



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Washington, D.C. 20240  
<http://www.blm.gov>



APR 02 2012

In Reply Refer To:  
4130/6700 (220/230)

Dear Reader:

The attached map represents a joint effort between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service (FS), in coordination with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Wild Sheep Working Group, to map bighorn sheep-occupied habitat and domestic sheep grazing allotments. The map is part of a series of joint BLM/FS maps that includes the Western States within the distribution of bighorn sheep habitat. The States are Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Additionally, the States are combined into a West-wide map.

### **Purpose**

The maps serve as a tool to identify areas of potential overlap between bighorn sheep-occupied habitat and domestic sheep grazing, including trailing authorizations. Areas of overlap may result in contact, and possible disease transmission, between domestic and wild sheep. Field Managers should consider the maps in decisions about domestic sheep grazing management to reduce the potential for contact, and minimize the risk of disease transmission, between domestic and wild sheep. These maps depict data obtained from State wildlife agencies in 2011 for bighorn sheep habitat, and BLM and FS 2009 grazing year data for domestic sheep grazing, including authorized and billed grazing. Additional and/or updated maps may be developed as needed.

### **Background**

There is documented anecdotal and empirical evidence that indicates the potential risk of disease transmission between domestic and wild sheep when there is contact between the two. Because of the potential for contact and risk of disease transmission, the BLM issued Instruction Memorandum 2010-011 on October 23, 2009, to request and obtain Geographic Information System (GIS) data from BLM Field Offices about where domestic sheep may occur on public lands. This data call yielded incomplete and inconsistent results from some Field Offices. As a result, the BLM decided to use existing databases of domestic sheep grazing information to answer the question of where potential overlap may occur between domestic and wild sheep. The GIS data submitted by the BLM Field Offices were linked to data contained in the Rangeland Administration System (RAS), which maintains electronic files about allotments, authorizations, and grazing bill history. All Field Offices were given an opportunity to refine the original data submitted to improve the quality of the domestic sheep allotment data. Based on concerns that the domestic grazing data still showed areas that were not authorized for grazing as of 2009, a subsequent data call to the BLM Field Offices went out in January 2012 to request and

obtain data to refine domestic grazing allotment and pasture information contained in the attached map.

The result linking the BLM Field Office data, including refinements, to the RAS grazing information, along with coordination with the FS produced the series of joint BLM/FS maps for the Western States and the combined West-wide map.

**Contact Information**

For technical questions about the maps or to request geodatabases, please contact Frank Quamen, BLM Wildlife Biologist at (303) 236-6310. The BLM Field Offices may access the geodatabases at the following link:

[\\blm\dfs\loc\EGIS\OC\Wildlife\Transfers\2011\\_Bighorn\\_Sheep\\_Habitat\\_Domestic\\_Sheep\\_Grazing\\_Maps](\\blm\dfs\loc\EGIS\OC\Wildlife\Transfers\2011_Bighorn_Sheep_Habitat_Domestic_Sheep_Grazing_Maps)

For all other questions about the maps, please contact Sally Butts, BLM Wildlife Biologist at (202) 912-7535, or Bob Bolton, BLM Senior Rangeland Management Specialist at (202) 912-7204.

Thank you for your interest in domestic and wild sheep on public lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin L. Roberson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Edwin L. Roberson  
Assistant Director, Renewable  
Resources and Planning

**Questions and Answers (Q&A) about the Joint Bureau of Land Management (BLM)/Forest Service (FS) Maps of Bighorn Sheep-Occupied Habitat and Domestic Sheep Grazing Allotments**  
*(Q&A pertains only to the BLM portions of the map.)*

**Q:** Why do the maps depict grazing data from 2009 and not more recent grazing data?

**A:** The BLM Range Allotment System (RAS) billing data that were used to create the domestic grazing layer can only be tallied after the grazing billing cycle ends, at the end of February. Thus, the grazing billing data pulled from RAS in the Fall of 2010 reflected 2009 billing data. The BLM's National Operation's Center staff joined the "RAS Authorized and Billed Allotment and Pasture" data to the "Range Allotment Geographic Information System (GIS)" data using the Range Allotment and Pasture Numbers. They were unable to join a significant percentage of these data because of incompleteness and errors in the Range Allotment GIS. To address this issue, the BLM State and Field Offices prioritized "cleaning up" certain GIS polygons using the 2009 billing data. This process was completed mid-2011. The final GIS analyses were completed by the end of 2011, and the final BLM Field Office review was completed in early 2012.

**Q:** What is the difference between billed grazing and term grazing authorizations (including term permits, leases or Exchange-of-Use agreements) and why do the maps display both categories of domestic sheep grazing?

**A:** Grazing bills are issued annually for domestic grazing that is authorized through term grazing authorizations, including term permits, leases, and Exchange-of-Use agreements. The maps display term grazing authorizations to depict where the BLM has identified and issued term authorizations to graze domestic sheep or goats. Grazing bills depict the allowed annual use within the term grazing authorizations. In addition, grazing bills show other permitted uses, such as crossing permits for trailing livestock across BLM land. So, the grazing bills displayed on these maps show where domestic sheep and goat grazing was allowed during the 2009 fee year.

**Q:** What updates to the maps are anticipated or planned?

**A:** Because the work to produce the initial series of State maps and the combined West-wide map has already been completed, subsequent updates to the maps with refined domestic and wild sheep data would take considerably less time than it took to produce the original set of maps. Annual updates to the maps will be pursued pending the continuing need and usefulness of the maps and available resources to produce annual updates.

**Q:** What is the BLM doing to reduce the potential for contact and minimize the risk of disease transmission between domestic and wild sheep?

**A:** The BLM issued Instruction Memorandum 1998-140 on July 10, 1998, to provide guidelines to Field Offices on the management of domestic sheep and goats in native wild sheep habitats. The BLM has been engaged in a lengthy process to revise policy for management of domestic sheep and goats in wild sheep habitat. Revised policy is being coordinated with FS because BLM and FS-managed lands with domestic sheep and goat grazing, and wild sheep habitat, are often adjacent. Because of adjacent lands, and similar objectives to reduce the potential for contact and minimize the risk of disease transmission between domestic and wild sheep, it makes sense to coordinate associated BLM and FS policy.