



Wenk, Dan <dan_wenk@nps.gov>

Update to bison brief.

1 message

Dan Wenk <dan_wenk@nps.gov>

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To: Bert Frost <Bert_Frost@nps.gov>, Sue Masica <Sue_Masica@nps.gov>, alexa_viets@nps.gov

Update to numbers reflecting today's date.

2 attachments **noname.txt**
1K **Bison Management (1).doc**
39K

Bison Management

Key Points:

- There is very limited tolerance for wild bison in Montana due to concerns about competition with cattle for grass, human safety, property damage, and brucellosis transmission. Idaho and Wyoming do not want wild bison outside parks and refuges.
- Approximately 5,500 Yellowstone bison were counted during summer 2016. High bison densities can degrade other resources and result in the migration of thousands of bison into Montana, which can overwhelm managers' abilities to maintain separation with cattle and protect people and property.
- In December 2016, YELL and other members of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) agreed to manage for a decreasing population this winter, using hunting in Montana and capture/culling (primarily shipments to slaughter) to remove up to 1,300 bison.
- This winter, 1,248 bison were removed from the population, including 440 harvested, 748 sent to slaughter, 25 dispatched for other reasons (e.g., wounding), and 35 held for research.
- The shipment of bison to slaughter facilities is controversial and generates negative publicity, but there is limited habitat inside the park and limited tolerance for bison outside the park.

Background:

- The federal government and the State of Montana are signatories to the IBMP, which has been implemented since 2001 to manage Yellowstone bison and reduce the risk of brucellosis transmission from bison to cattle.
- The plan has been successful at conserving a viable population of wild, wide-ranging bison and there have been no transmissions of brucellosis from bison to cattle. Other members involved with the IBMP include the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation, Forest Service, InterTribal Buffalo Council, and the Nez Perce Tribe.
- Five tribes have hunted bison on open and unclaimed lands in Montana adjacent to YELL, including the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Nez Perce Tribe, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and the Yakama Nation.
- There are recurring ethical, public relations, and safety issues in communities of Montana adjacent to Yellowstone National Park due to concentrations of hunters, gut piles near roads and residences, shooting across roads, shooting elk, and hunting practices perceived to be unethical (e.g., firing lines of hunters along the park boundary; "flock" shooting).
- Hunting is prohibited in Yellowstone National Park. However, when bison migrations into Montana are small or late, tribal hunters become frustrated and assert that treaty rights include hunting bison inside the park; a point that is encouraged by the Montana legislature, state veterinarian, and organizations associated with the livestock community.

Current Status:

- While hunting and meat processing are currently available tools for managers, quarantine and release of live, brucellosis-free animals are being considered as a future option.
- Montana recently decided to provide for some additional tolerance of bison north and west of the park. In addition, the NPS and Montana have initiated the preparation of a new environmental Impact Statement to consider changes in the management of bison and brucellosis given substantial new information, changed circumstances, and the passage of 16 years since the IBMP was initiated.