

Final Report

National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park Bison and Elk Management Plan

On August 22, 2005, Mike Hughes joined the National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service staff in a final preparatory meeting to discuss the public meetings scheduled for the following week. He reviewed the open house materials, discussed the role of each staff member and offered advice about engaging stakeholders productively.

On August 29-31, 2005, Mike Hughes and Caelan McGee accompanied the staff in their travels to Bozeman, Montana; Jackson, Wyoming; and Riverton, Wyoming. They participated in each open house, continued to advise the staff as they interacted with stakeholders and facilitated presentations, question and answer sessions, discussions between stakeholders and staff and public comment sessions. Throughout, they offered advice about ways to improve the interaction in the sessions and advice about future stakeholder engagement.

Specifically, Mike and Caelan discussed with the refuge manager ways to improve the public meetings including adding an agenda item at the end of the meeting to allow for the following:

- a recap of public comments – to demonstrate that the public was heard and that the agency staff were listening
- a recap of DEIS information – to address misinformation and misconceptions that came to light in public testimony
- answers to questions – because public testimony is often questions rather than comments and the agenda had no place for answering questions

Mike and Caelan also had the opportunity to talk individually with staff and members of the public to help address ongoing concerns including:

- improving communication between the agencies and those who expressed concern about the proposed action, mostly hunters and outfitters
- dealing with questions of trust, past history and other obstacles to addressing the needs of the agencies and the public and resolving differences
- producing a fact sheet or misconceptions/facts sheet to respond in writing about the ongoing misunderstandings

Finally, Mike and Caelan had the opportunity to offer ongoing assistance to the agencies and to the stakeholders in dealing with differences as the agencies finalize the EIS and address the issues listed above.