



Forest  
Service

Washington  
Office

1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

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**Route To:**

**Subject:** Bighorn Sheep Analysis for NEPA Documents

**To:** Regional Foresters, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, and R-6

The relationship between bighorn sheep population viability and domestic sheep and goat grazing on National Forest System (NFS) lands continues to be an important management issue. On August 19, 2011, Deputy Chief for National Forest System, Joel Holtrop, issued a letter (enclosed) identifying a four-step outline for conducting a qualitative bighorn sheep analysis at the Forest Plan level. Subsequently, on June 11, 2012, Deputy Chief for National Forest System, Leslie Weldon, issued a letter (enclosed) releasing maps that fulfill the first two steps of the four-step process. Implementation of the August 2011 letter and the four-step process remains a vital component of the Agency's continued efforts to maintain viable populations of bighorn sheep while balancing multiple-use demands.

There is a need to clarify the importance of balancing multiple-use demands with the management practices to support viable populations of bighorn sheep and a healthy domestic sheep industry. Best management practices to maintain separation need to be applied to the extent they are effective in supporting both uses. When a line officer determines that the potential risk for contact, as identified through the four-step process, is at an unacceptable level, those officers need to identify and analyze potential replacement allotments when developing management alternatives. The analysis for alternatives for replacement allotments should be part of a single decision-making process as part of ongoing collaborative efforts to identify and develop site-specific solutions.

Working with Federal partners, such as the Agricultural Research Service and Bureau of Land Management, State wildlife organizations, local stakeholders, and the livestock industry remains a crucial aspect of the Agency's continued efforts in striving for balanced solutions. If you have questions, please contact Rob Harper, Director, Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air, and Rare Plants at (202) 205-1671.

*/s/ Gregory Smith (for)*  
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Enclosures

