



# National Elk Refuge Bison and Elk Management Plan

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to develop an updated Bison and Elk Management Plan to ensure healthy, sustainable bison and elk herds.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, intends to prepare an updated Bison and Elk Management Plan (BEMP) and environmental impact statement (EIS) for the National Elk Refuge (NER). The BEMP describes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s proposal for the management of the Jackson bison and elk populations within their respective jurisdictions with the goal of ensuring sustainable and healthy herds; an EIS will be prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the BEMP.

The Jackson bison and elk herds make up one of the largest concentrations of free-ranging ungulates in North America. Currently, these herds number about 450 bison and 10,600 elk. More than 15 years have elapsed since the last BEMP was finalized in 2007. Conditions have changed, while elk management remains one of the most important management actions for the NER.

The BEMP will address changed conditions and newly available scientific information. The BEMP will also set new desired conditions, management goals, objectives, and strategies to guide the management of bison and elk on the NER to work towards a goal of a healthy sustainable population of elk and bison on NER and the southern portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. We invite input from other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, nongovernmental organizations, private sector businesses, and members of the public on the scope of the EIS, alternatives to our proposed approaches for the management of bison and elk on the NER and GTNP, and the pertinent issues that we should address in the EIS.

### Draft objectives associated with this proposal include:

- Maintain sustainable populations of elk
- Maintain sustainable populations of bison
- Maintain sustainable populations of other wildlife affected by elk and bison management activities
- Maintain physical habitats and environmental processes associated with bison and elk
- Maximize health and human safety related to elk and bison
- Maintain social and economic benefits associated with elk and bison
- Minimize impacts on cultural, archaeological, and ethnographic resources
- Minimize costs of bison and elk management activities

### Planning process timeline:

*Public Scoping Location Solicitation*  
Spring 2023

*Conduct Public Scoping*  
Late Summer - Fall 2023

*Conduct Public Review and Comment on Draft BEMP and EIS*  
Late Summer - Fall 2024

*Evaluate the Comments and Develop Final BEMP*  
Fall 2024 - Spring 2025

### Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.fws.gov/project/upcoming-bison-elk-management-plan>

### How to submit comments (see website for comment deadlines):

Online: <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments to Docket No. FWS-R6-NWRS-2023-0062.

By Mail: Attn: FWS-R6-NWRS-2023-0062; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: PRB/3W, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041–3803. Please note in your submission that your comments are regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Bison and Elk Management Plan.



*Elk Herd on the National Elk Refuge,  
Credit: USFWS*