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YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK NEWS RELEASE

Yellowstone Decides Not To Implement Remote Vaccination Of Bison

The National Park Service (NPS) has released a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a Brucellosis Remote Vaccination Program for Bison in Yellowstone National Park.

The NPS preferred alternative is the No Action alternative, which would continue the currently authorized syringe vaccination of bison calves and yearlings periodically captured at the northern boundary of the park. The action alternatives, which would have implemented a remote vaccination program, were dismissed because of substantial uncertainties over vaccine effectiveness and delivery, the cost of a 30 year program, potential impacts to wildlife behavior and the visitor experience, and evaluation of public comments.

"We don't think it makes any sense to spend millions of taxpayer dollars and invest thirty years of effort in hopes of a small reduction in the prevalence of brucellosis in bison with no significant benefit to bison conservation," said Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Dan Wenk. "The fact is that by working with our federal, state, and tribal partners we have completely kept wild bison from infecting area livestock with brucellosis."

Brucellosis can cause pregnant cattle, elk, and bison to abort their calves. Cattle brought this non-native disease to the region when pioneers settled the West. The disease was subsequently transmitted to local wildlife populations. Many bison and elk in the 28,000 square mile Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem have been exposed to the bacterium that causes brucellosis.

The preferred alternative is supported by the inclusive IBMP Citizen's Working Group, several American Indian Tribes, the Intertribal Buffalo Council, and the conclusions of a February 2013 Bison/Brucellosis Science panel composed of disease experts and organized by the NPS and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The EIS was prepared in response to a commitment the NPS made in 2000 as part of a court-mediated settlement between the federal government and the State of Montana which resulted in the creation of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP). Additional information and an electronic copy of the Final EIS is available online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BisonRemoteVacc>. You can request a printed copy of the Final EIS by contacting the National Park Service, Bison Management Program, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190.

The Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park will use the analysis and recommendations contained in the Final EIS to make a final recommendation to the National Park Service Intermountain Regional Director regarding bison remote vaccination. The Regional Director is expected to issue a Record of Decision (ROD) in late winter or early spring.