One-Year Progress Report for the Montana Statewide Bighorn Sheep Research Project

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Restoration and conservation of bighorn sheep has been a challenge. Despite strong conservation efforts, bighorn sheep have not recovered to historic range and numbers as most other ungulates have. The Montana Statewide Bighorn Sheep Research Project, a collaborative effort between Montana Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks and Montana State University, began operations in winter 2013/2014 in order to provide information to

help guide future management and conservation of bighorn sheep. Seven bighorn sheep populations were scheduled to be sampled in the first year of the study and this presentation will outline the accomplishments, challenges, and findings from the first year of the research effort. Research objectives are to quantify and compare exposure to and prevalence of pneumonia pathogens, body condition, habitat use and demographic rates in multiple bighorn sheep populations with varying histories and characteristics across Montana. Study plans and initial findings relevant to these objectives will be presented.