



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### DESERT GAME RANGE CLASSIFIED INTO AREAS OPEN AND CLOSED TO OIL AND GAS LEASING

Approval of recommendations of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management relating to classification of areas open and closed to oil and gas leasing in the 2,200,000-acre Desert Game Range in Nevada was announced today by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton.

Legal descriptions of areas closed to leasing in order to protect the desert bighorn mountain sheep within the Range, and those open for possible oil and gas leasing upon agreement of operators to rigid protective stipulations, will be published in an early issue of the Federal Register.

Departmental regulations issued in January 1958 close all national wildlife refuges to oil and gas leasing except in case of drainage of oil owned by the United States. These regulations also provide that portions of the national wildlife areas in Alaska and game ranges in the other 48 States--including the Desert Game Range--might be classified as open to leasing at such time as the Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management, with technical assistance from the Geological Survey complete classification.

In accord with those regulations, field teams from the two Federal agencies with technical assistance from the third made an on-the-ground survey of the Desert Game Range over an extended period of time and came to agreement on those areas which could be opened to oil and gas development without serious damage to the mountain sheep for which the Range was established. Study by these agencies included discussions with officials of the Nevada State Fish and Game Commission.

Five mountain ranges and a part of a sixth range comprising the high country which is the major habitat for the desert bighorn are reserved for them. There are about 900,000 acres in these areas. About 1,300,000 acres are to be opened to oil and gas leasing activities. Maps showing the areas closed and open to leasing are available at the Bureau of Land Management Land Office in Reno, Nevada.

Today's action represents the second time such a classification has been made. The first was on the Kenai National Moose Range in Alaska. Oil leasing has been permitted there since January 1958. In that case, also, Secretary Seaton's action was based upon recommendations of the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service and concurred in by the Geological Survey.

Operations are conducted in accordance with stipulations protecting the wildlife. Kenai Moose Range is under the sole jurisdiction of the Fish and Wildlife Service but the Desert Game Range is under the joint jurisdiction of the Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

The Air Force uses portions of Desert Game Range through agreements as does the Atomic Energy Commission.

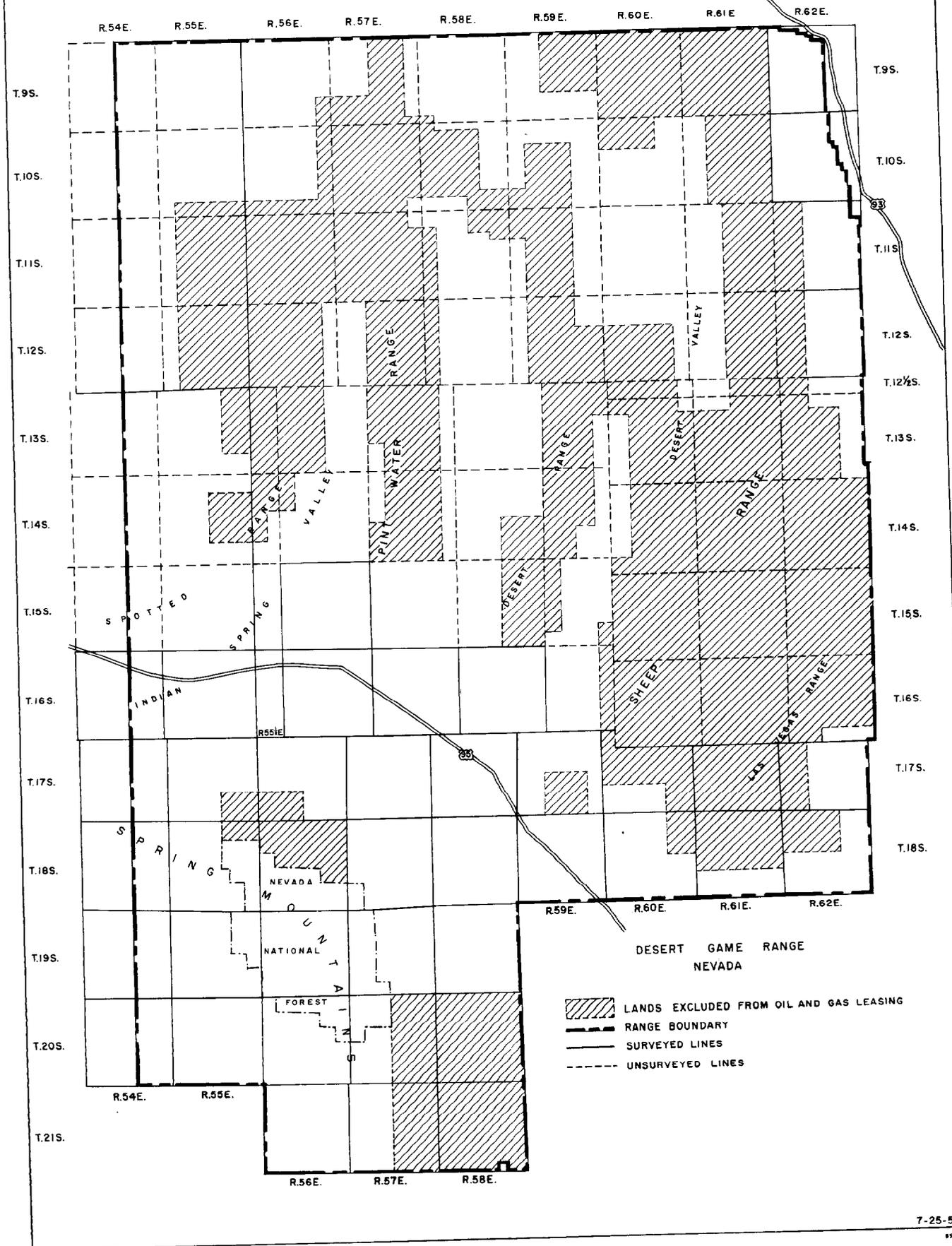
Desert Game Range is in southern Nevada, not far from Las Vegas. It was established in 1936, primarily for the preservation of the Nelson or desert bighorns, which are smaller than the Rocky Mountain bighorn. It is the second largest Federal wildlife area, embracing an area larger than the State of Rhode Island. Of the mountain ranges on the project, Spring and Sheep Ranges are the most impressive. Spring Range has the higher elevation, the most precipitation, the most vegetation, but Sheep Range has the major portion of the 1,500 sheep which occupy the reservation. Other ranges are the Las Vegas, Pint Water, Desert Spotted Ranges and the La Madre Mountains.

When the Desert Game Range was established, there were only about 300 of the Nelson bighorns in existence. Conservation practices built the number to a maximum of about 1,800. There have been bighorn hunts during the past three years. Because of the extreme scarcity of water in the area, special conservation measures such as the construction of small reservoirs which catch and save even trickles of water, assure the bighorns the amount of water needed to survive.

Attached is a map showing the portions of the game range excluded from oil and gas leasing.

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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



DESERT GAME RANGE  
NEVADA

 LANDS EXCLUDED FROM OIL AND GAS LEASING  
 RANGE BOUNDARY  
 SURVEYED LINES  
 UNSURVEYED LINES