Ospika Mountain Goat Adaptive Management Trial

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Mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*) show strong fidelity to mineral licks. Traditional use by successive generations of goats has resulted in well-used trail systems through forested habitat between alpine summer ranges and valley bottom mineral licks. Industrial forest development has the potential to reduce or eliminate access to these mineral licks. Although a designated "regionally important" species under the BC Identified Wildlife Management Strategy (IWMS), operational management options tend to be vague or non-existent due to a lack of technical information.

In 2001, the Peace/Williston Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (PWFWCP) and Slocan Forest Products Ltd. Mackenzie Operations (SFP) initiated the Ospika Goat Project (OGP) a large-scale, multi-phase, collaborative study focused on the development and implementation of effective policy to support integrated management of forests and mountain goat habitat in north-central British Columbia. Collaborators from government agencies and private industry are active in the project through participation in a Mountain Goat Management Team (MGMT). In order to develop effective operational management policies for the forest industry, an adaptive management approach is being taken to assess the impacts of forest harvesting on the use of low elevation mineral licks by goats (the "Adaptive Management Trial" component of the OGP).

The OGP Adaptive Management Trial aims to monitor the impact of different forest harvesting strategies on the behaviour of mountain goats using low-elevation mineral licks and associated access trails in the Ospika River drainage. The study design involves monitoring goat use of 4 mineral lick complexes using remote radio-telemetry and camera technologies. Forest harvesting will occur at two sites, one employing retention of a 100m buffer along the forested access trail, the other with no trail buffer. An adjacent un-treated mineral lick will be monitored to assess possible post-treatment displacement of goats from the treated licks. A control lick across the drainage will also be monitored. Goat behavioural responses to the treatments will be determined by monitoring the frequency, timing, and duration of lick visits by radio-collared goats before and after harvesting options occur along forested lick access trails.