

WSF INTERNATIONAL CV2025 CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Model Program of Nature Conservation Central Asia Initiative

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To build a cultural and institutional conservation ethic that will survive and flourish, this model program must provide and promote ownership for the people of the Country and their Government in implementing conservation, sustainable-use, and enhancement of their natural resources.

The foundation for the Central Asia Conservation Initiative (CACI) is science-based conservation of wild sheep and goats and their habitat. Hunting-based tourism will serve as the primary funding mechanism for this project. While working in full cooperation with country specific government agencies, in-country expertise and in-country hunting organizations, key conservation support and economic promotion will be provided by the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) and SCI Foundation (SCI-F). In-country leadership, expertise and implementation will be provided by the country's Government, citizens and local communities.

Enhancement goals and program elements of the CACI:

1. Work closely with the Caprinae Specialist Group under the IUCN Species Survival Commission to sponsor, facilitate and participate in Red-List assessments for Caprinae species world-wide.
2. Build in-country ownership and political will of stakeholders (i.e. the country's governmental agencies, citizens, local communities, private landholders, and lease holders) in the program.
3. Establish wild sheep and wild goat population monitoring.
4. Establish sustainable legal harvest expectations, based on scientific data analysis.
5. Determine wild sheep seasonal habitat use and population movement patterns.
6. Establish wild sheep habitat conservation management strategies based on scientific knowledge from in-country work and experience in other comparable jurisdictions.
7. Conduct disease monitoring of wild sheep and goats.
8. Conduct genetic monitoring of wild sheep and goats.
9. Establish a country-specific and species-specific Conservation Management Fee for hunting-based tourism hunts to provide the funding base for conservation work.
10. Increase technical/management capacity for key officials in targeted conservation areas by developing short duration manager-to-manager exchanges (includes wildlife disease health professionals) between NA and Central Asia expertise.
11. As populations of wild sheep and goats increase, advocate for sustainable harvest opportunities and international trade (CITES), with a focus on the US, EU and Central Asia.
12. Support legal citizen hunting as an incentive for sustainable and healthy wildlife populations in Caprinae habitat.

In order for this program to be successful and sustainable, each of these goals and program elements will continue long-term.

Funding for the CACI will be provided through a species-specific Conservation Management Fee (CMF) for harvest of a wild sheep or goat. Included in the CMF is the government permit, revenue to implement the 12 program goals and elements listed above, and funding for guidance, support and marketing expenses associated with the CACI. In addition, WSF and SCI-F will, in collaboration with the respective Governments, provide important information for

species assessment consultation with IUCN Caprinae Specialist Group. Below is a brief expanded description of the 12 program goals and elements:

1. Work closely with Caprinae Specialist Group under the IUCN Species Survival Commission to sponsor, facilitate and participate in red-list assessments for Caprinae species world-wide.
 - WSF will host the 7th World Mountain Ungulate Conference, September 2019, in Bozeman, MT.
2. Build in-country ownership and commitment to the program
 - Emphasize and involve utilization of in-country expertise (and develop where needed).
 - Implement program elements with Government, citizen and local community involvement.
 - Develop full collaboration between researchers, managers, Government officials, Universities, and CITES regulators in NA, EU and Central Asia countries.
3. Population Monitoring
 - Develop and Implement annual/repeatable population surveys:
 - Establish seasonal wild sheep and wild goat population surveys, i.e. reliable and repeatable survey periods.
 - Establish Demographic Baseline. Classify females, young of year, males (by age class...age class to be determined).
 - From above data, calculate post-season yearling/female ratios, male/female ratios, adult yearling male to adult male ratios, etc.
4. Establish Legal harvest expectations. (Rangers/game wardens are important but enforcement will not be the primary basis for funds derived from this CACI).
 - From population surveys, develop and implement sustainable harvest strategies.
 - Implement horn plugging to uniquely identify harvested animals:
 - Provide plugs, drill bits and in-country drills.
 - Provide training via video and hands-on instruction.
 - Establish central in-country location(s) for horn plugging of all harvested animals.
 - Collect material (e.g., horn drill shavings, tissue) for genetic analysis.
5. Seasonal use and movement patterns
 - Develop seasonal movement and dispersal patterns and home range maps using existing in-country scientific expertise and local knowledge, augmented by GPS radio collar relocation data where feasible.
 - Develop an adopt-a-satellite collar movement/ monitoring program that would utilize a small number (5-10) of satellite GPS collars where feasible, with full understanding that it will take time to develop program funding.
6. Habitat Management
 - Develop digital mapping (GIS) of winter habitat overlap of wild sheep distribution and domestic livestock grazing.
 - Implement incentive programs for domestic livestock owners to graze away from crucial winter habitat to minimize forage competition between livestock and wild sheep.
7. Disease monitoring
 - Implement disease monitoring:
 - Identify wildlife and livestock diseases that are of concern in Central Asia.

- Determine equipment needs, costs and sources.
- Identify labs (preferably in-country) where samples can be processed.
 - In-country lab(s): determine needs and costs and develop funding sources.
 - Out-of-country:
 - Seek labs that do not require CITES permits to obtain/process material.
 - Work with CITES to facilitate transfer of tissues/samples if CITES permit is required.
- Develop sampling protocol.
- Begin sample collections.

8. Genetic monitoring

- Implement genetic monitoring:
 - Identify labs (preferably in-country) where samples can be processed.
 - In-country lab(s): determine needs and costs and develop funding sources.
 - Out-of-country:
 - Seek labs that do not require CITES permits to obtain/process material.
 - Work with CITES to facilitate transfer of tissues/samples if CITES permit is required.
 - Develop sampling protocol
 - Collect samples as specified
 - Collect horn-plugging shaving material
 - Collect genetic material from dead males and females found in the field.
 - Collect material from live males and females through drive net/drop net captures.

9. Establish a country-specific and species-specific Conservation Management Fee for hunting-based tourism hunts to help fund conservation work.

- The Conservation Management Fee (CMF) is specific to a species.
- Each CMF would allow for the harvest of 1 individual of a species.
- 70% of the CMF will be directed to on-the-ground conservation and restoration work.
- As this CACI evolves and as CITES status improves, the percentage of CMF fees allocated between various program elements will be refined.

10. Increase technical/management capacity for key officials in targeted conservation areas by developing short duration manager-to-manager exchanges (includes wildlife disease health professionals) between NA and Central Asia expertise.

- Key Central Asia managers/officials will spend time in the field in NA with a variety wildlife expertise, primarily at the State and Provincial levels.
- Exchanges will occur during short intervals (2 weeks per year), spread out over multiple years.
- Partners in developing exchange include key Central Asia Governments, US Government, IUCN, TWS, SCIF, WCS, Panthera, outfitting community, etc.
- Duration, 5 years, with multiple NA and key Central Asia participants.

11. Develop a WSF presence in CITES and with the USFWS endangered species program.

As population assessments of wild sheep and goats improves, argue for sustainable harvest opportunities and international trade, with a focus on the US, EU and Central Asia.

- Develop collaboration between researchers, managers, governmental officials and CITES regulators in NA, EU and Central Asia.
- Share and discuss the CV2025 with the USFWS.
- Provide regulators with reliable and current information regarding species status and enhancement efforts in Central Asia countries

12. Support legal citizen hunting as an incentive for sustainable and healthy wildlife populations in Caprinae habitat.

- A long-term goal is to mirror the funding approach of Federal Aid (PR), where initially NGO funding would provide a surrogate PR type match for funding conservation.
- Countries that have citizen hunting will need to develop a resident hunting license fee that could be used to match NGO funding.
- A goal of local funding to provide 5% of the cost of hunting-based conservation, focusing on citizen involvement and ownership with in-country conservation of Caprinae and other species.

Additional Considerations: Successful implementation of management and enhancement actions presented in the 12 program goals and elements would ideally lead to improved conservation status and down-listing” in risk status of species targeted by this initiative. Each of the startup actions has to be visibly established and functioning. An active public relations program with widespread multimedia outreach disseminating the conservation merits of the CACI program is a must. This includes publication of program results in appropriate scientific outlets and regularly scheduled social media releases of population numbers, habitat data, relative health information for wild sheep populations and other results of interest to the general public. These conservation merits also include positive economic, social and environmental benefits. Equally important is involving and informing the people of the country and elsewhere of the scientific merits of the program and the potential benefits to the in-country public and the larger conservation community. Examples include:

- Involving local citizen participation in population monitoring, identifying movement and seasonal use patterns and determining sustainable harvest levels will encourage local citizens and communities to conserve wildlife.
- Engaging agricultural and forest lease-holders in developing economic incentive programs to enhance wild sheep habitat adds economic viability to what the land can sustainably produce.
- Disease monitoring has implications for the general public because some diseases can be transmitted between humans, livestock and wildlife. The livestock industry will also benefit from knowledge gained from disease monitoring, which may ultimately enhance agricultural production.
- Genetic monitoring will improve taxonomic classification for Caprinae species of Central Asia.
- Scientific analysis of blood, fluid, and tissue samples collected will establish a health baseline.
- Live-capture will enhance disease and genetic monitoring. In addition, deployment of GPS radio-collars where feasible will allow the public to follow wild sheep or goat’s travel through time, facilitating understanding of the challenges faced by wildlife.

The purpose and benefits for people and wild sheep and goat conservation using hunting-based tourism authorized under the CMF and within the CACI as a conservation tool must be clearly defined up front. Permits should be issued for both mature male or female to remove ‘trophy’ from the equation. As the program expands, all permits should be mature and either-sex permits.