

NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, MOUNTAIN-PRAIRIE REGION
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM
NATIONAL ELK REFUGE
PO Box 510, Jackson, WY, 83002**

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**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service Issue Record of Decision for
Bison/Elk Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for National Elk
Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial
Parkway**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Park Service (NPS) today announced the publication of the Record of Decision for the *Final Bison and Elk Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (Final Plan/EIS) for the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway in northwestern Wyoming. The Record of Decision provides a summary of planning and analysis process and the basis for the decision to implement the preferred alternative known as Adaptively Manage Habitat and Populations.

The FWS and NPS made several changes to the preferred alternative in the Final Plan/EIS after release of the Draft Plan/EIS in 2005, and the subsequent analysis of more than 11,900 written comments and public testimony from private citizens, organizations, and other agencies. These changes included clarifying desired conditions to be achieved over 15 years for the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park, and adopting an adaptive management approach for managing habitat and bison and elk populations. Key elements of the final plan include:

- In close cooperation with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the agencies will use existing conditions, research, and changing circumstances to provide the basis for developing and implementing a dynamic management framework for decreasing supplemental feeding on the National Elk Refuge. Population management, habitat restoration, monitoring, and public education are important components of this framework.
- The plan will include progressive transition from intensive supplemental winter feeding to greater reliance on free-standing forage using adaptive management actions and established criteria based on the following considerations: level of forage production and availability; desired herd sizes; mitigation of bison and elk conflicts on adjacent lands; winter distribution patterns; prevalence of brucellosis or other wildlife diseases; and public support.

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- After initial implementation through a phased approach, about 5,000 elk will winter on the refuge and bison numbers will be reduced to about 500 animals (currently estimated over 1,100). Bison and elk

hunting on the refuge—and when necessary, the elk herd reduction program in the park—will be used to assist the State in managing these herds.

- Any further reductions in feeding or populations will only occur after initial objectives for habitat and wildlife populations were achieved, and will be based on established triggers, criteria, and other considerations of changing biological and social conditions.

Publication of the Final Plan/EIS in early February, 2007 followed an interagency review process, in which the Services worked with the U.S. Forest Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Wyoming Fish and Game Department to refine and revise the Draft Plan/EIS.

A copy of the Record of Decision is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/bisonandelkplan>. A limited number of copies of the Final Plan/EIS can be obtained by calling (307) 733-9212 or by writing to: Bison and Elk Management Planning Office, National Elk Refuge, P.O. Box 510, Jackson, Wyoming 83001.

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