



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

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PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Kim Greenwood
USFWS Region 6
303.236.4575

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH SHOSHONE-BANNOCK TRIBES

The Shoshone-Bannock tribes have recently entered into an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to allow a limited ceremonial bison hunt on the National Elk Refuge. The Shoshone-Bannock tribes, who were historically associated with the Jackson Hole area, will be allowed to harvest up to five bison per year as part of a traditional ceremonial activity. This activity will be closely coordinated with National Elk Refuge staff and could be conducted from May through December, 2008.

A Bison and Elk Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement was finalized in April, 2007, with a draft document open for public review from July 21 to November 7, 2005. Both written comments and public input were solicited during the review period. During that time, the Shoshone-Bannock tribes requested ceremonial bison hunts on the refuge. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policy does encourage reasonable access to Service-managed lands for Native American ceremonial activities. "The tribes are very interested in conducting this ceremony on the National Elk Refuge where they have historic ties," said Refuge Manager Steve Kallin.

The ceremony will be specific to bison and does not extend to other wildlife species. The use of off-road vehicles will be prohibited, a restriction that applies during all other refuge hunting seasons in order to protect habitat.

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