

# Agenda for the Winter Use Wildlife Working Group Meeting #1 Feb. 14, 2014

**Overall Objective:** To develop a comprehensive adaptive management program

- Addressing the impacts to wildlife will be one element of the overall program

## Elements of the winter use adaptive management program (From ROD 2013)

1. To evaluate impacts of OSV use and help managers implement actions that keep impacts within the range predicted under the selected alternative
2. To gather additional data regarding the comparability of impacts from a group of snowmobiles versus a snowcoach
3. To reduce impacts on park resources after implementation of the Selected Alternative by gathering additional data regarding the overall social and ecological impacts of winter use and using those data to guide future management decisions.

## Role of the Wildlife Working Group

- To make recommendations to the NPS on the design of an updated monitoring strategy
- Description of monitoring (specific indicators) that can identify changes in the level of impacts
- Develop research questions, objectives, and justification for addressing the comparability of OSV type.
- Develop research questions that address key uncertainties regarding winter use on wildlife

## WILDLIFE MONITORING AND WHAT IS KNOWN

### Impact Levels: Historic

Findings: Effects of OSV Use on Individual Animal Behavior from SEIS page 91

TABLE 2: WILDLIFE– BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES TO SNOWMOBILE AND SNOWCOACH TRANSPORTATION EVENTS

Observed Response	Bison		Elk		Trumpeter Swans	Bald Eagles
	Borkowski et al. 2006	White et al. 2009	Borkowski et al. 2006	White et al. 2009	White et al. 2009	White et al. 2009
No Apparent Responses	81%	80%	48%	48%	57%	17%
Look-Resume	8%	9%	32%	27%	21%	64%
Alert	2%	3%	12%	17%	12%	9%
Travel	7%	5%	6%	5%	9%	4%
Flight	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	6%
Defensive	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	0%

Overall: Low Rate of Active Response (Movement) and Minimal Displacement

### Impact levels: Present

Preliminary Data from winter 2013/2014 (Dan Reinhart, Brian Teets, and Jaime Roper)

- 67% of wildlife groups had an interaction with OSV (i.e., observed within 500 m of Wildlife)

- 57% of interactions – ‘NO OBSERVED REACTION’ by wildlife
- 28% of interactions – ‘LOOK RESUME’ by wildlife
- 14% of interactions – ‘ALERT/ATTENTION, TRAVEL, FLEE’
- 32% of vehicles stopped to view wildlife groups. 92% of these interactions resulted in an observed response by the wildlife group (look/resume, travel, alert, flee, defense)
- 22% of observed interactions involved what would be a more than one ‘Transportation Event’ at a time (i.e., more than 10 snowmobiles, or multiple coaches, or a mix of both snowmobiles and coaches)

#### Task of the Wildlife Group

1. **Identify critical knowledge gaps** about the impacts of winter use on wildlife
2. Use these knowledge gaps to **define priority research questions** to focus future monitoring and research efforts.
3. **Prepare an effective, feasible, and fiscally sustainable monitoring strategy** to address the adaptive management program’s three objectives, and to inform priority research questions about winter use impacts on wildlife

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

##### **Identifying critical knowledge gaps and priority research questions**

1. What are acceptable impact levels for wildlife? Are the historic and current levels acceptable?
2. Are the current study design and methods appropriate for addressing impact levels?
3. Are changes to the wildlife monitoring program necessary?
  - a. Do individual animals/groups need to be monitored over an entire day?
  - b. Should monitoring address behavior of OSV users (e.g., duration and number of visitors approaching wildlife on foot) in more detail?

##### **Comparability of impacts from the type of OSV (snowmobile vs. snowcoach)**

1. Based on low responses of wildlife to either OSV type, is a rigorous study of comparability necessary?
2. Does the current monitoring program adequately describe wildlife responses to OSV type?

##### **Additional research**

1. How should the behavior of OSV users (approaching wildlife on foot) be addressed?
2. Should new research address the overall health (e.g., productivity) of wildlife populations, which would occur outside the winter use season?