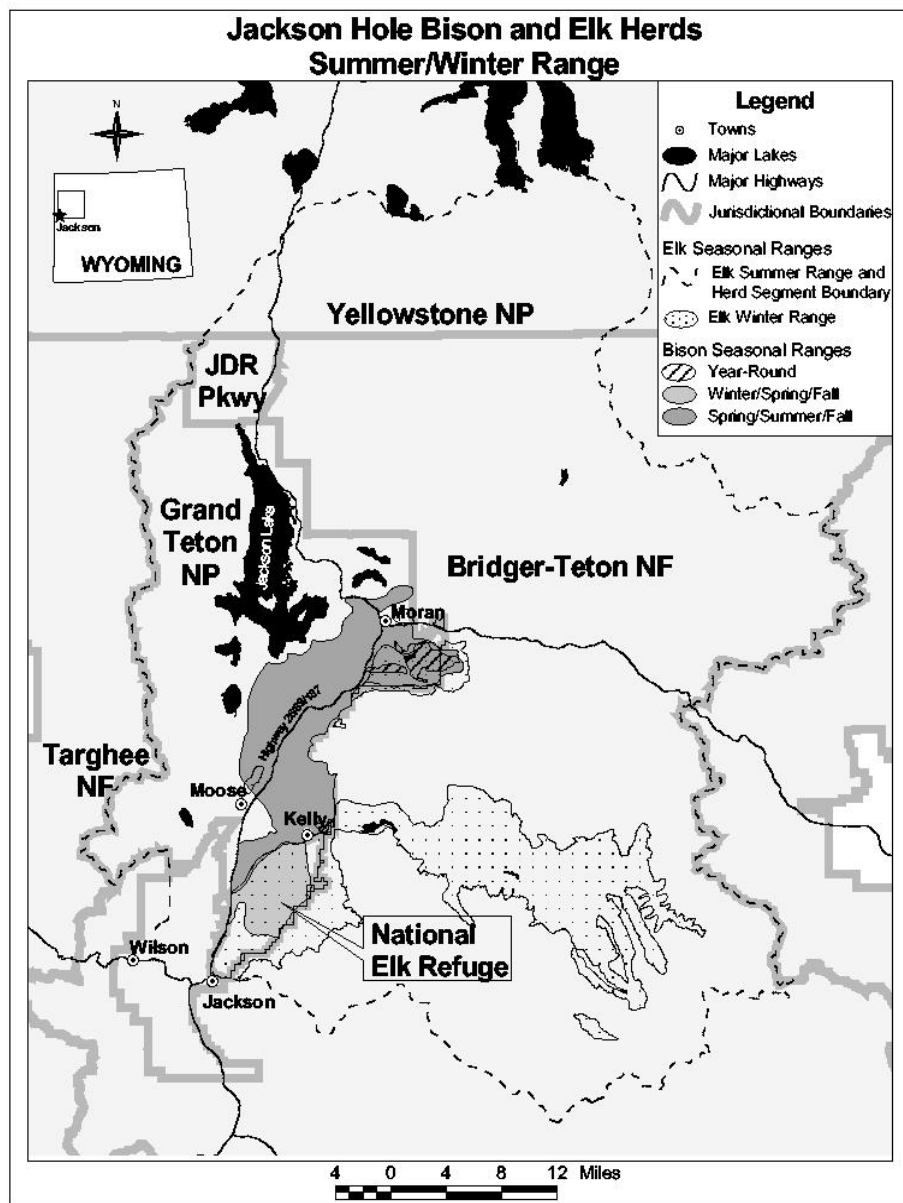




# Bison and Elk Management Plan and EIS



## Scoping Brochure - Summer 2001



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- Purpose of Scoping Meetings:**
- Define Project Scope
  - Clarify Issues
  - Determine Range of Desired Future Conditions
  - Identify Stakeholders

# General Information

<u>Lead Agencies:</u>	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (National Elk Refuge) & National Park Service (Grand Teton National Park)
<u>Cooperators:</u>	U.S.D.A. Forest Service (Bridger-Teton National Forest) and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
<u>Partners:</u>	Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Bureau of Land Management
<u>Product of the Planning Process:</u>	A bison and elk management plan and environmental impact statement (EIS) for the National Elk Refuge (NER) and Grand Teton National Park (GTNP)
<u>Decision Area:</u>	Decisions resulting from the planning process will be limited to management activities on the NER and GTNP
<u>EIS Analysis Area:</u>	To be determined through scoping  At a minimum, the EIS analysis area will be large enough to analyze the effects of NER/GTNP management on the entire Jackson bison and elk herds and their habitat, and socio-economic effects of proposed management within Teton County, Wyoming.
<u>Affected programs:</u>	Supplemental (winter) feeding, recreation, habitat management, hunting, population control, disease management, population goals, and others to be determined during scoping



## Purposes of the National Elk Refuge:

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System “is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans” (16 USC 668dd). The NER was established in 1912 as a “winter game (elk) reserve” (37 Stat. 293). This was followed in 1913 with another Act of Congress designating the area as “a winter elk refuge” (37 Stat. 847). Nine years after the NER was established, providing “refuge and breeding grounds for birds” was added as a purpose for which the refuge is to be managed (Exec. Order 3596). This was followed in 1927 by an expansion of the NER for the purpose of providing “for the grazing of, and as a refuge for, American elk and other big game animals” (44 Stat. 1246). Other purposes address threatened and endangered species, wildlife in general, and wildlife-oriented recreation.



Purposes of Grand Teton National Park: In their management of national parks, monuments, and reservations, the fundamental mission of the National Park Service is “... to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” (16 U.S.C. 1). Grand Teton National Park was established for the purpose of protecting the area’s native plant and animal life and its “spectacular values,” as characterized by the geologic features of the Teton Range and Jackson Hole. Legislation also called for “the permanent conservation of the elk within the Grand Teton National Park” (64 Stat. 849).

# Background Information ~ Purpose and Need

## Background Information

The National Elk Refuge (NER) and Grand Teton National Park (GTNP), situated at the southern end of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, are adjacent to one another and are located just north of Jackson, Wyoming. The NER is approximately 25,000 acres in size; and GTNP, about 304,000 acres. The elk and bison that inhabit the two areas are part of the Jackson bison and elk herds, which comprise one of the largest concentrations of free-ranging elk and bison in North America—approximately 14,000 elk and 600 bison. The Jackson bison and elk herds migrate across several jurisdictional boundaries including the NER, GTNP, Yellowstone National Park, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Bureau of Land Management resource areas, and state and private lands. Because of the wide range of authorities and interests, the FWS and NPS are seeking a cooperative approach to management planning involving all of the associated federal and state agencies and a broad range of organized and private interests.

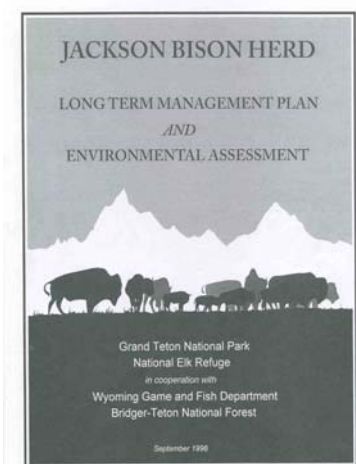
The Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (IECR) and its cooperators were enlisted in early 2000 to develop a *Situation Assessment*. The assessment can be found online at [www.ecr.gov/new.htm](http://www.ecr.gov/new.htm). Preparation of that report involved solicitation of comments and concerns from numerous public and private individuals, organizations, and tribal representatives, regarding management of the Jackson bison and elk herds. IECR recommended an extended “pre-scoping” process be carried out prior to the official beginning of the EIS process. That process will be completed upon the publication of the Notice of Intent (to prepare an EIS) in the *Federal Register* on or about July 1, 2001.

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## Purpose and Need for the Management Plan

The *Jackson Bison Herd Long-Term Management Plan and Environmental Assessment* was developed during the mid 1990s. The plan, which had support by the public, tribes, and partnering agencies, was approved in 1997. This document was the result of a series of planning efforts begun in the 1980s to assess and establish actions for 1) herd size, 2) herd reduction, 3) winter distribution, and 4) disease management. A lawsuit prevented the implementation of most of the federal management actions outlined in the plan. The court ruled that destruction of bison on NER and GTNP for population control purposes could not be carried out until the effects of the NER’s winter feeding on bison are analyzed in additional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance requirements.

No plan for managing elk has ever been completed for either the NER or GTNP. Since the winter feeding program is one of the primary elk and bison management activities on the NER; since it must be considered in the court ordered bison planning process; and because the Refuge Improvement Act (1997) required its completion at some future time; it was determined that a combined bison and elk plan for the federal areas should be undertaken. This process was recommended by NER and GTNP and directed by the Department of Interior (DOI) Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks in 1999. The DOI committed to this process in the settlement deliberations for the 1998 lawsuit.



# Prescoping Meetings

## Prescoping Meetings

Seven prescoping meetings were held between February 10 through May 5, 2001 to gather and share information on existing and historical conditions and opinions on desired future conditions. The intent of these meetings was to establish working relationships with interested groups and individuals and to provide information on the resources, planning process and agencies involved.

These meetings were held with a variety of formats, locations, dates, and times and were generally well attended by the public. The information that follows is a compilation of comments and frequent themes that were heard at the meetings. A full listing of pre-scoping comments will soon be available on the project WebPage <http://bisonandelkplan.fws.gov/>.

### **Public Involvement:**

A question asked by the agencies in each meeting was how would stakeholders (e.g., interested agencies, individuals, and organizations) like to be involved in the planning process? Participants expressed an interest in helping the agencies design the public involvement process, providing opportunity for open debate, and in establishing task oriented work groups. A desire was expressed to get more agencies involved in the process and to honor tribal traditions and treaties. Concern was expressed about the “weight” of public comment (e.g., local vs. national, individual vs. group) and placing emphasis on outreach to people throughout Wyoming and the nation. Some expressed concerns for well-defined goals and stakeholder agreement on issues. Specific input was also provided on meeting logistics (e.g., dates, times, locations, advertisement, etc.)

### **Desired Future Conditions:**

A number of frequent themes were heard in the prescoping meetings such as sustaining a viable and healthy elk herd and providing continued access to the elk and bison herds for a variety of uses. Another was the importance of the herds to the Jackson area, as well as to the State of Wyoming, and the nation. Much interest was expressed in herd size objectives and healthy habitat conditions, although their priorities differed. Some support was expressed for a free-ranging elk herd that uses its historic summer and winter range. Views on the bison population varied, ranging from removing bison from the NER to maintaining the herd at specified levels. A variety of opinions were heard regarding vaccination of animals and related research. A desire was expressed by most publics to maintain historic uses (e.g., hunting and wildlife viewing). The importance of hunting was often ex-

pressed, as well as the desire to have hunting opportunities expanded. Other comments included a diversity of opportunities and a variety of factors to be weighed equally, including financial, aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual values.

### **Desired Future Strategies:**

Although participants were not asked to identify strategies in the prescoping phase, many thoughts on how to accomplish the desired conditions were recorded. Strategies included a wide range of conservation/management actions. Identified strategies included winter feeding, irrigation, prescribed burning, disease management, hunting and/or logging as management tools, habitat restoration and management, acquisition of additional habitat, reestablishment corridors, adaptive management, and incorporation of tribal uses.

# Prescoping Report ~ Timeline ~ Mailing List

## Prescoping Report

A summary of pre-scoping results will soon be available on the project WebPage. It will include a discussion of the planning process in general, and an explanation of the steps toward developing a management plan.

### Timeline for Actions and Products:

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Situation Assessment (completed)                          | September 21, 2000       |
| 2. Prescoping Meetings (completed)                           | February 10 -May 5, 2001 |
| 3. “Notice of Intent” published in <i>Federal Register</i>   | July 15, 2001            |
| 4. Scoping Meetings  | July 20-August 3, 2001   |
| 5. Draft Plan/EIS available to the public                    | September 15, 2002       |
| 6. Final Plan/EIS available to the public                    | September 15, 2003       |
| 7. “Record of Decision” published in <i>Federal Register</i> | January 1, 2004          |

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Please detach and mail to address listed on back page.

### Mailing List Information:

If you would like to be **added to the mailing list**, or need to update your mailing information, please provide the following information to the Planning Team. See contact information on back page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your preferred method of receiving information:

Fax  Email  Postal Mail



## Scoping Meeting Schedule

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Date	City	Location
July 20, 2001	Jackson, Wyoming	Commissioner's Chamber (200 S. Willow)
July 21, 2001	Rock Springs, Wyoming	Holiday Inn (1675 Sunset Drive)
July 23, 2001	Idaho Falls, Idaho	Quality Inn (850 Lindsay Blvd.)
July 24, 2001	Bozeman, Montana	Best Western Grantree (1325 North 7 <sup>th</sup> )
July 25, 2001	Sheridan, Wyoming	Best Western Sheridan Center (612 N. Main)
July 26, 2001	Casper, Wyoming	Holiday Inn (300 West F Street)
July 27, 2001	Riverton, Wyoming	City Hall (816 N. Federal Blvd.)
August 1, 2001	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Little America (2800 W. Lincolnway)
August 2, 2001	Denver, Colorado	Denver Sheraton West (360 Union Blvd; Lakewood)
August 3, 2001	Arlington, Virginia	Holiday Inn at Ballston (4610 N. Fairfax Drive)

Meeting times will be from 6:30pm - 8:30pm

For further information, please contact:

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