



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Communications
and Public Affairs

1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240
202-208-6843 phone
202-219-0910 fax

National Park Service

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – August 10, 2009
Contacts: Valerie Naylor (701) 623-4730 ext. 3409
Bill Whitworth (701)623-4730 ext. 3407
Gerry Gaumer (202)208-6843

Public Comment Invited on Elk Management Theodore Roosevelt National Park Identifies Preferred Alternative

MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA – The National Park Service (NPS) has released a preferred alternative addressing elk management at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The proposal calls for reducing the elk herd in the park from the current level of about 900 animals to a sustainable level between 100 and 400 animals using qualified NPS staff to lead teams that include skilled volunteers.

Skilled volunteers which may include North Dakota sportsmen – who must demonstrate proficiency with firearms and meet other requirements established by the park – will be used to assist park staff in the removal process. In addition, to the extent practicable, animals will be tested for Chronic Wasting Disease. If the animals test negative, the meat will be donated in accordance with federal regulations and National Park Service policy.

The program will be evaluated after two years to determine if direct reduction is effective; if it is not then other methods will be considered to supplement the efforts of the skilled volunteers.

“This approach gets the herd down to a size that park resources can sustain, allows us to test animals for Chronic Wasting Disease, and gives us the flexibility we must have to better manage all of the park’s wildlife over time,” said Acting National Park Service Director Dan Wenk. “We are grateful to all of those across North Dakota and the country who offered comments and invite them to review our preferred alternative and let us know what they think.”

This preferred alternative is the product of a public planning process that generated nearly 300 comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement on the elk management plan between December 17, 2008, and March 19, 2009. The preferred alternative reflects an analysis of those comments, as well as costs, efficiency, and environment impacts and uses a suite of options contained in Alternative B (direct reduction with firearms by federal employees and skilled volunteers), Alternative C (roundup and euthanasia), and Alternative D (roundup and translocation).

“The importance of public participation throughout this process cannot be overstated,” said Theodore Roosevelt National Park Superintendent Valerie Naylor. “We are getting closer to a final decision on elk reduction, one that will be reached only after we thoroughly evaluate the public comments we receive on this preferred alternative.”

It is anticipated that the plan will be finalized by December 2009 and implementation will begin in fall 2010.

To review the preferred alternative and the environmentally preferable alternative go to <http://parkplanning.gov/THRO> or request a copy from the park by calling 701-623-4466 or writing Superintendent, Attn: Elk Management Plan, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, PO Box 7, Medora, North Dakota, 58645. Comments will be accepted for 30 days, through September 9, 2009.

-NPS-

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.