

**ANALYSIS OF THE 2024 BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING REGULATIONS**

**ADDENDUM**

to the 2019 ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

**REGARDING BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING**

prepared by the

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY**

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

on behalf of

**CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION**

as

**LEAD AGENCY UNDER THE**

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)**

for the

**REGULARY NOTICED RULEMAKING ACTION TO AMEND**

**SECTION 362 BIGHORN SHEEP**

**TITLE 14, CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS**

**2024 HUNTING SEASON**

**(OAL Notice File No. 2024-0123-07)**

## INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has prepared this addendum pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., to inform consideration by the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) of proposed amendments to existing regulations governing bighorn sheep hunting in California. (California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Section 362.) Fish and Game Code (F&G Code), Section 3950(b) designates Nelson bighorn sheep as a game mammal in California. F&G Code Section 203 authorizes the Commission to fix the area or areas, seasons and hours, bag and possession limit, sex, and total number of bighorn sheep that may be taken pursuant to its regulations. F&G Code Section 203.1 requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, the welfare of individual animals, and other pertinent facts when establishing hunting regulations for bighorn sheep. The Commission establishes bighorn sheep hunting tag quotas through regulations amended annually, as needed, based on current population estimates derived from surveys by CDFW.

The Commission serves as the CEQA lead agency when it promulgates and amends the bighorn sheep hunting regulations. (Public Resources Code, Section 21067; CEQA Guidelines Section 15367.)<sup>1</sup> The Commission established maximum tag quotas for all bighorn sheep hunting zones in California in 2019 with the certification of a Final Environmental Document under CEQA (2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED) (SCH No. 2018112036). The 2019 Bighorn Sheep ED provides relevant and important informational value as the Commission as CEQA lead agency considers proposed amendments to the existing regulations for bighorn sheep hunting in California. In 2023, an addendum documented the Commission's consideration of adjusting tag quotas for the 2023-2024 hunt season and subsequently determined that the adjustments would have no additional effects than previously analyzed in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED. This addendum documents the Commission's consideration of related environmental effects for 2024 and subsequent hunt seasons.

## EARLIER PROJECT APPROVAL

CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with the Commission's certified regulatory program approved by the Secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.5 (See generally Title 14, CCR, Sections 781.5 and 15251(b)). CEQA requires all public agencies in the State to evaluate the environmental impacts of discretionary projects

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<sup>1</sup> The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

they propose to carry out or approve, including promulgating regulations, which may have a potential to significantly affect the environment.

In 2019, the Commission certified a Final Environmental Document Regarding Bighorn Sheep Hunting (2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED) (SCH No. 2018112036) as the lead agency under CEQA as part of the Commission’s review and adoption of the Bighorn Sheep Hunting regulations which focused on the potential for significant environmental impacts from 1) an increase in the tag quota ranges for Marble Mountains Hunt Zone by one tag, the Clark/Kingston Mountain Range Hunt Zone by two tags, and the White Mountains Hunt Zone by one tag; 2) increasing the individual tag quotas in other zones within previously analyzed quota ranges; 3) establishing a new hunt zone in the Newberry, Rodman, and Ord Mountains; and 4) reallocating a fundraising tag. The Commission considered the proposed project increase of 10 tags and two alternatives. The Commission as lead agency certified the ED and determined adoption of the amended regulations as proposed would not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects. The Commission approved the increase of 10 tags for the 2019-20 bighorn sheep hunting regulations.

### PROPOSED 2024 TAG ALLOCATIONS FOR THE MARBLE AND CLIPPER MOUNTAINS HUNT ZONE

The bighorn sheep tag quota ranges described in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED are the basis for the number of tags currently allocated to all zones in regulation. Amendments of tag quotas for the 2024 bighorn sheep hunting season by the Commission are based on survey data collected by the Department in its survey efforts. Data collection and analyses for hunt zones was completed in March of 2024, resulting in the below proposed tag allocations.

<i>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</i>	<i>2019 ED Tag Allocation Range</i>	<i>2024 Proposed Tag Allocation</i>
Zone 1 – Marble/Clipper Mountains	0-5	1
Zone 2 – Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains	0-2	2
Zone 3 – Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges	0-4	3
Zone 4 – Orocopia Mountains	0-2	1
Zone 5 – San Gorgonio Wilderness	0-3	0
Zone 6 – Sheep Hole Mountains	0-2	1
Zone 7 – White Mountains	0-6	4
Zone 8 – South Bristol Mountains	0-3	1
Zone 9 – Cady Mountains	0-4	2
Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	0-6	6
Open Zone Fundraising Tag	0-1	1
Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains Fundraising Tag	0-1	0

<i>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</i>	<i>2019 ED Tag Allocation Range</i>	<i>2024 Proposed Tag Allocation</i>
Cady Mountains Fundraising Tag	0-1	1
Total:	0- <u>40</u>	<u>23</u>

The 2024 proposed tag allocation falls within the previously analyzed range. Therefore, there are no new significant or substantially more severe impacts from amending the bighorn sheep hunt regulations to reduce tags in the Marble and Clipper Mountains.

## NO SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT IS REQUIRED

In general, CEQA applies whenever a public agency proposes to carry out or approve a discretionary project. (Public Resources Code Section 21080(a)). CEQA provides that, where a public agency proposes to modify a previously approved project for which a Final Environmental Document was prepared and certified:

“The lead agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an **addendum** to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in §15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.” (Title 14, CCR, Section 15164)

- A Subsequent Environment Document (Section 15162) when there is substantial evidence that:
  - Substantial changes are proposed in the project, which will require major revisions to the previous environmental impact report (EIR) or environmental document (ED).
  - Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken, which will require major revisions to the previous EIR or environmental documentation.
  - New information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time the previous EIR or ED was certified as complete, becomes available.
- A Supplement to an Environment Document (Section 15163) when:
  - A subsequent ED is not required.
  - Only minor changes to the project are described.
  - Only that information to make the ED adequate is provided.
- An Addendum to the Certified ED (Section 15164) is proper when:
  - The changes or additions presented in this project are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent ED have occurred.

- The Commission may properly prepare and may rely on an addendum in accordance with Section 15164 to fulfill its obligations under CEQA.

### NO ADDITIONAL IMPACTS UNDER CEQA


The Commission has determined that amending the current bighorn sheep hunting regulations based on annual survey results will not result in any new or significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep ED for this project.

This project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. There are no impacts to the habitat of fish and wildlife species.

This approval action adjusts the previous year tag quotas based on more current population information. No other aspect of the project is changed. No new significant or substantially more severe impacts under CEQA will occur due to this change.

### AMENDMENT OF THE BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING REGULATIONS

In conclusion, the Commission finds that amending the bighorn sheep hunt regulations in Title 14, CCR, Section 362, will not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED. The Commission also finds that subsequent or supplemental review beyond this Addendum is not warranted pursuant to the Title 14, Section 15164, in connection with this proposed action.

  
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Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director  
California Fish and Game Commission

April 12, 2024  
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Date