

HISTORY OF TRANSPLANTING MOUNTAIN GOATS AND MOUNTAIN SHEEP – UTAH

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Since 1966, 305 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep have been brought into Utah and released in nine different sites (Table 1). Best estimates indicate sheep currently exist in six of these sites with a total estimated population of 500 animals in Utah. Past mistakes required a re-evaluation of Utah's Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep program. In 1990, a decision was made to concentrate re-introduction efforts along the Green River from the North Slope of the Uinta Mountains through the Book Cliffs in suitable habitats. Five of the existing populations are found in this corridor. Utah is seeking Rocky Mountain bighorns from other states and provinces to complete our objectives along the Green River corridor.

An opportunity also exists in Utah for California bighorn sheep. Based on historical information, the distribution of California bighorn stopped at the Utah state line with our neighbors to the west and north. We currently feel that Utah has habitat available for this subspecies and we have worked out an agreement with Antelope Island State Park in the Great Salt Lake to release California bighorn sheep there, with the understanding that excess animals in the future would be used to start new populations in northwestern Utah.

Table 1. Utah Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep relocations.

AREA WHERE RELEASED	# SHEEP RELEASED	YEAR	SOURCE	CURRENT STATUS
Box Elder Canyon	60	1966-1970	Whiskey Basin-Waterton-Banff	No Sheep
Hill Creek/ Rattlesnake	9	1970	Whiskey Basin, WY	approx. 200
Mount Nebo	48	1981-82	Whiskey Basin, WY	No Sheep
Bare Top Mtn.	36	1983-84	Whiskey Basin, WY	approx. 80
Deep Creek Mtns.	32	1984&89	Whiskey Basin, WY	No Sheep?
Pilot Mtn.	24	1987&93	Basalt, CO - Bare Top, UT	35-40
Sheep Creek	21	1989	Whiskey Basin, WY	approx. 40
Hole-in-the-Rock	23	1989	Whiskey Basin, WY	approx. 40
Big Horn Mtn.	54	1993&95	Estes Park/Georgetown, CO	60-70

A Statewide Rocky Mountain goat management plan was approved by the Utah Wildlife Board after public review and input. Seventy-seven Rocky Mountain goats have been brought into Utah since 1967. Thirty-nine additional goats have been relocated within Utah. Eight distinct populations of Rocky Mountain goats exist in Utah at this time (Table 2). Six of the eight populations now have limited harvest strategies in place. The current statewide population is estimated at 500 animals.

The recently adopted statewide Rocky Mountain goat management plan identifies one additional site to receive a transplant, the Nebo Mountain in central Utah. In the future, Utah may be contacting states with Rocky Mountain goats to obtain animals to provide genetic diversity, as most of the animals in Utah originated from Olympic National Park.

Table 2. Utah Rocky Mountain goat relocations.

AREA WHERE RELEASED	# SHEEP RELEASED	YEAR	SOURCE	CURRENT STATUS
Lone Peak	6	1967	Cascade Range, WA	200 (Stable)
Timpanogos	10	1981	Olympic Nat'l Park, WA	100 (Stable)
Mount Olympus	20	1981-82	Olympic Nat'l Park, WA	20 (Stable)
Tushar	16	1986&88	Lone Peak-Olympic NP, WA	60 (Increasing)
Bald Mtn.	24	1987-88	Lone Peak-Olympic NP, WA	(Increasing)
White Rocks	22	1989&92	Lone Peak-Olympic NP, WA	
Provo Peak	12	1989-90	Olympic Nat'l Park, WA/ Timpanogos, UT	25 (Increasing)
Willard Peak	6	1994	Lone Peak-Olympic NP, WA	7 (Increasing)