

Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe Tribal Wildlife Grant

Executive Summary

Over the past half-century mountain goat populations (*Oreamnos americanus*) have declined substantially in Washington State. The decline of mountain goat populations is regional in nature, and is particularly evident in areas of the North Cascades. To the Sauk- Suiattle Tribe, located near Darrington, Washington in the North Cascades, the mountain goat is an important animal. The Tribe once managed and surveyed the populations of this economically significant animal in the pre- contact period. From both a traditional and cultural perspective the Sauk- Suiattle have coexisted with the mountain goat for centuries. Today, however, little has been done to stem the decline. While many potential causes have been proposed their relative contribution to arresting or reversing these declines has not been possible due to the scarcity of baseline information about mountain goats in this area and the rest of Washington State. The Sauk- Suiattle Indian Tribe in cooperation with Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Western Washington University, Mount Baker- Snoqualmie National Forest USDA Forest Service and The North Cascades National Park, (National Park Service, Department of Interior) proposes to provide the needed elements of baseline information crucial to the development of management strategies to stem the decline of mountain goat populations.

Habitat use and requirements are two aspects of mountain goat ecology where current knowledge is insufficient for effective management. This project will provide meaningful models of habitat availability and selection by: 1.) Producing a rigorous geo-spatial representation of seasonal mountain goat habitat in the North Cascade Range 2.) Analyzing habitat selection processes for mountain goats in this region. 3.) Test and evaluate aerial survey approaches for mountain goats in the Cascade Range, 4.) Develop Tribal Capacity to manage the mountain goat resource and other wildlife species of Tribal significance, and 4.) Disseminate findings to peers and the public. Previous investigation of these issues has been limited in scope, addressing habitat use with data from a limited area and at a particular time of year. Understanding how wild animals choose which resource to use and quantitatively describing the choice remains a difficult problem in wildlife research.

The Sauk- Suiattle is requesting a federal share of \$172,724 from the Fish and Wildlife Service Tribal Wildlife Grant. The Tribe will provide \$49,151 of matching to this project. The project duration will last from Jan 2004 till July of 2006, which is the shortest period possible to complete the project. The project proposal will fully fund the Sauk- Suiattle habitat-modeling project, which will provide a detailed model of both winter and summer habitat. The grant will also fund the Tribe's involvement and participation in aerial surveys, capture and collaring with GPS locators, and retrieval of GPS information, which will provide necessary information to the Tribal Habitat Model. The grant funding will sponsor the Tribe as a lead in this important project and also provide capacity by funding new Tribal Wildlife staff positions, training, and employment of Tribal members.