



News Release

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Public Invited to Participate in Preparation of Mountain Lion Management Plan for Kofa Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) formally opened a public scoping process today as part of their efforts to develop a mountain lion management plan on the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the scoping period gives all interested parties an opportunity to provide input by identifying concerns, potential impacts, and possible alternatives for mountain lion management. The scoping period runs through May 24.

Substantive comments and concerns gathered during the scoping period will be reviewed by the Service and factored into alternative management strategies. Those alternatives will be presented in a draft environmental assessment, which will be available for public comment and review prior to finalizing the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge mountain lion management plan.

The Refuge contains a major portion of the largest contiguous habitat for desert bighorn sheep in southwestern Arizona and historically has been home to a population averaging 760 bighorns. The Refuge has served as the primary source of bighorn sheep for translocations to reestablish and supplement extirpated or declining populations throughout southern Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado.

Once a very robust population, the size of the herd on the refuge has dropped significantly over the past three years. Wildlife experts attribute the decline to a variety of potential factors including drought, predation, water availability, disease and human disturbance. The management of mountain lions is proposed as part of a multi-faceted program to meet the objectives for desert bighorn sheep on the Refuge. The mountain lion management plan will include strategies for addressing impacts of mountain lions on the bighorn sheep population.

The public is encouraged to visit the Kofa Refuge website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/arizona/kofa/> for additional background information. Comments must be submitted in writing. Electronic comments can be sent to KofaLionComments@fws.gov. Written comments may also be mailed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 356 West 1st Street, Yuma, AZ 85364.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.