



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PO Box 168

Yellowstone National Park

Wyoming 82190

N1427(YELL)

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service (NPS) is evaluating the remote delivery of vaccine to free-ranging bison (*Bison bison*) in Yellowstone National Park (YNP) for the contagious disease brucellosis that is caused by the non-native bacteria *Brucella abortus*. The purpose of remote delivery vaccination is to deliver a safe and effective vaccine to eligible bison inside the park to increase tolerance for bison on essential winter ranges outside the park in Montana, by lowering the prevalence of brucellosis in bison. The evaluation of remote delivery vaccination was previously directed by a Record of Decision in December 2000 regarding the Interagency Bison Management Plan, which was a court negotiated settlement between the United States government and the state of Montana.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is available for review online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yell>. For further information about this planning effort contact Rick Wallen by mail at the park's address, above, by phone at (307) 344-2213, or by email at YELL_Remote_Vaccine@nps.gov.

The DEIS includes an assessment of available information regarding the remote delivery vaccination of bison and whether available methods provide a mechanism for decreasing the disease prevalence of brucellosis in the Yellowstone population. Brucellosis can be transmitted from infected bison to cattle when bison migrate to low elevation winter ranges outside the park where snow is less deep and more forage is available in this mountainous temperate environment. YNP provides sanctuary to the largest wild and free-ranging population of plains bison in the United States that remains free of cattle in-breeding. New science has revealed that conservation of bison migration to lands adjacent to the park is crucial for long-term conservation of the park's bison population. Thus, these bison are an integral and iconic part of the cultural values and ecological processes protected by the park in keeping with the mission of the NPS.

This planning effort will result in a decision determining whether or not to implement remote delivery of a vaccine to free-ranging bison inside YNP. Three alternatives will be considered

including no-action, hand and remote delivery vaccination of young non-pregnant bison, and hand and remote delivery vaccination of young and adult female bison. The no action alternative is to continue the currently authorized syringe vaccination of calves and yearlings periodically captured in pens at the park boundary. The two remote delivery alternatives include the continuation of the hand delivery program described under no action. The difference between the two remote delivery alternatives is in the age category of bison being targeted for remote delivery. One of the remote delivery alternatives includes adult female bison. A preferred alternative has not been identified in the draft EIS, however, the final EIS will include a preferred alternative.

Public participation is very important to the successful evaluation of whether remote vaccination should be considered in an expanded brucellosis vaccination program for Yellowstone bison. The public comment period will be open for 60 days following the publication of the notice of availability in the Federal Register by the Environmental Protection Agency.

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods: 1) via the Internet at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yell>; 2) by mail to the Bison Ecology and Management Office, Center for Resources, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, 82190; and 3) hand-deliver comments to the Center for Resources at 27 Officer's Row in Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming. Comments will not be accepted by facsimile, electronic mail, or methods other than those specified above. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

We thank you in advance for your participation and we appreciate your concern for the future of the Yellowstone bison population.

Sincerely,



for Suzanne Lewis
Superintendent