



News Release

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Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)

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Public Invited to Comment on Species Management on Kofa Wildlife Refuge

The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) formally opened a public comment period today as part of continuing efforts to develop a mountain lion management plan on the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona. A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for limiting Mountain lion predation on Desert Bighorn Sheep has been prepared. Comments on the Draft EA are being solicited.

This comment period gives all interested parties an opportunity to provide input by identifying concerns, potential impacts, and possible alternatives for mountain lion management. The comment period runs through Friday, October 2, 2009. As part of the comment period, a public meeting will be hosted in mid-September 2009. Further information including location, date, and time will be distributed prior to the meeting.

Kofa National Wildlife Refuge was originally established in large part for the protection of the Desert Bighorn Sheep. Over the past several years the population of sheep has been in steep decline on the Refuge and on surrounding lands. The Service has determined that limiting mountain lion predation on desert bighorn sheep could benefit the sheep population. The Draft EA analyzed 6 alternatives to manage mountain lion predation of sheep on the refuge.

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 few 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.

Comments to be entered into the record must be submitted in writing to the email address at KofaLionComments@fws.gov or to the mailing address at 9300 E. 28th Street, Yuma, AZ 85365. A copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment is available by visiting: www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/arizona/kofa.

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.