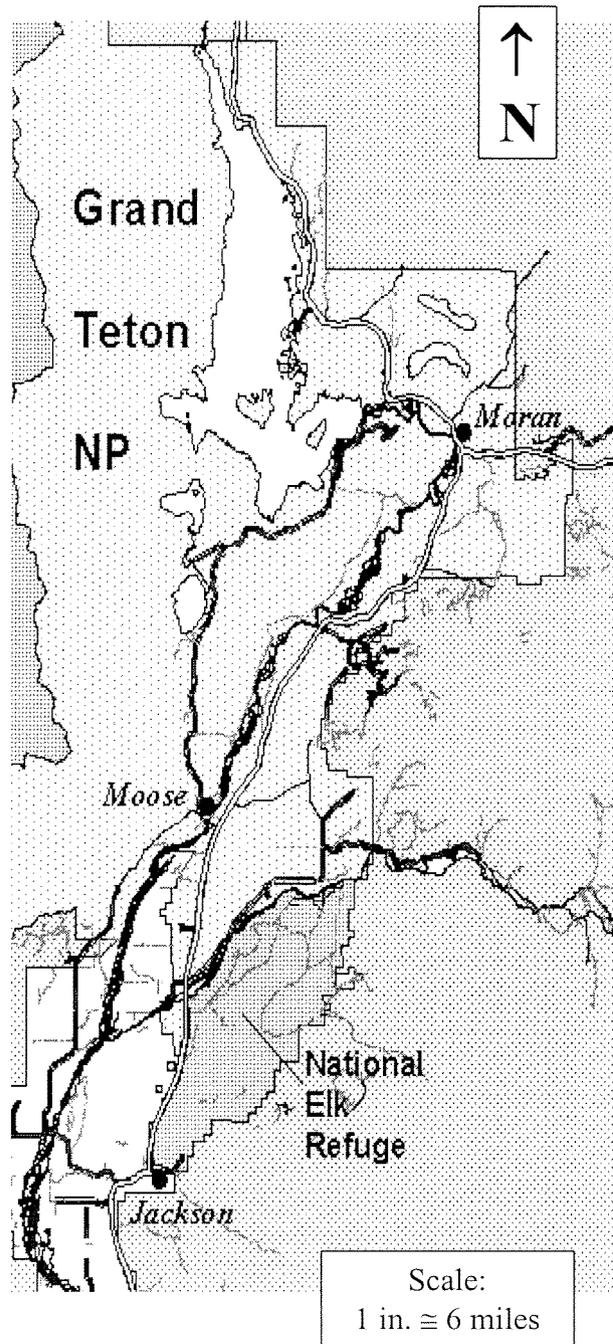


## Map of Project Area:



## Agenda for February 10, 2001 Meeting:

### Introduction

8:00 - 8:15	Arrival and Sign-in
8:15 - 8:25	Welcome
8:25 - 8:35	Background/Planning Process
8:35 - 8:45	Situation Assessment/Meeting Format

### Information Sharing

8:45 - 9:00	NER History and Mission
9:00 - 9:15	GTNP History and Mission
9:15 - 9:25	BTNF History and Mission
9:25 - 9:35	WG&F History and Mission
9:35 - 9:55	Elk Population
9:55 - 10:15	Bison Population
10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 10:50	Habitat Ecology and Integrity
10:50 - 11:10	Winter Feeding Programs
11:10 - 11:30	Elk and Bison Diseases
11:30 - 11:50	Recreation Programs
11:50 - 12:00	Social and Economic Values
12:00 - 12:10	Institutional Relationships and Wildlife
12:10 - 1:30	Lunch (on own)

### Small Group Discussion

1:30 - 1:40	Orientation
1:40 - 3:40	Group Discussions
3:40 - 4:40	Group Presentations
4:40 - 5:00	Wrap - up

### Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. What conditions would you like to see in the future?
2. How do you want to be involved in the planning process?

# Elk and Bison Management Planning Process for the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park



# Welcome!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Park Service (NPS) are in the initial stages of developing a plan for managing elk and bison inhabiting the National Elk Refuge (NER) and Grand Teton National Park (GTNP), Wyoming (see project area map). These animals are part of the Jackson elk and bison herds, one of the largest concentrations of free-ranging populations of elk and bison in the world.

The analysis area will cover the entire ranges of the Jackson elk and bison herds. These herds utilize areas including Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, the Bridger-Teton National Forest, the National Elk Refuge, and some Bureau of Land Management lands, state lands and private lands during some portions of the year.

## Background Information:

Until 1980, the Jackson bison population remained below 50 animals. Following their discovery of alfalfa hay provided to elk on the National Elk Refuge, numbers grew rapidly. Planning efforts began in 1986. An "Interim Plan" for the years 1988 to 1994 was challenged in court in 1991. This led to the development in 1996 of the *Jackson Bison Herd Long Term Management Plan and Environmental Assessment*.

A lawsuit by the Fund for Animals in 1998 resulted in a court order prohibiting lethal destruction of bison for population management purposes on the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park as described in the 1996 Management Plan. The judge's ruling called for additional National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) compliance considering the effects of winter feeding of elk on the NER on bison management. The NER/GTNP Elk and Bison EIS will fulfill this requirement.

The Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 requires the development of "Comprehensive Conservation Plans" (CCP) for all National Wildlife Refuges. This planning effort for the National Elk Refuge was scheduled to begin soon and would have included both elk and bison management on the refuge. Since the requirements of the bison management lawsuit and the CCP would have

overlapped, it was decided that both bison and elk management should be addressed in this current planning effort. While all planning issues have not yet been defined, it is anticipated that winter feeding, hunting (NER) and herd reduction (GTNP) programs, habitat management, and disease management will be included.

In the planning process, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Park Service are seeking the cooperation of other agencies with authorities to manage the bison and elk and their habitat in the Jackson area, including the Bridger-Teton National Forest and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Cooperation from all interested stakeholders will be included.

The Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (IECR) and its cooperators were enlisted in early 2000 to develop a *Situation Assessment*. The assessment can be found online at [www.ecr.gov/new.htm](http://www.ecr.gov/new.htm). Preparation of that report involved solicitation of comments and concerns of numerous public and private individuals and organizations, including tribal representatives, regarding management of the bison and elk herds in Jackson Hole.

IECR recommended an extended "pre-scoping" process be carried out prior to the official beginning of the EIS process. The goals of pre-scoping are information sharing to help identify the existing situation and developing dialogue with stakeholders.

## Contacting the Planning Team:

If you would like to contact the planning team, please write to NER/GTNP Elk and Bison Management Plan/EIS, PO Box 510, Jackson, WY, 83001 or email to [elk/bison\\_planning@fws.gov](mailto:elk/bison_planning@fws.gov). A member of the planning team will respond to you as quickly as possible.

More information is available through a link at <http://nationalelkrefuge.fws.gov>. This site also contains press releases (and eventually document links) and will be updated as often as possible.



## Purpose and Format for the February 10 Meeting:

The purpose of the first prescoping meeting is to share background information, gather input from interested parties on desired future conditions for the herd/habitat and elicit suggestions for public involvement for the upcoming bison/elk planning project.

In the morning, presenters from involved agencies will provide background information on the project. Much of this information will be historical background or scientific trends based on research data. The provision of this information is in response to requests from stakeholders to establish a baseline of information to help frame discussions and comments.

Afternoon breakout groups will discuss desired future conditions. The cooperating agencies want to hear people's thoughts on what they would like to see in the future, their values, and their interests.

Additionally, public feedback will be solicited on a developing a public involvement process for the development of the management plan and EIS. An effort will be made to develop a process that will fully incorporate public involvement in the most effective manner possible.

## Timeline:

Phase:	Date:
Prescoping	4/00 -
Define Need for Action	3/01
Conduct Situation Assessment	
Identify Agency Roles	
Information Sharing and Dialogue	
Scoping	4/01 -
Publish Notice of Intent	6/01
Identify Major Issues	
Development of Alternatives	6/01 -
	10/01
Alternative Evaluation	10/01 -
	2/02
Draft EIS Distributed for Review	9/02
Final EIS Distributed	6/03
Record of Decision Signed	7/03