United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Gallatin National Forest

Hebgen Lake Ranger District
P.O. Box 520
West Yellowstone, MT 59758
Phone: 406-646-7369
Fax: 406-646-9632

File Code: 2720

Date: October 28, 1997

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XX
XX

Dear ,

We are initiating an environmental analysis for a proposed bison capture facility to be located near Horse Butte. Please refer to the attached Proposed Action, Background, Purpose and Need and Map for more information.

To complete the environmental analysis we are asking for your assistance in identifying issues and concerns connected with this proposal. Please respond prior to November 14, 1997 and be as specific as possible with the issues and concerns you identify.

If you have any questions, please contact Claude Coffin, he will be coordinating the analysis process. We appreciate your assistance and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record buy showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within (10) days.

Sincerely,

GARY L. 'Stan" BENES
District Ranger

enclosures

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Greater Yellowstone Coalition
P.O. Box 1874
Bozeman, MT 59771
Attn: Jeanne-Marie Souvigney

David Ritchey
N. of West Yellowstone MT
West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Rick & Jane Keller
189 Mt. View Drive
West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Megan Bostrom
%Chuck & Nancy Bostrom
317 Shoshone Ave.
West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Scott Carsley
N. of West Yellowstone MT
West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Delas Munns
1424 West 7200 South
Rexburg, ID 83440

West Yellowstone
Chamber of Commerce
0 Yellowstone Ave
West Yellowstone, MT 59758
Attn: Gale Loomis

Gallatin County Commissioners
Courthouse
311 W. Main St., Room 301
Bozeman, MT 59715

Gallatin County Sheriff
Law & Justice Center
615 South 16th St
Room 220
Bozeman, MT 59715
Attn: Bob Pearson

Department of Livestock
State of Montana
P.O. Box 202001
Helena, MT 59620-2001
Attn: Marc Bridges

Montana Dept of FIsh, Wildlife & Parks
Region 3
1400 S. 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59715
Attn: Steve Lewis

Rose Christine Simon
Hebgen Lake Estates/Horse Butte
P.O. box 1402
West Yellowstone, MT 50758

USDA - Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service
Western Regional Office
384 Inverness Drive South
Suite 150
Englewood, CO 80112

Meyer & Glitzenstein
1601 Connecticut Ave, N.W.
Suite 450
Washington, D.C.
Attn: D.J. Schubert

PROPOSED ACTION

The District Ranger on the Hebgen Lake Ranger District, Gallatin National Forest proposes to permit ortable and temporary bison capture and handling facilities on National Forest lands at a location near Horse Butte approximately 9 miles northwest of West Yellowstone, MT. Specifically the facility would be located in the SW1/4NE1/4 Section 36, T12S, R4E and would be operated by the Montana Department of Livestock (DOL). This facility is approximately 70 x 80 feet and could be erected in the fall of 1997. The DOL would also be permitted to use the National Forest road which is connected to the "Pine Ave." road in the Horse Butte Acres subdivision. In 1996 this same facility was located on the north side of the Madison River, near the Yellowstone National Park Boundary. During the winter of 1996-97 DOL never operated the trap. The location turned out to be unsatisfactory for bison capture, DOL is in the process of dismantling the trap and placing it into storage.

BACKGROUND

The National Park Service (NPS), Montana Department of Livestock (DOL), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), United States Department of Agriculture, Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS), have implemented interim bison management operating procedures based upon the proposed action described in an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Interim Bison Management Plan released for public comment on December 20, 1995. These operating procedures are necessary to maintain Montana's brucellosis class-free status.

The interim Bison Management Plan of 1995 was necessary to guide and coordinate bison management until the long term management plan and EIS is completed later this winter. The EIS will evaluate a full range of alternatives for the management of bison that migrate between YNP and Montana. Additionally, in January 1995 Montana filed a law suit against the federal government regarding bison management. The Interim Management Plan is one element of the corresponding settlement agreement.

The EA described the extent and type of involvement the agencies have in relation to brucellosis-exposed, wild, free ranging bison that move from YNP onto public and private lands in Montana. Within YNP the National Park Service has authority over and responsibility for wildlife, including bison. Outside YNP the State of Montana has wildlife management responsibilities. Primary responsibilities for bison in Montana reside with Montana Department of Livestock.

The Forest Service does not have primary responsibilities for bison management. The Forest Service has agreed to cooperate with and support those agencies with primary responsibilities.

PURPOSE and NEED

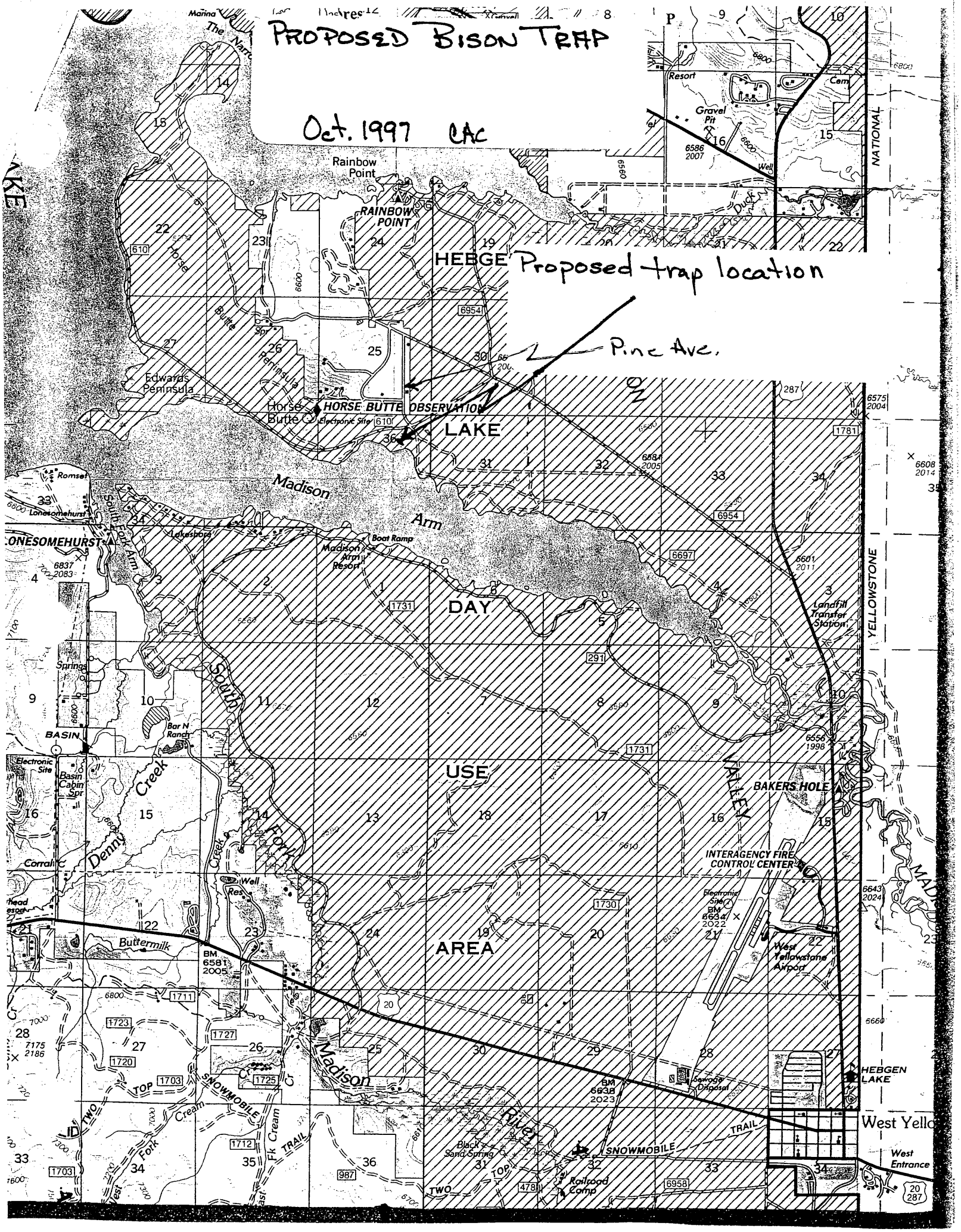
Montana Department of Livestock has made a request to erect a bison capture facility on National Forest land near Horse Butte. The purpose of the facility is to capture diseased/ exposed bison which have migrated out of YNP between November 1, 1997 and April 30, 1998 and to reduce bison mortality by lethel means.

All bison captured will be blood tested and visually identified. All adult females will be pregnancy tested. All pregnant and seropositive bison will be shipped to slaughter. Seronegative bison and "open"

females will be released on site. Released bison may be vaccinated for brucellosis, but a safe, effec vaccine for bison is not currently available.

Additional specifics of the proposal are:

- The facility is owned by APHIS
- The facility will be operated by DOL and APHIS personnel
- Capture and testing of bison avoids the need of shooting and/or slaughtering all animals that leave YNP
- Capture operation will utilize weed free feed
- The area immediately surrounding the capture site may be closed to public entry to maintain public safety
- All bison captured will be handled according to humane methods for blood testing, pregnancy testing, tagging, sorting and hauling


PROPOSED BISON TRAP
Oct. 1997 CAC
Proposed trap location
Pine Ave.
Rainbow Point
RAINBOW POINT
HEBGE
LAKE
DAY
USE
AREA
Madison Arm
Madison River
South Fork
Denny Creek
Edwards Peninsula
Horse Butte Peninsula
Horse Butte
HORSE BUTTE OBSERVATION
Electronic Site
Lakeshore
Boat Ramp
Madison Arm Resort
LONESOMEHURST
Romset
Lonesomehurst
South Fork Arm
BASIN
Basin Cabin Spr
Bar N Ranch
Buttermilk
Corral
Landfill Transfer Station
YELLOWSTONE
NATIONAL
BAKERS HOLE
INTERAGENCY FIRE CONTROL CENTER
West Yellowstone Airport
Sewage Disposal
HEBGEN LAKE
West Yello
West Entrance
Black Sand Spring
Railroad Camp
SNOWMOBILE TRAIL
TWO TOP
Gravel Pit
Resort
Cem
Well
Duck
Marina
The Narrows
Springs
Res
BM 6581 2005
BM 6638 2023
BM 6634 2022
6586 2007
6684 2005
6575 2004
6608 2014
6601 2011
6556 1998
6643 2024
6837 2083
7175 2186
6954
6697
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1781
1711
1723
1727
1720
1703
1725
1712
987
478
6958
610
291
287
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