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**RAMIRO URANGA-THOMAS - STATE AND FEDERAL WILDLIFE RELATIONSHIPS IN MEXICO**

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**Abstract:** In Mexico, all natural resources are the property of the nation. Wildlife administration, law enforcement, and management are under the jurisdiction of the federal government. SEMARNAP, acronym for the federal agency that manages wildlife, developed a four-year (1997-2000) program for wildlife conservation and protected areas that incorporated rural development. The desert bighorn sheep is listed as a priority species in this program. Desert bighorn are the highest priced game species in Mexico. In 1998, SEMARNAP initiated a bighorn capture on Tiburon Island in the Sea of Cortez to obtain animals to translocate in the states of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Coahuila. Prior to the capture, a potential sheep release site within historic sheep habitat was evaluated in Chihuahua. The results of the survey revealed that the area is a suitable release site for reestablishing desert bighorn sheep. However, probably due to political pressure from landowners who manage bighorn on their properties and sell bighorn hunts in Sonora, there was opposition to the translocation of wild sheep to any other state. This points out the tangled politics and inherent difficulties regarding wildlife management in Mexico. There is a lack of cooperation between government agencies, and a strong movement by states to relegate wildlife management to the states. The ownership and management of Mexican wildlife is developing into a contentious issue between private landowners and government agencies.

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