

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Nevada Fish & Wildlife Office  
1340 Financial Blvd #234  
Reno, NV 89502  
775-861-6300  
Fax – 861-6301  
<http://fws.gov/nevada>

# News Release



**For Immediate Release**  
**Date: February 5, 2008**

**Contact: Bob Williams**  
**(775) 861-6300**

## **Economic Analysis of Critical Habitat Proposal for Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Available for Public Review and Comment**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today announced the availability of the draft economic analysis for a proposed rule to designate critical habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis californiana*), a federally threatened species. Areas proposed as critical habitat include portions of Tuolumne, Mono, Fresno, Inyo, and Tulare counties in California. The draft economic analysis estimates potential costs for conservation activities to be approximately \$26.7 million and costs associated solely with the designation of critical habitat to be approximately \$135,000 over a 20-year period in areas proposed as critical habitat.

“In releasing the analysis, the Service also reopened the public comment period on the proposed critical habitat designation. Comments and information previously submitted on the proposal to designate critical habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep between July 25, 2007, and November 23, 2007, need not be resubmitted,” said Bob Williams Field Supervisor for the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office. “Comments already received will be incorporated into the public record and will be fully considered in preparation of the final rule.”

Critical habitat is a term of the Endangered Species Act that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection. Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, establish a refuge or preserve, and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require Federal funding or permits.

The proposed critical habitat includes open upland, montane, and alpine habitats with rocky areas along the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains from about 4,000 feet to approximately 14,500 feet. Of the proposed critical habitat, 416,407 acres, occurs on federally managed lands with the remaining 1,005 acres, under private ownership and 165 acres managed by local government.

When specifying an area as critical habitat, the Endangered Species Act requires the Service to consider economic and other relevant impacts of the designation. If the benefits of excluding an area outweigh the benefits of designating it, the Secretary may exclude an area from critical habitat, unless that would jeopardize the existence of a threatened or endangered species.

Written Comments on the draft economic analysis and proposed rule to designate critical habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep will be accepted until March 6, 2008. Written comments may be submitted by one of the following methods:

Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>; or by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to -Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AV05; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203. All comments received will be posted on <http://www.regulations.gov>. Copies of the proposed rule and draft economic analysis for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep are available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/nevada>.

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](http://www.fws.gov).

###