



Scoping Newsletter

BACKGROUND

In 2006, the National Park Service (NPS) began developing a plan (General Management Plan, or GMP) for management of natural and cultural resources, and visitor experience in the South Unit of Badlands National Park. In the early stages, the GMP team consisted of staff at Badlands National Park, the NPS Midwest Regional Office, and staff of the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority (OSPRA) designated by the Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) President. Before long, the GMP team had expanded to include numerous members of the OST, including elected representatives, staff of various tribal departments, and tribal members with an interest in the process.

The GMP team developed a number of preliminary alternatives for management based on their expertise, experience, and knowledge of resources and Oglala culture. The team was also influenced by comments and input received from the public throughout several public comment periods. Methods of commenting included mailed-in comments, comments entered into the park's website and NPS's Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website, and statements recorded on flipcharts at public open houses held in all districts of Pine Ridge Reservation, plus Kyle, Pine Ridge, and several off-reservation locations, including Wall and Rapid City; Denver, Colorado; and Washington, D.C.

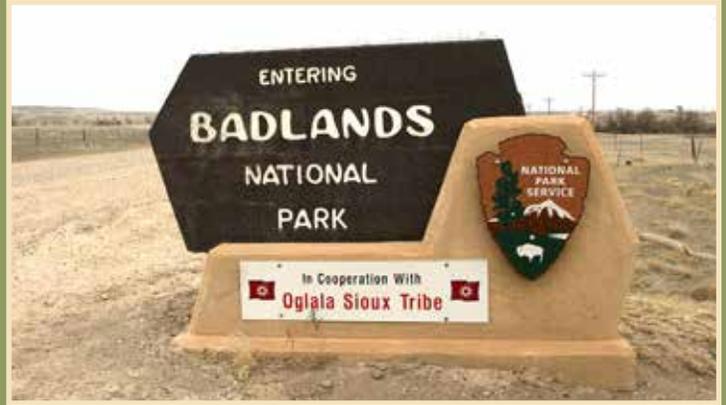
The GMP process concluded in 2012 with the publication and distribution of the *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* in April, followed by the *Record of Decision* in June, signed by the Midwest Regional Director and OST President John Yellow Bird Steele. The *Record of Decision* finalized the GMP, presented the Preferred Alternative, and allowed the NPS and OST to begin implementing provisions of the GMP as time and funding allowed.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR BISON MANAGEMENT



One of the decisions in the 2012 GMP is the reintroduction of bison to the South Unit. Bison reintroduction is also a provision of the 1976 *Memorandum of Agreement*, which was a factor in the decision to include species reintroduction in the GMP Preferred Alternative. Another consideration for studying bison reintroduction is the Department of the Interior's Bison Conservative Initiative of 2008, which has a goal to restore sustainable bison herds to their ecological and cultural role on appropriate landscapes within the species' historical range.

Any proposal to place bison on Department of Interior lands (including lands like the South Unit that are managed in partnership with NPS) will follow all applicable federal



laws and regulations, including environmental and Bureau land use planning requirements prior to implementation. Therefore, before any reintroduction can take place on the South Unit, there must be an analysis of the potential impacts, beneficial and adverse, of taking that action.

The National Park Service, Oglala Sioux Tribe, and Bureau of Indian Affairs, propose to conduct an Environmental Assessment (EA), a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act, which includes a public scoping period near the beginning stages to inform the public of the plan and to collect suggestions on the plan. That input is considered by a planning team when developing potential alternatives for the action – in this case, reintroduction of bison to the South Unit.

In an independent project, the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority (OSPRA) initiated a feasibility study in June 2012 for tribal buffalo herd expansion including the South Unit of Badlands National Park. The results of that study, completed in May 2013, included several proposed alternatives for the reintroduction of bison to the South Unit of Badlands National Park. The NPS has chosen to use scientific data and analyses from that study as background for its impact analysis.

Although this EA borrows information and some of the concepts from the 2013 *Feasibility Study*, this EA is a different project from the feasibility study. Unlike the study, the EA will reflect public input from several stages in the process. This newsletter kicks off the first of those stages, called public scoping.





PUBLIC SCOPING

Consultation and coordination with the OST, NPS, BIA, other agencies, the public, and the tribe are vitally important throughout the planning process. Public scoping involves two methods of public input: participation in public meetings and filing of comments on this newsletter. In this phase of the EA process, we are asking you to help us develop preliminary alternatives for how bison reintroduction to the South Unit may be managed.

We plan to hold public meetings on the Pine Ridge Reservation and in Rapid City the week of April 21. Times and locations are listed on page 4 of this newsletter. We will also post the times and locations on the park website, in local newspapers, and on radio stations throughout the area.

We encourage you also to comment electronically through a link to the park's website at www.nps.gov/badl. You are also welcome to mail comments directly to the park at:

Bison Management EA
Superintendent
Badlands National Park
P.O. Box 6
Interior, SD 57750

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSED BISON REINTRODUCTION

Each of the alternatives considered in this study will respect private property rights. For private property within the boundary of the project area, there would be no change in regulations or ownership. NPS land management regulations and policies would apply only to lands that the NPS and OST manage, per the 1968 legislation (Public Law 90-468) and the 1976 *Memorandum of Agreement* between the OST and NPS. Private land would still be regulated by the OST or BIA, as applicable.



SCHEDULE AND NEXT STEPS

Step	Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
1	Completed	Initiate Project The planning team begins to identify the project's scope, customize the planning process, and establish contacts with participants.	
2 WE ARE HERE	Spring 2014	Define Planning Context and Foundation The team presents preliminary concepts to the public in open house meetings to gather public input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send us your ideas and comments. • Come to public meetings and share your ideas.
3	Summer– Fall 2014	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives/ Publish Draft Document Using staff and public input, the team proposes a range of alternatives in a draft Environmental Assessment. The draft document describes the alternatives and impacts of implementing each alternative. Based on the impacts and public input, a preferred alternative is identified in the EA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the draft document. • Send us your ideas and comments. • Come to public meetings and share your ideas.
4	Spring 2015	Revise and Publish Final Document The team will analyze comments by agencies, organizations, and the public, revise the plan, and publish <i>Finding of No Significant Impact or Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the final document, including responses to substantive comments and official letters.
5	Summer 2015	Implement the Approved Plan After the FONSI is issued, begin implementing the plan as funding permits. If an EIS is needed, this step likely will occur late in 2016.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay involved throughout the implementation of approved plan. Let the park know what you think.

SOUTH UNIT BISON MANAGEMENT EA: PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 21–25, 2014

MONDAY, April 21	TUESDAY, April 22	WEDNESDAY, April 23	THURSDAY, April 24	FRIDAY, April 25
Pine Ridge/ Billy Mills Hall	Allen/CAP Office	Wounded Knee/ CAP Office	Wanblee/CAP Office	Oglala /Bro. Rene Hall
1:00 pm – 3:30 pm	1:00 pm – 3:30 pm	1:00 pm – 3:30 pm	1:00 pm – 3:30 pm	9:30 am – 12:00 noon
Wakpamni/CAP Office	LaCreek/CAP Office	Porcupine/Clinic	Kyle/CAP Office	Rapid City/Alex Johnson
5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	5:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Thank you for your interest in Badlands National Park and the South Unit Bison Reintroduction/Management/Environmental Assessment.