

Elk and Bison Management Planning Process for the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park



Update #2

Elk and Bison Planning Process Agenda for March 10, 2001 Meeting:

- 9:00 - 9:15 Welcome/Introduction
(Dan Huff)
- 9:15 - 9:30 Recap of Feb. 10 Meeting
(Sara Flitner, Niki Tippetts)
- 9:30 - 10:00 Agency Roles/
Responsibility/Scope
(Dan Huff, Bernie Holz)
- 10:00 - 10:15 Break
- 10:15 - 10:30 Planning Process Overview
(Flitner, Tippetts, Don
DeLong)
- 10:30 - 11:00 Open Discussion on Planning
Process (All)
- 11:00 - 11:30 Topic Identification for
Afternoon Session (All)
- 11:30 - 1:00 Lunch (on own)
- 1:00 - 3:00 Small Group Topical
Discussions (All)
- 3:00 - 4:00 Group Presentations/Open
Discussion (All)

Purposes of Topical Small Groups

Small group discussions will be offered in response to requests for more information and clarification on topics, and more access to the agency personnel who gave overviews at the February meeting.

Contacting the Planning Team:

Write to *NER/GTNP Bison/Elk Planning Team, PO Box 510, Jackson, WY 83001*. Call 307-733-9212, ext. 235, or send an email message to elk/bison_planning@fws.gov.

NER/GTNP Bison/Elk
Planning Team
PO Box 510
Jackson, WY 83001

Recipient Address

Welcome back!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Park Service (NPS) are in the initial stages of developing a plan for managing elk and bison inhabiting the National Elk Refuge (NER) and Grand Teton National Park (GTNP), Wyoming. These animals are part of the Jackson elk and bison herds, one of the largest concentrations of free-ranging populations of elk and bison in the world.

The first prescoping meeting was held in Jackson on February 10, 2001. The morning session was comprised of presentations from agency representatives on existing conditions. The afternoon was spent discussing desired future conditions and the development of the public participation process. The following is a recap of information received from public input during this meeting.

A complete list of comments can be accessed via a link to the project website from <http://nationalelkrrefuge.fws.gov/>.

Results of the February 10 Meeting:

Public Involvement:

A considerable amount of discussion took place on the question of how people would like to be involved in the planning process. Some participants expressed an interest in helping the agencies design the public involvement process. Some people wanted to make sure there was opportunity for open debate, and interest was also expressed in the establishment of small task/work groups with clearly defined roles. A desire was expressed to get more agencies involved in the process and to honor tribal traditions and treaties. Some people felt that local input should weigh more heavily than national input, and others felt there should be an effort to reach out to people throughout the State of Wyoming and the nation.

Still other people want individuals and organizations to have equal influence. Some people wanted to make sure that a goal is defined and that a problem is agreed upon.

Much specific input was put forth on meeting logistics, ways of getting more people involved, ways to get information out to people. For example, a variety of meeting times and locations were identified, and interest was expressed in using the media to advertise meetings. These topics will be discussed in more detail at the March 10 meeting.

Desired Future Conditions:

There were a number of common themes that were heard in the small group discussions. There seemed to be an overriding desire for a sustainable and healthy elk herd. A number of comments were made regarding herd size objectives. Many people expressed a desire to have healthy habitat conditions, although the priority of healthy habitat as related to elk numbers differed. Some people expressed desires to have a free-ranging elk herd that uses its historic summer and winter range. Views on the bison population ranged from a desire to have no bison on the Elk Refuge to maintaining the herd at specified levels. Some people desired a free-ranging and healthy bison herd.

Several groups recognized the importance of the herds to the Jackson area, as well as to the State of Wyoming and the nation. A desire was expressed to maintain historic uses (e.g., hunting and wildlife viewing) and to maintain access to the herds for such uses. The importance of hunting was expressed, as well as the desire to have hunting opportunities expanded. Some people expressed a desire to have a diversity of opportunities and for a variety of values to be weighed equally, including financial, aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual. Some people wanted to be able to view elk and bison in wild settings.

Desired Future Strategies:

Although small groups were not asked to identify strategies in the first meeting, participants listed many thoughts on how to accomplish the desired conditions that were recorded. Strategies included a wide range of conservation/management actions. Identified strategies included winter feeding, disease management, use of hunting as a management tool, habitat restoration, and management, acquisition of additional habitat. The planning team appreciates all input received and will keep this information for later discussion of this subject.

Project Timeline:

Phase:	Date:
Prescoping	4/00-3/01
Publish Notice of Intent	4/20/01
Information Sharing / Goal Identification / Scoping	4/01-7/01
Development of Alternatives	7/01-10/01
Draft EIS Distributed for Review	9/02
Final EIS Distributed	6/03
Record of Decision Signed	7/03

*Project timeline is somewhat flexible and will reflect public input where possible.

Purpose and Format of the March 10 Meeting:

The second prescoping public meeting will be held on March 10 at the Snow King Resort, and will focus on public interests expressed in the Feb. 10 meeting – primarily, clarification of group generated questions, followed by large and small group discussions. The large group discussion will summarize public involvement ideas for this planning process and small group discussions will allow for more extensive discussions with agency representatives.