



January 14, 2019

Neil Bosworth
Forest Supervisor
Tonto National Forest
2324 E. McDowell Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85006

RE: Scoping for Authorization of Helicopters in Wilderness for Bighorn Sheep Population Management

Dear Mr. Bosworth:

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on your Bighorn Sheep Management Project.

Conservation of wildlife resources upon all lands within Arizona, including those within the Tonto National Forest (TNF) is the trust responsibility of the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD). This responsibility requires active management of wildlife to ensure those resources are conserved for present and future generations.

Since 2014, AZSFWC has advocated and supported the AZGFD efforts to have at their disposal the appropriate tools to fulfill their management responsibility with bighorn sheep management on the TNF, including within the wilderness areas.

For the record, attached are seven comment letters that call on the TNF to allow AZGFD to utilize the means necessary including helicopters in wilderness areas for wildlife management, with some specifically addressing bighorn sheep management. The first letter goes back almost 5 years ago when the TNF called for Scoping of Helicopter Use by AZGFD within TNF wilderness areas on March 18, 2014 under File Code 1950/2610.

- **4/18/14** TNF Bighorn Sheep Population Management Project
- **11/4/16** TNF LMP Assessment Report and Need for Change, page 2
- **1/10/17** TNF Need for Change, page 2
- **3/3/17** Wilderness, Sportsmen Values & TNF LMP, pages 4, 5, 9 subsection b & c
- **5/21/17** Scoping Comments on TNF NOI for Forest Plan Revision, page 9 item 18
- **10/1/17** TNF Wilderness Recommendation Process, page 1
- **2/12/18** TNF Draft Wilderness Evaluation Map, page 2

AZSFWC letter to Tonto NF regarding Bighorn Sheep Population Management Project – 1-14-2019

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation
PO Box 75731 New River, AZ 85087

AZSFWC is pleased the TNF has continued to maintain a cooperating agency status with AZGFD. In that context, and to whatever extent possible, we strongly believe there is a need for flexibility in the plan components for efficient wildlife management in areas of special status like wilderness. As your EA outlines, nothing is more critical and important than the use of helicopters for effective bighorn sheep management in remote roadless areas.

With a desired goal of perpetuating healthy bighorn sheep populations on the TNF as well as other areas of the state, it must be recognized that this isn't a 5 or 10 year project, but a long term commitment that should be included as a component in your Forest Plan. AZSFWC input over the last couple years supports that suggestion.

AZSFWC and 29 of our member organizations are in favor of the proposed action outlined in the EA to authorize the use of helicopters by the AZGFD within the TNF wilderness areas for bighorn sheep management.

We urge you to expedite the approval of this action as soon as your guidelines and mandates allow!

Thank you.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Unmacht', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jim Unmacht
Executive Director

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) is a 501c-3 non-profit organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, habitat work, youth recruitment and retention, as well as educating sportsmen and women on issues important to their passions. AZSFWC consists of 43 member, affiliate, and associate groups that reach across the spectrum of hunting, angling, shooting, outdoor recreation and businesses from all across Arizona. Our member groups represent in excess of 10,000 sportsmen and women from Arizona.



AZSFWC Member Organizations that support Authorization of Helicopters in Wilderness for Bighorn Sheep Population Management

Anglers United
AZ Antelope Foundation
AZ Bass Federation Nation
AZ Big Game Super Raffle
AZ Bowhunters Association
AZ Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation
AZ Chapter Safari Club International
AZ Council of Trout Unlimited
AZ Deer Association
AZ Desert Bighorn Sheep Society
AZ Elk Society
AZ Houndsmen's Association
AZ Outdoor Adventures
AZ Outdoor Sports
AZ Predator Callers
AZ Shooting Sports Education Foundation
AZ Taxidermy Association
Christian Hunters of America
Coconino Sportsmen
Kahuna's Kids
Mohave Sportsman Club
Outdoor Experience 4 All
Southwest Wildlife Foundation
SRT Outdoors
The BASS Federation
Valley of the Sun Quail Forever
Xtreme Predator Callers
Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club
1.2.3.Go...

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