

distinct vertebrate population segment of bighorn sheep occupying the Peninsular Ranges of southern California was endangered pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The current population of bighorn sheep in the United States' Peninsular Ranges approximates 335 animals distributed in eight known ewe groups (subpopulations) from the San Jacinto Mountains south to the Mexican border.

The Peninsular bighorn sheep is restricted to the east facing, lower elevation slopes (below 1,400 meters) of the Peninsular Ranges in the Sonoran desert life zone. Bighorn sheep are wide-ranging animals that require a variety of habitat characteristics that relate to topography, visibility, water availability, and forage quality and quantity. Steep topography is required for lambing and rearing habitat and escape terrain from predators. Open terrain with good visibility is critical because bighorn primarily rely on their sense of sight to detect predators. In their hot, arid habitat, water availability in some form is critical, especially during the summer. A wide range of forage resources and habitat types are needed to meet annual and drought-related variations in forage availability. Limiting factors apparently vary with each ewe group but are not well understood in all cases. The range of factors appears to include predation, urban-related sources of mortality, low rates of lamb recruitment, disease, habitat loss, and human-related disturbance.

A review of pertinent literature reveals that various prolonged disturbances to bighorn sheep may result in abandonment of lambing areas. Further, the stresses induced by dogs as exhibited by increases in bighorn sheep heart rates generally exceed the levels of stress caused by other factors. Whereas there is a recognized need to act swiftly to minimize the potential for abandonment of lambing areas by bighorn sheep during the lambing season, which occurs between January 1 and June 30, a temporary closure to dogs pending completion of a comprehensive trails management plan is appropriate. A year-round rather than a seasonal closure is instituted to avert associations by bighorn sheep of this area as occupied by dogs. Such closure reduces the potential for abandonment.

The comprehensive trails management plan is an element of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP). The CVMSHCP is currently in development. Those desiring to participate in the planning process

should contact the individual cited below.

Any person who fails to comply with this order may be subject to the penalties provided in 43 CFR 8360.0-7.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jim Foote, BLM, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, P.O. Box 1260, North Palm Springs, CA 92258, telephone 760-251-4836.

Dated: January 12, 2000.

James G. Kenna,
Field Manager.

[FR Doc. 00-1447 Filed 1-20-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-40-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[NM-930-00-1040-DE]

Notice of Extension of Public Comment Period

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Extension of Public Comment Period for Thirty (30) Days.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the extension of the public comment on four Draft Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan Environment Impact Statements (DEISs) and Possible Resource Management Plan Amendments (RMPAs). The four documents are for the Taos Field Office, the Farmington Field Office, the Albuquerque Field Office and the Las Cruces Field Office.

The 30 day extension of the public comment period was granted for the four documents after BLM review of the reasons for the request for extensions on two of them. The thirty day extension starts immediately after the end of the ninety day (90) public comment period. The ninety (90) day public comment period ended January 12, 2000. The Thirty (30) extension of the public comment period starts January 13, 2000 and ends February 11, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the Draft documents should be sent as follows:

Comment on the Draft Taos Field Office Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan and Possible RMP Amendment should be sent to: Taos Field Office, Taos HMP/EIS/RMPA Team Leader, 226 Cruz Alta Road, Taos, NM 87571-5983.

Comment on the Draft Farmington Field Office Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan and Possible RMP Amendment should be sent to:

Farmington Field Office, Farmington HMP/EIS/RMPA Team Leader, 1235 La Plata Highway, Farmington, NM 87401-1808.

Comment on the Draft Albuquerque Field Office Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan and Possible RMP Amendment should be sent to: Albuquerque Field Office, Rio Puerco HMP/EIS/RMPA Team Leader, 435 Montano Road, NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107-4935.

Comment on the Draft Las Cruces Field Office Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan and Possible RMP Amendment should be sent to: Las Cruces Office, Mimbres HMP/EIS/RMPA Team Leader, 1800 Marquess Street, Las Cruces, NM 88005-3371.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the above address during regular business hours (8:00 am to 4:30 pm) Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the EIS and possible RMPA. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comments. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

(1) Taos Field Office, Ram Herrera, 505-751-4705.

(2) Farmington Field Office, Bob Moore, 505-599-6311.

(3) Albuquerque Field Office, Jim Silva, 505-761-8901.

(4) Las Cruces Field Office, Bill Merhege, 505-525-4369.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The two Draft Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statements and Possible RMP Amendments are being prepared to provide comprehensive riparian and aquatic management guidance for restoring and protecting riparian habitat under BLM jurisdiction.

Dated: January 14, 2000.

M.J. Chavez,
State Director.

[FR Doc. 00-1503 Filed 1-20-00; 8:45am]

BILLING CODE 4310-FB-M