



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Yosemite National Park
P. O. Box 577
Yosemite, California 95389

IN REPLY REFER TO:
L7615 (YOSE-PM)

Memorandum

To: Travis Espinoza, Project Manager, Yosemite National Park

From: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

Subject: NEPA and NHPA Clearance: 2014-031 Cathedral Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Reintroductions (55191)

The Executive Leadership Team has reviewed the proposed project and completed its environmental assessment documentation, and we have determined the following:

- There will not be any effect on threatened, endangered, or rare species and/or their critical habitat.
- There will be no adverse effect to historical, cultural, or archeological resources.
- There will not be serious or long-term undesirable environmental or visual effects.

The subject proposed project, therefore, is now cleared for all NEPA and NHPA compliance requirements as presented above. Project plans and specifications are approved and construction and/or project implementation can commence.

Recommendations for Conditions or Stipulations:

For the proposed project actions to be within compliance requirements during construction and/or project implementation, the following stipulation must be adhered to:

- The Yosemite National Park Office of the American Indian Liaison will continue to provide information and facilitate tribal involvement as requested.

For complete compliance information see PEPC Project 51061.

//Don L. Neubacher//

Don L. Neubacher

Enclosure (with attachments)

cc: Statutory Compliance File

*The signed original of this document is on file at the
Environmental Planning and Compliance Office in
Yosemite National Park.*



Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: 2014-031 Cathedral Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Reintroductions

PEPC Project Number: 55191

Project Description:

The National Park Service (NPS) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will reintroduce up to 25 Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep (hereafter bighorn or sheep) into the Cathedral Range of Yosemite National Park over a five year period from 2015-2019. The Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep is a federally endangered species. Up to 20 of these animals will receive GPS and VHF tracking collars to monitor their movements throughout the range. In addition to collars, surveys will be conducted by NPS and CDFW personnel to monitor the herd.

In March 2015, contracted crews will capture up to 15 bighorn sheep (10 ewes and 5 rams) out of the Mt. Langley herd in Sequoia National Park. The crews will use net-guns operated from a helicopter. Net-gunning includes shooting individual sheep with a net, tying their feet together, and covering the bighorn's eyes with a mask. Research has shown net-gunning to be the safest alternative for bighorn captures with 2-3% accidental mortality. After sheep have been immobilized, they are harnessed and flown out of the capture site to a processing site on the east side of the Sierra Nevada. During processing, veterinarians and biologists will perform health assessments on each individual, take blood and hair samples for genetic analysis, and affix GPS and VHF collars for monitoring purposes. The sheep will then be loaded into large boxes and transported by truck north to a location close to the release site. Once there, biologists will transport all boxes of sheep to Washburn Lake via helicopter. Biologists will then release the sheep and be flown out of the backcountry.

Field crews will conduct surveys throughout the following summer and fall to monitor the sheep and assess movement and mortality. Twice yearly surveys will continue for at least 7 years. The GPS collars will send out location fixes once per day and can last up to 3 years. Once the collar battery dies or nears depletion, collars may be replaced depending on monitoring needs for the herd. GPS collaring of multiple bighorns will continue for at least 7 years due to Endangered Species Act delisting requirements. VHF collars send out a short range radio signal that helps crews and air support locate the sheep. Batteries on the VHF collars have a much longer life and generally last throughout the lifetime of a sheep. Due to herd movements and dynamics, the park will attempt to collar all rams and multiple, but not all, ewes.

Additional population augmentations will occur in 2017 and 2019. Each of those years, up to 5 ewes or rams will be translocated to the Cathedral Herd. The source herd will likely be Mt. Langley, but could be from other herds if necessary. The maximum number of sheep reintroduced into the Cathedral Herd will be 25 animals (up to 15 ewes and up to 10 rams). Augmentations will be completed using the same methods as the original reintroductions in 2015. Monitoring methods and protocols will also be consistent with those identified in the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Recovery Plan.

Helicopter flights will generally be short in duration (10 minutes or less) and as short as possible when transporting sheep and crewmembers. For the 2015 reintroductions, the release crew will be flown in on 1-2 flights. The sheep will then be delivered in a maximum of 8 trips. Up to 2 additional trips will be necessary to pick up the release crew. In 2017 and 2019, fewer trips will be required for fewer sheep. Over the five year duration of the project, a maximum of 30 landings over 6 days will be required for reintroductions.

The release site is located immediately southeast of Washburn Lake in the upper Merced River canyon. Habitat models and expert opinion predict winter range for the sheep will likely be the south-facing cliffs near Washburn Lake. Summer range will include extensive habitat throughout the Cathedral Range and in the headwaters of the Merced River. There is potential for rams from the Cathedral herd to migrate and breed with the existing Mt. Gibbs herd farther north.

Project Locations:

Madera, Tuolumne, Mariposa Counties, CA

Other project stipulations:

The Yosemite National Park Office of the American Indian Liaison will continue to provide information and facilitate tribal involvement as requested.

Describe the category used to exclude action from further NEPA analysis and indicate the number of the category (see Section 3-4 of DO-12):

E.2 Restoration of noncontroversial native species into suitable habitats within their historic range and elimination of exotic species.

On the basis of the environmental impact information in the statutory compliance file, with which I am familiar, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No exceptional circumstances (e.g. all boxes in the ESF are marked "no") or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.

Superintendent: //Don L. Neubacher// **Date:** 3/17/15
Don L. Neubacher

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ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF)

DO-12 APPENDIX 1

Date Form Initiated: 12/18/2014

Updated May 2007 - per 2004 Departmental Manual revisions and proposed Director's Order 12 changes

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name: Yosemite National Park
Project Title: 2014-031 Cathedral Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Reintroductions
PEPC Project Number: 55191
PMIS Number: 213105
Project Type: Resource Management (RM)
Project Location:
 County, State: Madera, California
 County, State: Mariposa, California
 County, State: Tuolumne, California
Project Leader: Travis Espinoza

Is project a hot topic (controversial or sensitive issues that should be brought to attention of Regional Director)? No

B. RESOURCE EFFECTS TO CONSIDER:

Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources	No Effect	Negligible Effects	Minor Effects	Exceeds Minor Effects	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
1. Geologic resources – soils, bedrock, streambeds, etc.		Negligible			There will be temporary soil disturbance during the helicopter activities over the five year project.
2. From geohazards	No				
3. Air quality		Negligible			Helicopter flights will create temporary dust emissions which will result in approximately 8 hours total over the five years.
4. Soundscapes		Negligible			Helicopter noise will be significant but only for short durations.
5. Water quality or quantity	No				

Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources	No Effect	Negligible Effects	Minor Effects	Exceeds Minor Effects	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
6. Streamflow characteristics	No				
7. Marine or estuarine resources	No				
8. Floodplains or wetlands	No				
9. Land use, including occupancy, income, values, ownership, type of use	No				
10. Rare or unusual vegetation – old growth timber, riparian, alpine	No				
11. Species of special concern (plant or animal; state or federal listed or proposed for listing) or their habitat		Negligible			The Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep is federally endangered. Monitoring methods and protocols will be consistent with those identified in the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Recovery Plan.
12. Unique ecosystems, biosphere reserves, World Heritage Sites	No				Yosemite National Park is a World Heritage Site.
13. Unique or important wildlife or wildlife habitat	No				
14. Unique or important fish or fish habitat	No				
15. Introduce or promote non-native species (plant or animal)	No				
16. Recreation resources, including supply, demand, visitation, activities,	No				

Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources	No Effect	Negligible Effects	Minor Effects	Exceeds Minor Effects	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
etc.					
17. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources		Negligible			Visitor experience could be enhanced if a Bighorn sheep is encountered in the wilderness.
18. Archeological resources	No				
19. Prehistoric/historic structure	No				
20. Cultural landscapes	No				
21. Ethnographic resources	No				
22. Museum collections (objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript collections)	No				
23. Socioeconomics, including employment, occupation, income changes, tax base, infrastructure	No				
24. Minority and low income populations, ethnography, size, migration patterns, etc.	No				
25. Energy resources	No				
26. Other agency or tribal land use plans or policies	No				
27. Resource, including energy, conservation potential,	No				

Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources	No Effect	Negligible Effects	Minor Effects	Exceeds Minor Effects	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
sustainability					
28. Urban quality, gateway communities, etc.	No				
29. Long-term management of resources or land/resource productivity	No				
30. Other important environment resources (e.g. geothermal, paleontological resources)?	No				

C. MANDATORY CRITERIA

Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal:	Yes	No	N/A	Comment or Data Needed to Determine
A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?		No		
B. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?		No		
C. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E))?		No		

Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal:	Yes	No	N/A	Comment or Data Needed to Determine
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		No		
E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?		No		
F. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		No		
G. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by either the bureau or office?		No		
H. Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		No		
I. Violate a federal law, or a state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		No		
J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?		No		
K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?		No		
L. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur		No		

Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal:	Yes	No	N/A	Comment or Data Needed to Determine
in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?				

For the purpose of interpreting these procedures within the NPS, any action that has the potential to violate the NPS Organic Act by impairing park resources or values would constitute an action that triggers the DOI exception for actions that threaten to violate a federal law for protection of the environment.

D. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Are personnel preparing this form familiar with the site? Yes
- 1.A. Did personnel conduct a site visit? No
2. Is the project in an approved plan such as a General Management Plan or an Implementation Plan with an accompanying NEPA document? Yes
- 2.A. If so, plan name: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep EA: Research and Recovery Actions
Plan Project ID: 29693
- 2.B. Is the project still consistent with the approved plan? Yes
- 2.C. Is the environmental document accurate and up-to-date? Yes
FONSI: Yes ROD: No Date approved: 08/08/2011
3. Are there any interested or affected agencies or parties? Yes. Consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concluded 3/17/2015. (See letter of support from USFWS stating no additional consultation required.)
4. Has consultation with all affected agencies or tribes been completed? Yes, October 2014 Tribal Spreadsheet
5. Are there any connected, cumulative, or similar actions as part of the proposed action? (*e.g., other development projects in area or identified in GMP, adequate/available utilities to accomplish project*) No

E. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM SIGNATORIES

<u>Interdisciplinary Team</u>	<u>Field of Expertise</u>
Don L. Neubacher	Superintendent
Michael Gauthier	Chief of Staff
Kathleen Morse	Chief of Planning
Randy Fong	Chief of Project Management
Jeffrey Hilliard	Chief of Administration Management
Ron Borne	Chief of Facilities Management
Linda C. Mazzu	Chief of Resources Management & Science
Kris Kirby	Chief of Business and Revenue Management
Tom Medema	Chief of Interpretation and Education
Kevin Killian	Chief of Visitor and Resource Protection
Travis Espinoza	Project Leader
Madelyn Ruffner	Environmental Planning and Compliance Program Manager
Renea Kennec	NEPA Specialist

F. SUPERVISORY SIGNATORY

Based on the environmental impact information contained in the statutory compliance file and in this environmental screening form, environmental documentation for this stage of the subject project is complete.

Recommended:

Compliance Specialists	Date
<u>//Renea Kennec//</u> Compliance Specialist – Renea Kennec	<u>3/17/2015</u>
<u>//Lisa Acree// acting for</u> Compliance Program Manager – Madelyn Ruffner	<u>3/17/2015</u>
<u>//Randy Fong//</u> Chief, Project Management – Randy Fong	<u>3/17/2015</u>

Approved:

Superintendent	Date
<u>//Don L. Neubacher//</u> Don L. Neubacher	<u>3/17/2015</u>

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PARK ESF ADDENDUM

Today's Date: March 5, 2015

PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name: Yosemite National Park
Project Title: 2014-031 Cathedral Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Reintroductions
PEPC Project Number: 55191
Project Type: Resource Management (RM)
Project Location:
 County, State: Madera, California
 County, State: Mariposa, California
 County, State: Tuolumne, California
Project Leader: Travis Espinoza

PARK ESF ADDENDUM QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ESF Addendum Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES CHECKLIST				
Listed or proposed threatened or endangered species (Federal or State)?	Yes			The Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep is federally endangered.
Species of special concern (Federal or State)?		No		
Park rare plants or vegetation?		No		
Potential habitat for any special-status species listed above?		No		
NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT CHECKLIST				
Entail ground disturbance?	Yes			Minor, temporary soil disturbance from helicopter use.
Are any archeological or ethnographic sites located within the area of potential effect?		No		
Entail alteration of a historic structure or cultural landscape?		No		
Has a National Register form been completed?		No		
Are there any structures on the park's List of Classified Structures in the area of potential effect?		No		
WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT CHECKLIST				
Fall within a wild and scenic river corridor?	Yes			Merced River
Fall within the bed and banks AND will affect the free-flow of the		No		

ESF Addendum Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
river?				
Have the possibility of affecting water quality of the area?		No		
Remain consistent with its river segment classification?	Yes			
Fall on a tributary of a Wild and Scenic River?		No		
Will the project encroach or intrude upon the Wild and Scenic River corridor?		No		
Will the project unreasonably diminish scenic, recreational, or fish and wildlife values?		No		
WILDERNESS ACT CHECKLIST				
Within designated Wilderness?	Yes			Minimum Requirement Analysis is attached.
Within a Potential Wilderness Addition?		No		



ASSESSMENT OF ACTIONS HAVING AN EFFECT ON HISTORIC PROPERTIES

A. DESCRIPTION OF UNDERTAKING

1. **Park:** Yosemite National Park

2. **Project Description:**

Project Name: 2014-031 Cathedral Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Reintroductions

Prepared by: Renea Kennec **Date Prepared:** 03/05/2015 **Telephone:** 209-379-1038

PEPC Project Number: 55191

Area of potential effects (as defined in 36 CFR 800.16[d])

3. **Has the area of potential effects been surveyed to identify historic properties?**

☒ No

☐ Yes

4. **Potentially Affected Resource(s):**

5. **The proposed action will: (check as many as apply)**

☐ No Destroy, remove, or alter features/elements from a historic structure

☐ No Replace historic features/elements in kind

☐ No Add non-historic features/elements to a historic structure

☐ No Alter or remove features/elements of a historic setting or environment (inc. terrain)

☐ No Add non-historic features/elements (inc. visual, audible, or atmospheric) to a historic setting or cultural landscape

☐ No Disturb, destroy, or make archeological resources inaccessible

☐ No Disturb, destroy, or make ethnographic resources inaccessible

☒ Yes Potentially affect presently unidentified cultural resources

☐ No Begin or contribute to deterioration of historic features, terrain, setting, landscape elements, or archeological or ethnographic resources

☐ No Involve a real property transaction (exchange, sale, or lease of land or structures)

☐ Other (please specify): _____

6. **Supporting Study Data:**

(Attach if feasible; if action is in a plan, EA or EIS, give name and project or page number.)

B. REVIEWS BY CULTURAL RESOURCE SPECIALISTS

The park 106 coordinator requested review by the park's cultural resource specialist/advisors as indicated by check-off boxes or as follows:

☒ Anthropologist

Name: Jun Kinoshita

Date: 03/11/2015

Comments: The project was sent out for consultation in December of 2014. The Bridgeport Indian Colony asked to be present and involved in the project but no comments specific to Section 106 effect were recieved. Jun Kinoshita, Acting Cultural Resource Manager

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance ☒

Assessment of Effect: ☒ No Potential to Cause Effect ☐ No Historic Properties Affected ☐ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations: The Yosemite National Park Office of the American Indian Liaison will continue to provide information and facilitate tribal involvement as requested.

☒ Archeologist

Name: Sonny Montague

Date: 12/03/2014

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance ☐

Assessment of Effect: ☐ No Potential to Cause Effect ☒ No Historic Properties Affected ☐ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

Doc Method: Park Specific Programmatic Agreement

☒ Historical Landscape Architect

Name: Kevin McCardle

Date: 12/03/2014

Check if project does not involve ground disturbance ☐

Assessment of Effect: ☒ No Potential to Cause Effect ☐ No Historic Properties Affected ☐ No

Adverse Effect ☐ Adverse Effect ☐ Streamlined Review

Recommendations for conditions or stipulations:

No Reviews From: Curator, Historical Architect, Historian, 106 Advisor, Other Advisor

C. PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR'S REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assessment of Effect:

☐ No Potential to Cause Effects
☐ No Historic Properties Affected
☒ No Adverse Effect
☐ Adverse Effect

2. Documentation Method:

☐ A. STANDARD 36 CFR PART 800 CONSULTATION
Further consultation under 36 CFR Part 800 is needed.

☐ B. STREAMLINED REVIEW UNDER THE 2008 SERVICEWIDE PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT (PA)

The above action meets all conditions for a streamlined review under section III of the 2008 Servicewide PA for Section 106 compliance.

APPLICABLE STREAMLINED REVIEW Criteria
(Specify 1-16 of the list of streamlined review criteria.)

☐ C. PLAN-RELATED UNDERTAKING

Consultation and review of the proposed undertaking were completed in the context of a plan review process, in accordance with the 2008 Servicewide PA and 36 CFR Part 800.
Specify plan/EA/EIS:

☒ D. UNDERTAKING RELATED TO ANOTHER AGREEMENT
The proposed undertaking is covered for Section 106 purposes under another document such as a statewide agreement established in accord with 36 CFR 800.7 or counterpart regulations.

1999 Programmatic Agreement as amended in 2014

☐ E. COMBINED NEPA/NHPA Document
Documentation is required for the preparation of an EA/FONSI or an EIS/ROD has been developed and used so as also to meet the requirements of 36 CFR 800.3 through 800.6

☐ G. Memo to SHPO/THPO

☐ H. Memo to ACHP

SHPO/THPO Notes:

3. Additional Consulting Parties Information:

Additional Consulting Parties: No

4. Stipulations and Conditions:

Following are listed any stipulations or conditions necessary to ensure that the assessment of effect above is consistent with 36 CFR Part 800 criteria of effect or to avoid or reduce potential adverse effects.

5. Mitigations/Treatment Measures:

Measures to prevent or minimize loss or impairment of historic/prehistoric properties:
(Remember that setting, location, and use may be relevant.)

No Assessment of Effect mitigations identified.

D. RECOMMENDED BY PARK SECTION 106 COORDINATOR:

Historic Preservation Officer:

Kimball

Koch

//Kimball Koch//

Date: 3/16/2015

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S APPROVAL

The proposed work conforms to the NPS *Management Policies* and *Cultural Resource Management Guideline*, and I have reviewed and approve the recommendations, stipulations, or conditions noted in Section C of this form.

Superintendent: //Don L. Neubacher//

Don L. Neubacher

Date: 3/17/2015

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Yosemite National Park.*

Cathedral Herd: Proposed Location

