

NEWS RELEASE
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
134 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, Colorado 80228

For Immediate Release Contacts: Laurie Shannon, FWS, (303) 236-4317
Barry Reiswig, FWS, (307) 733-9212
Joan Anzelmo, NPS, (307) 739-3415

July 21, 2005

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AND NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
RELEASE DRAFT 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 and National Park Service today published a draft Bison/Elk Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway in northwestern Wyoming.

The Services are seeking public comment on the draft document, which is available for download at: <http://www.fws.gov/bisonandelkplan>. The public comment period will conclude on September 30, 2005. Copies of the draft plan and EIS are also available by calling (307) 733-9212 or by writing to: Bison and Elk Management Planning Office, National Elk Refuge, P.O. Box 510, 675 E. Broadway, Jackson, Wyoming 83001, no later than September 30, 2005. Comments may be sent by email to: bison/elk_planning@fws.gov.

The Services will hold a series of combination open houses and formal hearings in late August to further discuss the draft plan and EIS. The meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

August 29, 2005, Lindley House, 1102, East Curtiss, Bozeman Montana

August 30, 2005, Virginian Lodge, 750 Broadway, Jackson, Wyoming

August 31, 2005, Holiday Inn/Convention Center, 900 E. Sunset, Riverton, WY

The afternoon open houses will run from 2:00-5:00 p.m., and the public hearings will run from 6:30-9:00 p.m.

“We look forward to hearing from the many agencies, organizations and individuals with interests in the management of the Jackson bison and elk herds,” said Barry Reiswig, National Elk Refuge Manager. “Public participation in this process will help to strengthen our final management plan for this important resource.”

Publication of the draft follows 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 plan and the EIS. The Services anticipate that the final plan and EIS will be completed by late 2006.

The bison/elk management planning process began in 1999 following earlier litigation over a bison management plan prepared by the Services for the refuge and the park and parkway. The court ordered that no reduction of the bison herd could occur on refuge lands until the Services analyzed bison management in combination with the winter feeding program on the refuge. The Services ultimately broadened the scope of the analysis to include elk management in order to meet National Wildlife Refuge System planning requirements and to address the issues related to high animal concentrations and effects on habitat all at the same time.

The National Elk Refuge, a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, is located in northwestern Wyoming, just north of Jackson. The refuge consists of 25,000 acres, including nearly 1600 acres of open water, and provides winter range for more than 7,500 elk and habitat for 47 different mammals and 175 species of birds.

Grand Teton National Park, a unit of the National Park System, is located in northwestern Wyoming, just north and west of Jackson. The park consists of 309,995 acres of diverse habitats, ranging from sagebrush to the high mountain peaks of the Teton Range, and supports a variety of native wildlife, including elk and bison, as well as pronghorn antelope. Nearly 3.5 million people visit the park annually. The plan and EIS will also address bison and elk management issues on the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway, a 23,777-acre link between the park and Yellowstone National Park.

More than 13,000 elk summer in the Park, the southern part of Yellowstone National Park, and the Bridger-Teton National Forest. At least half the herd winters on the National Elk Refuge. The Jackson elk herd is the nation's largest.

Absent from the area for many years, in 1980 bison began wintering on the National Elk Refuge. Subsequently, the number of bison wintering on the refuge has grown to nearly 800 animals.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal

Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

- FWS -

For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>