



## In the News

### **Bighorn Sheep Transplant for Ram Mountain**

*Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta – News Release*

*October 28, 2004*

FNAWS Alberta is in discussions with Alberta Fish & Wildlife officials on a proposed Bighorn Sheep Transplant for the Ram Mountain Range located west of Rocky Mountain House.

The Bighorn Sheep on the Ram Mountain have been studied since the early 1970s and is perhaps the longest studied herd in Canada. Statistics from the study show that the population peaked at approximately 230, and over the last 20 years has steadily declined to a herd of approximately 30 animals. Several factors caused the decline including changing habitat, a period of over population and significant declines over the last 5 years due to predation by cougar, wolves and bear. Hunting on this range is allowed but has not been a significant factor as records indicate annual harvests from this area are very low or nonexistent.

FNAWS Alberta approached Alberta Fish & Wildlife about the potential for transplanting sheep onto this range to enhance the herd and hopefully provide a viable and productive herd. Initial responses were not in favor of any transplants. In recent weeks there has been a shift in the thinking we believe largely due to the efforts of FNAWS and in particular due to the efforts of Pat Long an adhoc FNAWS Alberta Director representing northern Alberta and who committed to researching the issues about the Ram Mountain herd.

Initial discussions with Fish & Wildlife were about the potential to transplant 4 to 6 Bighorn Rams this November and to follow up with transplanting 8 pregnant ewes in February. FNAWS directors meeting with Alberta Fish & Wildlife officials proposed the development of a long term re-establishment and management plan including assistance & plan input by FNAWS, plans for habitat, predator and access management and transplants into the range for the next 3 to 5 years. FNAWS Alberta also committed to funding for the initial transplants and would likely provide substantial and long term funding should a Ram Mountain Bighorn Sheep Management Plan be developed. Two locations for taking the sheep from were discussed, one including the Cadomin Mine area. No conclusions about what area the sheep would come from was made by the close of the meeting.

Work on this initial transplant will happen quickly if we are to get Rams relocated within a month. Opportunities for member participation may likely happen with the February transplant of ewes. This proposal certainly fits our mission and may allow FNAWS Directors and members

the opportunity to do some hands on field work and be able to support these projects with equipment and vehicles donated by members and supporters.

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**Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta**

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