



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region

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134 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, Colorado 80228-1807

Dear Reader:

AUG 05 2014

We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), are providing you with a public review copy of the Environmental Assessment (EA) that was prepared to analyze the proposed action for an Annual Funding Agreement (AFA) with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). This proposed action, identified as alternative B in the EA, would allow CSKT to manage and implement the visitor services, biology, maintenance, and fire programs on the National Bison Range Complex (refuge complex). The units included in this proposal are the National Bison Range, Pablo National Wildlife Refuge, Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge, and 9 waterfowl production areas. All of these units are within the boundaries of the Flathead Indian Reservation and are located both in Lake and Sanders counties in Montana. The headquarters office for the refuge complex is located in Moiese, Montana, approximately 40 miles north of Missoula.

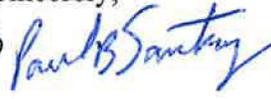
The proposed action can be found in section 5.3 and appendix A of the attached EA. This draft AFA alternative, negotiated between the Service and CSKT, was provided to the public as part of the scoping process when this EA process began in May of 2012. In addition to the proposed action, the Service developed and analyzed three other AFA alternatives (alternative C through E) along with the No Action alternative (alternative A).

The Service is asking you to comment on the proposed action and the other alternatives (chapter 5), including the analysis that was conducted. To provide written comments you can mail them to the National Bison Range, 58355 Bison Range Road, Moiese, Montana 59824 or email them to bisonrange@fws.gov no later than September 3, 2014. Please be as specific as you can, referencing page number or sections that you are commenting on, if possible.

After this public review the Regional Director will be provided all public comments, including those from CSKT. She will consider these along with the effects of all the alternatives. Following this review, the Regional Director will select a preferred alternative, which would become the Service's AFA proposal. In considering the consequences, the Regional Director will determine if the preferred alternative could have a significant impact. If the Regional Director finds that no significant impacts would occur, the Regional Director's decision will be disclosed in a finding of no significant impact (FONSI). If the Regional Director finds a significant impact would occur, she could modify or mitigate the alternative or direct staff to prepare an environmental impact statement.

If the Regional Director decides to proceed with an AFA, we are required to send the AFA to Congress for a 90-day review and comment period. If approved by Congress, we will immediately begin working with CSKT to begin implementing the selected alternative and associated components as an AFA. To receive additional information about the EA, please contact Leith Edgar, External Affairs, 303-236-4588 or Jeff King, Project Leader, at (406) 644-2211, ext. 204. This document can also be downloaded from the refuge complex website, www.fws.gov/bisonrange. Thank you for taking the time to comment.

Sincerely,

Acting 

William Meeks
Assistant Regional Director
Mountain-Prairie Region
National Wildlife Refuge System