

**USDA Forest Service
San Bernardino National Forest
Front Country Ranger District**



Date: June 9, 2006

San Bernardino National Forest
1209 Lytle Creek Road
Lytle Creek, CA 92358

For Immediate Release

**News Contact: Kathie Meyer
909-382-2874**

BIGHORN SHEEP HAVE RETURNED

San Bernardino, CA- The Los Angeles rams have returned. Surveys conducted by federal and state wildlife biologists and volunteers determined there were an estimated 292 bighorn sheep in the San Gabriel Mountains. This is a substantial increase over the estimated 136 animals that were present in 1995.

The San Gabriel Mountains once supported an estimated 740 bighorn sheep, making it the largest desert bighorn sheep population in the west. After the population declined dramatically, the Los Angeles Fish and Game Commission, California Department of Fish and Game, and Forest Service prepared a plan to restore the bighorn sheep population. The goal of that plan was to have a minimum of 322 animals well distributed in the mountain range. In early April, 53 volunteers assisted wildlife biologists from the Department of Fish and Game and San Bernardino National Forest conduct a population survey. Information from that survey allowed the biologists to develop a population estimate and reconstruct changes in the population over the past the 17 years. They also estimated the population would achieve one of the restoration goals in 2008, given the current trajectory of the population.

-MORE-

Biologists are encouraged by the population increase because it indicates complex interactions among bighorn sheep, mule deer, and mountain lions are functioning and that portion of the San Gabriel ecosystem appears to be intact. They will continue to capture and monitor bighorn sheep and fit them with radio collars to determine their movement and sources of mortality and the annual surveys will also be conducted to monitor changes in the population. A copy of the report describing the population changes can be downloaded at www.nelsonbighorn.com.

###