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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

***GOVERNOR SIGNS LEGISLATION WHICH WILL INCREASE STATE WILDLIFE FUNDING***  
***Promotes State Partnership with Private Conservation Organizations***

**SACRAMENTO, CA. (September 30, 2014):** California Governor Jerry Brown has signed legislation which will now ensure maximum annual funding is made available to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for wildlife programs and projects from the sale of select big game hunting tags. Recognizing the importance of non-profit conservation organizations maintaining an incentive to sell these exclusive tags on behalf of DFW, Assembly Bill 2105 now authorizes these groups to retain a portion of the tag sale price as a vendor fee. The legislation also brings the cost of a non-resident California wild sheep tag in line with the amount charged in other states to nonresidents. AB 2105 was sponsored by the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation and authored by Assembly Member Jim Frazier (D/11-Oakley). The bill was signed earlier this month.

Each year, DFW depends on the significant funding made available from the auction sale of exclusive big game tags to carry out critically needed wildlife research and habitat projects in California. To maximize tag revenue, CDFW looks to hunting-related conservation organizations to assist by promoting and selling these tags. These nonprofit organizations have the unique ability to reach out to the targeted community with interest in a particular tag, and the forum – typically via fundraising dinner events – to market the tag and sell it at maximum sale price. In 2013, a California wild sheep tag sold for \$170,000 at the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation event in Rancho Cordova. Prior to the approval of AB 2105, state law required 100% of these revenues go direct to the state.

Recently, the increasing cost to non-profits of promoting and selling these tags has proven to be a growing disincentive for these organizations to partner with the state in their sale – placing substantial annual wildlife project funding at great risk. AB 2105 addresses this problem by allowing nonprofit organizations who auction big game fundraising tags on behalf of CDFW to retain 5% of the sale price as a reasonable vendor fee. The ability to maintain this small percentage helps cover the costs to the nonprofits and any applicable credit card fees – maintaining an incentive for these organizations to sell these select tags and promoting the critical partnership between the state and private hunting-related organizations on the conservation of our state's big game species.

“The California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation is proud to have been the lead conservation organization in the creation and passage of this important bill,” stated Kyle M. Meintzer, Founder of the California Chapter of the organization. “Financially sound and committed hunter-supported nonprofits are integral to the success of the Department of Fish and Wildlife's big game wildlife programs. AB 2105 will ensure wild sheep and California's other big game species get the financial support they so desperately need.”

Gray N. Thornton, WSF President & CEO, agreed. “WSF is very pleased at the passage of AB 2105 enabling selling agents for CDFW to retain 5% of fundraising tag proceeds,” commented Thornton. “WSF raised and put \$4.3 million on the ground last year for programs benefiting wild sheep and other wildlife – \$3.4 million from fundraising tags and permits alone. We will now be able to use the 5% to fund special and emergency projects with CDFW when their regular funding sources are not available. AB 2105 is a win for California's wildlife and for CDFW.”

The desert bighorn sheep is the most treasured big game animal in North America. Because only six states offer desert bighorn sheep tags to non-residents, they are under high demand. In California, the price of a non-resident sheep tag has

been set in statute since 1986 at \$500 and has not been allowed to increase with inflation or demand. AB 2105 corrects this problem by bringing the cost of a non-resident sheep tag current with inflation, in-line with the cost of similar non-resident sheep tags in other states, and allowing it to adjust annually in the future with inflation and demand.

“It is my hope that this bill will enhance the critical partnership between the Department of Fish and Wildlife and nonprofit hunting organizations,” said Assembly Member Frazier. “Many of these organizations, most notably the Wild Sheep Foundation, play a vital role in raising funds that go back to CDFW for programs that support important wildlife conservation in California. Easing some of the administrative financial burden for these nonprofit conservation groups will help to ensure that maximum funds are raised to assist in the preservation of our state’s precious natural resources.”

*The Wild Sheep Foundation, formerly the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) was founded in 1977 by wild sheep, conservationists and enthusiasts. With a membership of more than 5,500 worldwide and a chapter network in North America, WSF is dedicated to enhancing wild sheep populations, promoting professional wildlife management, educating the public and youth on sustainable use and the conservation benefits of hunting while promoting the interests of the hunter and all stakeholders. WSF is the premier advocate for wild sheep, other mountain wildlife, their habitat, and their conservation. Since forming in 1977, the Wild Sheep Foundation and its chapters and affiliates have raised and expended more than \$95 million on conservation, education and conservation advocacy programs in North America, Europe and Asia. These and other efforts have resulted in a three-fold increase in bighorn sheep populations in North America from their historic 1950-70s lows of ~25,000 to ~80,000 today. Visit us at [www.wildsheepfoundation.org](http://www.wildsheepfoundation.org)*

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