



State of California -The Natural Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
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EDMUND G. BROWN JR, Governor  
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



## **Notice of Intent to use Environmental Assessment/ Finding of No Significant Impact in lieu of a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Project**

In lieu of preparing its own Mitigated Negative Declaration, the Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), Inland Deserts Region, acting as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)<sup>1</sup>, intends to use the Environmental Assessment (EA)/Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI), prepared by Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (SEKI), for a project that includes population monitoring, research, and translocation of Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis sierrae*), a state and federally endangered species.

CEQA Guidelines section 15225(a) states:

“Where the federal agency circulated the EIS or finding of no significant impact for public review as broadly as state or local law may require and gave notice meeting the standards in Section 15072(a) or 15087(a), the lead agency under CEQA may use the federal document in the place of an EIR or negative declaration without recirculating the federal document for public review. One review and comment period is enough. Prior to using the federal document in this situation, the lead agency shall give notice that it will use the federal document in the place of an EIR or negative declaration and that it believes that the federal document meets the requirement of CEQA.”

Under CEQA Guidelines section 15221, state agencies are encouraged to use a FONSI prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rather than preparing a new CEQA document when the FONSI, prepared before a Mitigated Negative Declaration or EIR, would otherwise be completed for the project; and the FONSI complies with CEQA Guidelines.

Therefore, CDFG is providing this notice that it intends to use the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Environmental Assessment: Research and Recovery Action (June 2011) and FONSI prepared by SEKI in lieu of a mitigated negative declaration. CDFG believes that the federal document meets the requirements of CEQA.

The project activities, including helicopter-supported capture of bighorn sheep with net-guns, would be conducted primarily in wilderness areas of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks to facilitate meeting the goals of the Recovery Plan for Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (USFWS, 2007). Bighorn sheep movements would

<sup>1</sup> The California Environmental Quality Act is found at Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq. The CEQA Guidelines are found in the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, sections 15000-15387.

be remotely monitored using Very High Frequency (VHF) radio-transmitters and Geographic Positioning System (GPS) collars. Results from these projects would directly aid in planning and implementing actions identified as necessary to increase the number and expand the range of Sierra Nevada bighorn and therefore, to enable the recovery of this endangered species.

Public scoping was initiated for the proposed Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Study on June 18, 2010. The 30-day public comment period ended on July 19, 2010. A press release was distributed to area media outlets, and letters with project information requesting public input were mailed to 83 individuals, agencies and organizations, and to 34 tribes or tribal representatives. This letter was also submitted to the State Clearinghouse. In addition, scoping information was emailed to 311 agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

Notification of the scoping period was published in the Kaweah Commonwealth newspaper on July 2, 2010. Information was also posted on the National Parks Travelers and the Wilderness Watch websites. Additionally, information was posted on the National Park Service (NPS) Sequoia and Kings Canyon website and links were provided to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website (PEPC).

The EA prepared by SEKI was available for public review starting June 14, 2011. The original 30-day review period was extended until July 21, 2011 to allow for a public legal notice to be published in Eastern Sierra newspapers (published on June 21, 2011). A Notice of Completion & Environmental Document Transmittal was submitted to the State Clearinghouse on June 13, 2011 (SCH#: 2011064007) with 15 printed copies of the EA.

A press release was sent to media outlets and posted to the NPS's internet website. Letters were sent to approximately 90 individuals, interest groups, businesses, and agencies, and, a printed EA, or CD version were distributed to approximately 50 additional individuals, organizations, local news media, agencies, and interested parties on the NPS's mailing list. A printed EA was also sent to 21 area tribes or tribal representatives. Approximately 230 interested parties were notified by email that the document was under review. An electronic version of the EA was broadly available to the public through a posting on the NPS PEPC website and linked to the NPS's public website. The printed version of the EA was available at the following area libraries: California State University, San Joaquin Sierra Unit; Fresno County Libraries: Bear Mountain, Central, Sunnyside, Fowler, Kingsburg, Orange Cove, Parlier, Reedley, Sanger, and Selma; San Joaquin Valley College: Hanford Extension, Visalia Campus, and Fresno Campus; Tulare County Law Library; Tulare County Libraries: Exeter, Lindsay, and Three Rivers.

An article on the public review of the project was published in The Kaweah Commonwealth newspaper on June 17, 2011 and in the Inyo Register on June 20, 2011. Information was also posted on several websites including the National

Parks Traveler, VisitSequoia.com, YubaNet.com, Wilderness Watch, the CDFG website, and the USFS website. Information on the project was provided to attendees at the USFS Sierra and Sequoia Tribal Forum meetings on May 12 and June 8, respectively.

This Notice is provided by CDFG, the lead agency under CEQA for the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Project. Digital versions of the EA and FONSI are available at the Department of Fish and Game website at [www.dfg.ca.gov/news/pubnotice](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/news/pubnotice). Should you have any questions, please contact Dr. Alexandra Few, by email at [AFew@dfg.ca.gov](mailto:AFew@dfg.ca.gov) or by mail to:

Department of Fish and Game  
Inland Deserts Region  
407 West Line Street  
Bishop, CA 93514

Attn: Dr. Alexandra Few

*The Environmental Assessment (EA)/Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI), prepared by Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (SEKI) is adopted.*

*The Notice of Intent is approved.*

DATE: 10/19/11

By: Kimberly Nicol

Kimberly Nicol, Regional Manager  
Inland Deserts Region  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME