rams were marked. One lamb was very small and clearly born in July. What is noteworthy about these observations is the large number of sheep accounted for in a relatively small effort. The last such effort was in fall 1986, also by Rob and Laura, in which they also logged a minimum of 31 sheep, but in 24 days of effort. In that survey, they accounted for 12 ewes (10 adults, 2 yealings), which is 1 less than this year, despite the considerably greater effort. In other words, it is probable that there are more sheep than they found this year, although they found little sign in areas surrounding those where they saw sheep. In addition to the small time allocated for this year's sample, a greater population is suggested by the observed ram:ewe ratio, which was greater than 1:1. This normally runs about 70:100. All their observations this summer were in the Mount Morgan area. Later in the summer, there was a report of sheep seen on Bear Creek Spire. On May 26 this year I observed 12 sheep by the mine in Pine Creek, 11 of which were rams, which I was able to age at very close range with a spotting scope with the following distribution:

Age:	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
Number:	0	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1

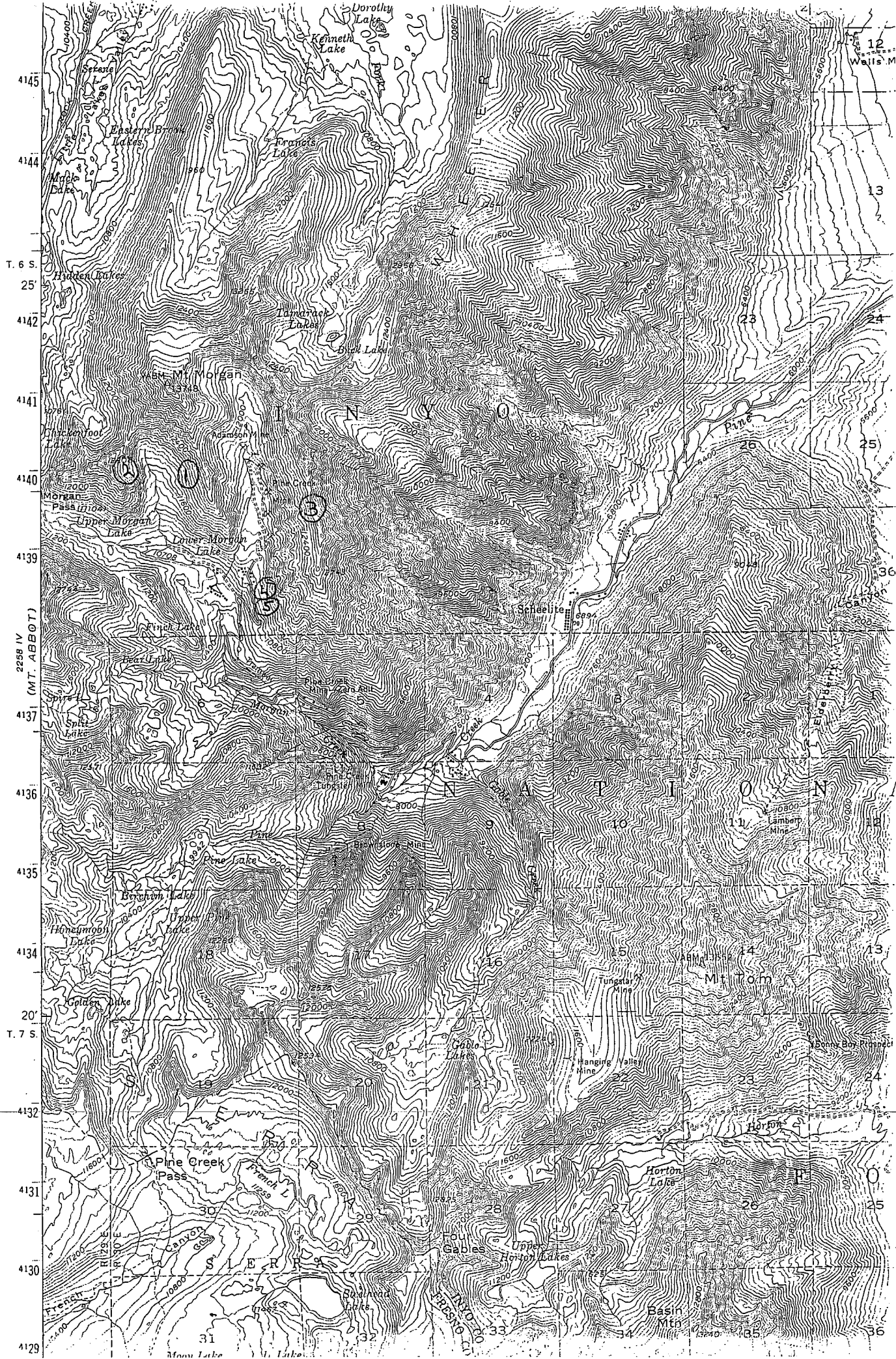
This group allows the addition of perhaps two rams to the minimum population developed by Rob and Laura, based on ages they recorded. More importantly, its age structure may have some meaning. A population undergoing substantial increase will exhibit an age structure with progressively larger numbers in the younger age classes, while one declining due to poor recruitment will show the opposite. A population not much different from static can be expected to show approximately equal numbers for some of the younger age classes. What can be said about the age distribution of the limited sampling above is that it does not suggest an increasing population, but does indicate some recruitment every year, especially with the addition of the yearling recorded this summer.

Three ewes were reported in Dusy Basin (across Bishop Pass) this summer by a group of backpackers. This is the third report of sheep groups that include ewes in that general area in about four years, suggesting some summer sheep use in that area. Last year, a group was reported above Thunder and Lightning Lake in the Inconsolable Range, while one or two summers before that some boy scouts reported a small group on the west side of the Palisades, I believe near the head of Palisade Creek. I suspect these are sheep ranging north from the Tebouse Pass area, and may well be from the same subpopulation that was wintering in Goodale Creek in the early 1980's.

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Rob Ramey and Laura Brown - Wheeler Ridge Sheep Survey - July 1991

7/18/91

- ① ♀ III  
 1 yr ♀ I (dark hind-body white, hump out with floppy collars)  
 L I  
 ♂ III  
 1 yr ♂ I

5 total

7/21/91

- ② ♀ III I (includes 2 collared ♀, with one snag, one floppy)  
 1 yr ♀ I (same as yesterday)  
 L III (includes 1 very small lamb that fits under belly of ewe with snag collar)  
 ♂ II  
 1 yr ♂ I

13 total (includes group 1)

7/24/91

- ③ ♀ III I (includes two collared ♀, snag #373 and floppy collared ♀)  
 1 yr ♀ II (scat as above) (one ♀ had a broken right horn, broke 1/2 way off)  
 L IIII (one each with 2 collared ♀s)  
 ♂ II (3-4 years old)  
 1 yr ♂ I

20 total (includes group 2)

④ 7/21/91

- ♂ III (all in very good condition full rumps & stocky no aggs just horn sizes:  
 1 - 3/4 curl, big say, light color  
 1 - 5/8 " , very dark body  
 1 - just part half  
 1 - 1/2 curl  
 1 - just before 1/2 curl

5 total

⑤ 7/24/91

- ♂ III I aggs:  
 6 years 1  
 5 " 11 (one had an injured front leg)  
 4 " 1  
 3 " 11

6 total

Other areas also surveyed, but no sheep found:

- Little Lakes basin
- Francis Lake basin
- Tamarack Lake basin
- ridge directly north of Wheeler Peak 12,956' (all sign over 2 years old)
- Pass between Upper Morgan Lake and Finch Lake (only one set of ram tracks seen)