

National Bison Range - Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) Timeline Update - Summer 2018

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the streamlined timeline for the National Bison Range Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and environmental impact statement (EIS)?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) plans to release the draft CCP/EIS in late November 2018 and finalize the CCP/EIS by late April 2019. Please visit the [National Bison Range Complex CCP website](#) for a detailed planning schedule.

Q: Why was the timeline for the National Bison Range CCP/EIS streamlined?

The Secretary of the Interior recently issued additional guidance for all Department of the Interior (Department) projects with an EIS started before [Secretarial Order 3355](#) (“*Streamlining National Environmental Reviews and Implementation of Executive Order 13807*”) issued in 2017. Additional guidance from the Department clarifies that all projects with an EIS that began before Secretarial Order 3355 must now be completed by April 27, 2019 and be less than 150 pages. This guidance applies to the CCP/EIS for the National Bison Range.

Q: How will the Service ensure a high-quality product given the streamlined timeline for completing the National Bison Range CCP/EIS?

The Service will make all necessary resources available as needed in developing the CCP/EIS for the National Bison Range to ensure a high-quality document that fully complies with all applicable law, Secretarial Order 3355, and all Service policies. These resources may include assigning additional Service staff to assist with the CCP/EIS process.

Q: How will the streamlined timeline for completing the National Bison Range CCP/EIS be beneficial? What are the challenges inherent in this approach?

Streamlining the CCP/EIS process will enable the National Bison Range to complete a CCP and begin its implementation sooner than previously planned. It also ensures the Service’s focus on the highest priorities and most substantive issues affecting Refuge management. The streamlined EIS requirements in Secretarial Order 3355 will translate into a more concise and user-friendly document for the public and Refuge staff.

Service planning policy directs us to integrate our management plans with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This approach is more efficient than developing documents separately, which means we will develop additional components for the CCP along with the EIS within the new one year timeline. Additional resources, including staff with Refuge planning expertise, will be made available as needed to support completion of the CCP/EIS.

Q: Is this streamlined National Bison Range CCP/EIS timeline a violation of the lawsuit settlement with Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)?

No. The settlement agreement stipulates that the Service will develop a CCP/EIS for National Bison Range by January 31, 2023. The stipulations of the settlement do not preclude the Service from completing this process earlier.

Q: What is [Secretarial Order 3355](#)? How does it apply to the streamlined National Bison Range CCP/EIS process?

Secretarial Order 3355 is a Department of the Interior (Department) policy issued in 2017. Among other actions, it notes that “each bureau [including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service] shall have a target to complete each Final EIS for which it is the lead agency within 1 year from the issuance of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS.” The aim of Secretarial Order 3355 is to “enhance and modernize the Department's NEPA processes,” including streamlining timelines for completion.

Based on the most recent Department guidance, the Service aims to complete its EIS for the National Bison Range CCP process by April 2019 to comply with the recommendations for implementing Secretarial Order 3355.

Q: Besides the Service, who else is actively participating in developing the National Bison Range CCP/EIS?

The National Bison Range CCP/EIS is being developed by a Planning Team composed of: staff from the Refuge Complex; other Service employees in the Mountain-Prairie Region; and five cooperating agencies: the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; Bureau of Indian Affairs; Lake County; and Sanders County.

Q: Will the Service provide new or additional staff to assist with development of the National Bison Range CCP/EIS?

Permanent personnel at the Refuge Complex, assisted by additional Service employees in the Mountain-Prairie Region, are working to develop and complete the CCPs for all units in the Refuge Complex. Additional Service staff will assist with the CCPs, as needed, based on their knowledge and expertise.

Q: How may the public remain informed and review the most current schedule, documents, and other information for the ongoing CCP/EIS process?

The Service maintains an up-to-date website devoted entirely to the CCP planning process and associated NEPA documents for all units in the Refuge Complex. The website also provides contact information and allows visitors to sign up for postal mail and/or email updates. It can be accessed by visiting: <https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/refuges/nbrc.php>