

Conversation Contents

FWP Weekly

Attachments:

/6. FWP Weekly/1.1 FWP Weekly Report 2017-05-17.docx

"Foster, Maureen" <maureen_foster@ios.doi.gov>

From: "Foster, Maureen" <maureen_foster@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Wed May 17 2017 14:55:11 GMT-0600 (MDT)
To: Gareth Rees <gareth_rees@ios.doi.gov>
Virginia Johnson <virginia_johnson@ios.doi.gov>, Casey
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<marshall_critchfield@ios.doi.gov>, Wendy Fink
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Subject: FWP Weekly
Attachments: FWP Weekly Report 2017-05-17.docx

Here you go.

Thanks.

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WEEKLY REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR/Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks May 17, 2017

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

From May 22 through 26, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Virginia Johnson and NPS Acting Director Mike Reynolds will travel to Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park to discuss Yellowstone bison management and the Moose-Wilson Corridor Plan, and to meet with constituents and concessioners. Acting Assistant Secretary Maureen Foster and FWS Acting Director Jim Kurth will be in the office all week.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

In May, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$1.75 million in available Maritime Heritage project grant funding. These grants will be used for maritime heritage education and preservation projects related to the maritime heritage of the United States. The National Maritime Heritage Act established the National Maritime Heritage Grants Program within the Department of the Interior. The grants program is administered in partnership with the Maritime Administration (MarAd). It provides funding for education and preservation projects designed to preserve historic maritime resources and is funded through a percentage of the proceeds from the sale or scrapping of obsolete vessels of the National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF). All grants awarded must be matched on a 1-to-1 basis with non-Federal assets.

In May, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$3,623,162 in available Battlefield Land Acquisition grant funding. Grants will be used to protect 999 acres of Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields in Virginia, Mississippi, New York, West Virginia, and Maryland. The NPS works with private landowners, battlefield friends groups, interested community groups, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, local, state, and tribal governments and Federal agencies for preservation projects and local acquisition of Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War battlefield land. The NPS is working with the Secretary's office on an event and the communications plan.

In May, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$1.63 million in available Japanese-American WWII Confinement Camp preservation grants funding. These grants will be used to preserve and interpret confinement sites and their related historic resources. Congress established the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program in 2006, authorizing a total of \$38 million in funding for the life of the program. Successful proposals are chosen through a competitive process that requires applicants to match the grant award with \$1 in non-federal funds or "in-kind" contributions for every \$2 they receive in federal money. The NPS hopes to announce these grants during May, Asian American-Pacific Islander month.

In May, the NPS anticipates the announcement of \$15 million in Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant funding for approximately 25 projects. A total of 51 projects were submitted by states to acquire and develop outdoor recreation spaces. This competitive program supplements

the annual Land and Water Conservation Fund apportionment to states by supporting projects for disadvantaged populations in urban areas.

In May, through the Secretary, FWS will announce \$1.1 billion in revenues generated by the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Acts to states, territories and District of Columbia. The funding, which supports critical state wildlife conservation and recreation projects throughout the nation, is generated by excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, fishing equipment and motorboat fuels paid by the hunting, shooting, boating and angling industries. Outreach through the Department is planned.


Pending Departmental advisement, FWS plans to announce nearly \$15 million in grants to 40 states for projects to support recreational boating through the Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program. More than \$9 million of this will go to six states (California, Maine, Michigan, South Carolina, Texas and Washington) for competitive grants, and the remaining \$5 million will go to 39 states, commonwealths, territories and the District of Columbia for a smaller, non-competitive grant program. Funding is generated through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund by excise taxes on sport fishing and boating equipment and tackle, motorboat fuels and import duties on fishing tackle, yachts and pleasure craft. Grants, which are matched by funding from project partners, support construction or renovation of tie-ups, utilities, fuel stations, pump-out and dump stations, restrooms and additional sanitary amenities such as laundry and showers for recreational boaters.

In late May, FWS will approve a slate of projects for funding under the Competitive State Wildlife Grants program. The projects focus on "species of greatest conservation need" identified in State Wildlife Action Plans. Funds for this program are appropriated annually by Congress. FWS Regional Offices will submit individual grants for DOI approval prior to award.

During the week of May 22, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia will announce final changes to the refuge's fee structure, to align with fees already in place at the adjacent NPS Assateague Island National Seashore. The new fee structure, which eliminates the daily pass, increases the weekly pass from \$15 to \$20, and increases the annual pass from \$30 to \$40, was proposed in March and open for 30 days of public comment.

30-60 Day Look Ahead

(b) (5) - DPP



The West Mims Fire at Okefenokee NWR (South Georgia) is being managed by the Southern Area Red IMT 1 under unified command (FWS, FL, GA). Media interest is increasing including

several national media outlets. There are 727 personnel assigned to the incident along with significant aerial support (five fixed wing air tanker, and 11 helicopters), 79 wildland fire engines, nine bulldozers, 47 tractor plows, three 20-person hot shot crews, and various overhead and support positions. Models predict this fire will last for several months and will burn 300,000 acres. If the fire crosses north of the Suwanee Canal, the amount of potential acres to burn could double.

WEEKLY REPORT
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
May 17, 2017

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Acting FWS Director Jim Kurth will be in the office all week.

Hot Topics

In May, FWS along with southern Arizona's Pima and Pinal counties, and Arizona Game and Fish Department will begin to use federally endangered Gila topminnows to target mosquito larvae and reduce the threat of mosquito-borne diseases, such as the West Nile and Zika viruses. The counties will establish holding facilities from where Gila topminnows can be stocked. The fish will then be placed into abandoned urban sources of water, such as swimming pools, fountains and backyard ponds found at vacant and abandoned houses and commercial properties within the counties. The Gila topminnows will replace the use of exotic Western mosquitofish as a previously preferred vector control agent. Research over the past 20 years shows that native topminnows are just as effective at targeting disease-causing mosquitoes as non-native mosquitofish, without any of the unintended consequences if they escape confinement. Use of topminnows for vector control is an element of the award-winning Pima County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan and permitted under a state-wide programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement. Joint outreach is planned.

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In late May, FWS will approve a slate of projects for funding under the Competitive State

Wildlife Grants program. The projects focus on “species of greatest conservation need” identified in State Wildlife Action Plans. Funds for this program are appropriated annually by Congress. FWS Regional Offices will submit individual grants for DOI approval prior to award.

Asian Carp

In June, FWS plans to send the 2016 Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) report to Congress. WRRDA includes direction from Congress to FWS to lead a multiagency effort to slow the spread of Asian carp in the Upper Mississippi River and Ohio River basins, in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. Specifically, WRRDA calls for FWS to develop and deliver a report to Congress summarizing all activities and expenditures (both federal and non-federal) related to Asian carp prevention efforts in the two watersheds, as well as describing any observed changes in the range of Asian carp in Upper Mississippi River and Ohio River basins. Notable changes from the 2015 report include updates on a slight range expansion of silver carp, the movement of juvenile Asian carps in the sub-basins and additional information on the status of black carp. As in previous years, the 2016 report will be made available to the public on AsianCarp.us. The report also outlines research that could improve the ability to control the spread of Asian carp and quantitative measures proposed for use in documenting progress in controlling the spread of Asian carp. Potentially controversial due to the slight range expansion of silver carp. No public outreach is planned; outreach to Congress will be conducted.

Endangered Species Act Recovery Actions

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On June 7, FWS plans to formally recognize Fort Hood as the recipient of FWS’s Military Conservation Partner Award. FWS presents this award annually to a military installation whose efforts represent significant conservation accomplishments achieved in partnership with FWS and other conservation agencies. The U.S. Army Garrison Fort Hood Military Installation encompasses 218,824 acres in Bell and Coryell counties in Texas. Fort Hood is one of the Army’s premier installations, encompassing the largest area of any installation in the continental United States. It conducts the full range of mission-related training activities and also manages the largest known populations of the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. Outreach is planned. The ceremony is open to media.

In late June, FWS will publish a notice of intent to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement and initiate scoping related to the Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan. In July, following publication of this notice, the Service will host four public scoping meetings in central Oregon to gather information for the NEPA analysis. The Deschutes Basin Board of Control and the city of Prineville are developing the plan to mitigate for the incidental take of three listed species – Oregon spotted frog, bull trout, and steelhead – resulting from operations of eight

central Oregon irrigation districts. Media expected. While there are controversial issues with development of the habitat conservation plan, the notice and initiation of scoping is not expected to be controversial in itself.

Endangered Species Act Listing/Delisting Actions

In late May, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice that it is reopening the comment period and plans to hold two public hearings on the proposed listing for the Texas hornshell, a mussel located in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. Outreach is planned.

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On May 26, FWS expects to publish a notice announcing consideration of a draft Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA), draft Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA), and draft environmental assessment for the Texas hornshell (proposed for listing) and other covered species (Rio Grande River cooter, gray redhorse, blue sucker and Pecos springsnail), and an enhancement of survival permit application under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) submitted by the Center of Excellence. The covered area would include portions of Eddy County, New Mexico, and Culberson County, Texas.

In early June, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final rule to remove the Hualapai Mexican vole, located in Arizona, from the list of endangered and threatened species due to the fact that the original taxonomic classification is no longer appropriate. Outreach is planned.

In early June, FWS will send to the *Federal Register* a notice extending the final listing determination and critical habitat for the San Fernando Valley spineflower, in California. Outreach is planned.

In mid-June, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a 12-month finding on a petition to list the San Felipe gambusia, a Texas fish. Outreach is planned.

In late June, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a 12-month finding and proposed delisting determination on the Deseret milkvetch, found in Utah. Outreach is planned.

(b) (5) - DPP

FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice to reopen the comment period on proposed rules to list and designate critical habitat for the Guadalupe fescue, downlist the Tobusch fishhook cactus from endangered to threatened, (b) (5) - DPP

takeholder outreach is planned.

The package is pending clearance by the Department.

(b) (5) - DPP

National Wildlife Refuge Actions

During the week of May 22, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia will announce final changes to the refuge's fee structure, to align with fees already in place at the adjacent NPS Assateague Island National Seashore. The new fee structure, which eliminates the daily pass, increases the weekly pass from \$15 to \$20, and increases the annual pass from \$30 to \$40, was proposed in March and open for 30 days of public comment.

In May, FWS anticipates making a draft Environmental Assessment for the Valle de Oro NWR in Albuquerque, New Mexico, available for public comment. (b) (5) - DPP

In late May or early June, FWS will publish a proposed rule and open a 30-day public comment period on the 2017-18 Refuge-Specific Hunting and Sport Fishing Regulations. The proposed rule would open various national wildlife refuges to hunting and/or sport fishing for the first time (new hunts) and expand hunting and fishing opportunities at others. The proposal also includes modifications to existing hunting and fishing regulations for refuges and wetland management districts. Outreach is planned.

FWS is initiating a planning process to develop a water management plan and associated environmental assessment for Pocosin Lakes NWR in North Carolina. Congressional representatives including Senator Tillis (R-NC) are interested in seeing the development of a water management plan for the refuge with public involvement. The plan will guide water management on the refuge for the next 15 or more years. The planning process will include several opportunities for public involvement, beginning with public scoping meetings to be hosted in June. Outreach is planned.

Migratory Bird Management Actions

In late May, FWS plans to publish in the *Federal Register* the final 2017-18 hunting regulations for certain migratory game birds. FWS annually prescribes frameworks, or outer limits, for dates and times when hunting may occur and the number of birds that may be taken and possessed in hunting seasons. These frameworks are necessary to allow state selections of seasons and limits

and to allow recreational harvest at levels compatible with population and habitat conditions. There are no substantive changes between the proposed regulations and the final. If-asked talking points will be available.

On May 22, FWS Regional Director Tom Melius will represent the FWS in the signing of an Urban Bird Treaty with the City of Detroit. Partners who will be working with FWS on an ensuing urban bird agenda include the City of Detroit, Michigan DNR, the Detroit Zoo and Detroit Audubon. Detroit becomes the 29th Urban Bird Treaty city, and provides important stopover habitat as well as being the intersection of the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways along the Detroit River, resulting in over 350 species of birds using the corridor for migration. More than 300,000 diving ducks of various species use the Detroit River as stopover habitat – a theme also highlighted for International Migratory Bird Day. Staff members from U.S. Representatives John Conyers (D-MI) and Brenda Lawrence (D-MI) are expected to attend the event. Outreach is planned.

Within the next 30-60 days, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* its annual proposal for administering tribal hunting, fishing, and gathering rights under multiple treaties for several federally recognized tribes in the Great Lakes region. The proposal has been compiled in consultation with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, which represents 11 tribes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. FWS has informed the Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan DNRs of the agency's support for these proposed regulations. A final decision will not be made until after public comments are reviewed and would not take effect until the fall 2017 hunting season. The proposal is expected to be controversial due to the inclusion of several new techniques for tribal members to take waterfowl. No outreach is planned.

In May, through the Department, FWS will announce the approval of around \$4 million in grants for 32 projects throughout the Americas as part of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grant program. Exact date and award amount are not yet determined. Outreach through the Department is planned.

Dam Removal

In May, FWS will begin work on the Bradford Dam removal project, located on the border of Westerly and Hopkinton, Rhode Island. Following construction of a bypass channel, in-river work to remove the dam will start in July. The project is supported by federal funding for Hurricane Sandy recovery. The work will restore fish passage and natural river flow to 31 miles of the Pawcatuck River and protect local communities from risks of flooding and dam failure. Outreach is planned.

Energy

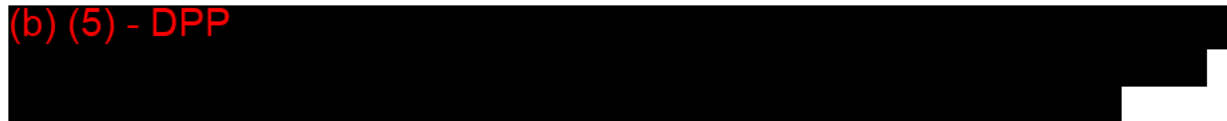
FWS has completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the R-Project Transmission Line, a 225-mile long, 345 kilovolt transmission line that runs cross county through the Nebraska Sandhills. The R-Project will be constructed and operated by Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD); NPPD is applying for an incidental take permit for the American burying beetle and has developed the associated habitat conservation plan. The Notice of

Availability was published on May 12. Public meetings are scheduled for the week of June 12 in Sutherland, Thedford, and Burwell, Nebraska.

Other

In late May, FWS will approve a slate of projects for funding under the Competitive State Wildlife Grants program. The projects focus on “species of greatest conservation need” identified in State Wildlife Action Plans. Funds for this program are appropriated annually by Congress. FWS Regional Offices will submit individual grants for DOI approval prior to award. No outreach is planned.

(b) (5) - DPP



On May 31, FWS will join agencies in Canada, other U.S. federal agencies, Canadian federal agencies, First Nations in Canada, and two federally recognized tribes in the U.S. (the Houlton Band of Maliseets and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs) at an event in Edmundston, Quebec, to sign the St. John Watershed Collaboration Agreement. The non-binding agreement affirms the relationship between these governments to restore sea-run fish species such as shad and herring through fish passage, habitat restoration, and other ecosystem restoration efforts. No outreach is planned.

By the end of May, FWS will transmit a report to Congress required by the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act, which describes the collaborative process to establish a non-regulatory program to conserve this important watershed. Outreach is planned.

(b) (5) - DPP



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Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

On May 22, the NPS will provide a briefing on the Commemorative Works Act for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources majority staff and Committee members.

On May 23, the NPS will meet with the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands minority staff to provide an update on park issues.

On May 23, the Director of Yuntaishan (China) Geologic Park and regional government officials plan to visit Grand Canyon National Park to sign the sister park renewal agreement. This sister park relationship, first formalized in 2007, promotes international cooperation and support for the mutual benefit of both parks and the people of both countries.

On or before May 24, Golden Gate National Recreation Area will release the Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Muir Woods National Monument Sustainable Access Project. The selected alternative will change the footprint of the parking lots and entry plaza but leave the number of parking places unchanged. The project implements part of the 2014 General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement.

On or before May 24, Golden Gate National Recreation Area will release the Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Muir Woods National Monument Water and Wastewater Service Lines Replacement Project. The selected alternative will replace aging water and wastewater lines to ensure safe and reliable transport to park facilities and meet modern code requirements for fire protection and water quality.

On May 27, Vicksburg National Military Park, along with the leaders of the Sons of Union Veterans and the Sons of Confederate Veterans of Missouri, will rededicate the park's restored Missouri Monument commemorating the sacrifices of Union and Confederate Soldiers. The event will include a living history program by the 3rd US Colored Cavalry and the annual Memorial Day concert. Invitees include the Missouri congressional delegation, Senators Cochrane and Wicker, Congressman Thompson of Mississippi, Mississippi Governor Bryant, Lieutenant Governor Reeves, and Secretary of State Hoseman. Confirmed attendees include 3 Missouri state senators and 1 member of the Missouri State House of Representatives, Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler (MO-4) and the Chief Deputy of the Mississippi Attorney General.

30-60 Day Look Ahead

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In May, the NPS plans to announce the end of fiscal year (FY) 2016 deferred maintenance (DM) estimate. Based on output from the NPS' Facility Management Software System (FMSS), the NPS estimates that the deferred maintenance of the NPS is approximately \$11.3 billion. This estimate is the total (net) DM associated with all assets in the FMSS and is updated annually. The communications plan is being developed.

In June, Mojave National Preserve will begin a 60-day public comment period on the Water Resources Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement (WRP/DEIS). The plan will manage both developed (diverted springs and wildlife guzzlers) and undeveloped water resources in the park. The process is being closely watched by local hunting groups interested in the management

of wildlife guzzlers (large basins which catch rainwater and provide a watering source for wildlife and cattle), which are viewed as necessary to maintaining a healthy bighorn sheep population for hunting.

On June 2-4, the NPS will co-host a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Dutch Harbor by Japan in World War II. The event will be held in Unalaska/Dutch Harbor, where the NPS has the Aleutian World War II National Historic Site, an affiliated area. The event will honor and acknowledge surviving veterans and Aleut evacuees, and remember those who have passed. An invitation to the Secretary of the Interior is forthcoming; other invitees include the Alaska Congressional Delegation, Governor Walker, Native corporation and tribal officials, and military leadership.

In mid-June, when the Half Dome Cables are in place, Yosemite National Park is increasing the permit fees to hike to the summit of Half Dome. The nominal fee increase is due to the increased fees associated with the national bridge contract and passing these fees to the users. Public notification of the fee increase will be announced via a news release, and the cables are expected to go up later than usual this year due to the heavy snowpack.

In July, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park fire assessment review will be released. In February, a team of fire experts (federal and state) convened at Great Smoky Mountains National Park to conduct an independent review of the 2016 Chimney Tops 2 fire that started in the park on November 23. The purpose of the review team is to assess the facts leading up to and during the Chimney Tops 2 fire within the boundaries of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, as well as make recommendations on any planning, operational, or managerial issues which can be addressed locally, regionally, and/or nationally to reduce the chances of a similar incident in the future. The NPS has received tort claims related to this incident and expects additional lawsuits in the near future.

Conversation Contents

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/1. Fwd: Final Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith for Region 6/2.16
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.NationalElkRefuge.v4.docx
/1. Fwd: Final Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith for Region 6/2.17
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.BisonManagement.v2.docx

"Morris, Charisa" <charisa_morris@fws.gov>

From: "Morris, Charisa" <charisa_morris@fws.gov>
Sent: Fri Jul 07 2017 07:50:59 GMT-0600 (MDT)
To: Wendy Fink <wendy_r_fink@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Final Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith for Region 6
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BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.UpperCOFishProgram.v4.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.UTPrairieDog.v5.docx
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BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.GrSGMT.v3.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.GrSGUT.v3.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.GrSGWY.v3.docx
Attachments: BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.WYWolves.v3.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.BLFootedFerret.v3.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.Grizzly.v3.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.Wolverine.v5.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.FishPassageHabitat.v3.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.JacksonNFH.v3.docx
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BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.NationalElkRefuge.v4.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.BisonManagement.v2.docx

Hey Wendy!

Attached are the final briefings papers for Deputy Assistant Secretary Aurelia Skipwith's upcoming travel to Region 6 (minor grammatical changes made).

It includes a Table of Contents (TOC) of all the briefing papers, and the attachments should be in order of the TOC.

Because the various attachments (i.e., maps, fact sheets) are too large to email, they are organized in a series of folders on Bison Connect (see [this folder](#) and the various folders labeled "Attachments"). We had printed and delivered all of these materials last night for your convenience.

Please let me know if you need any additional information!
Charisa

--

Charisa.Morris@fws.gov | Chief of Staff, Office of the Director | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service | 1849 C Street NW, Room 3348 | Washington, DC 20240 | (202) 208-3843 | For urgent matters, please dial cell: 301-875-8937

"Fink, Wendy" <wendy_r_fink@ios.doi.gov>

From: "Fink, Wendy" <wendy_r_fink@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Fri Jul 07 2017 12:39:19 GMT-0600 (MDT)
To: Tameka Lewis-Robinson <tameka_lewis-robinson@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Final Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith for Region 6
TableofContents.docx
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BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.BisonManagement.v2.docx

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Morris, Charisa** <charisa_morris@fws.gov>
Date: Fri, Jul 7, 2017 at 9:50 AM
Subject: Fwd: Final Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith for Region 6
To: Wendy Fink <wendy_r_fink@ios.doi.gov>

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--

Wendy R. Fink

Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St NW | MS 3145 | Washington D.C. 20240
P|202.208.4615

Briefing Papers - July 2017

Table of Contents

1. Status Review of the Canada Lynx Distinct Population Segment
2. Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program
3. Utah Prairie Dog Litigation and State Coordination Update
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15. Managing Invasive Nonnative Sportfish in the Upper Colorado River Basin
16. National Elk Refuge Elk and Bison Management
17. Bison Conservation and Management

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

DATE: July 5, 2017

FROM: Noreen Walsh, Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 303-236-7920

SUBJECT: National Elk Refuge Elk and Bison Management

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The National Elk Refuge (NER) in Jackson, Wyoming was established in 1912 by Congress, as an important wintering area for elk and for the conservation of other big game animals. While there are many benefits associated with elk and bison on NER, high animal concentrations can contribute to an increased risk for habitat loss and disease outbreaks.

II. BACKGROUND

The 24,700-acre refuge is surrounded by the Town of Jackson, Bridger-Teton National Forest, and Grand Teton National Park. Elk were starving at the time the NER was created, with losses greater than 10,000 during the harshest winters. Human settlement replaced historic wintering, while fences and roads cut off elk migration routes. Supplemental feeding for elk began in 1912 and bison took advantage of this food source, resulting in population growth and concerns about disease spread, habitat loss, costs of feeding, and competition with elk. The NER is a highly visited refuge, drawing thousands of visitors annually, supporting the local economy. The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center hosts educational programming, interpretative displays, and information. The visitor center, jointly managed by several partners, needs expansion and repairs and local organizations have expressed interest in fundraising to help this \$3.5 million effort.

III. DISCUSSION

The Service proposes to reduce and eventually eliminate supplemental feeding of elk and bison in consultation with local, state, tribal, private, and Federal stakeholders. Reduction in supplemental feeding will address several issues, including habitat loss/reduction and disease spread. Current disease risk is evidenced by high levels of brucellosis and concerns about chronic wasting disease, a fatal nervous system disease affecting elk, deer, and moose. The reduction of feeding will take into account Wyoming's Jackson elk herd population objectives (11,000).

IV. NEXT STEPS

The Service has a step down management plan pending internal review.

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

DATE: July 5, 2017

FROM: Noreen Walsh, Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 303-236-7920

SUBJECT: Bison Conservation and Management

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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III. DISCUSSION

On October 28, 2008, DOI Secretary Kempthorne established the Bison Conservation Initiative. He established the DOI Bison Working Group and charged the group to assess the genetic status and disease surveillance needed for DOI bison. He further charged the group to support tribal bison restoration initiatives and to manage DOI herds as a meta-population. Two publications have been produced by the Working Group, the genetics assessment for DOI Bison was published in 2010 and an assessment of the future potential of DOI lands to either increase or start new herds was published in 2014. The Service currently chairs the DOI Bison Working Group.

There are several current challenges to bison conservation in the west. Perhaps the biggest challenge is the presence of brucellosis in bison and elk in the Greater Yellowstone Area,

including the National Elk Refuge. Brucellosis is a bacterium (*Brucellosis abortus*) that causes cattle, bison, and elk to abort their first fetus after infection. The fetus and other birth materials are the infectious agents and other animals are infected as they mill around the aborted material. Brucellosis is a federally-regulated disease and causes economic hardship to area ranchers. The state livestock boards and the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) have jurisdiction over disease exposed wildlife and bison have been routinely captured and sent to slaughter or destroyed outside of Yellowstone National Park. There have been two National Academy of Sciences assessments of the brucellosis situation in Yellowstone Area, but no publically acceptable solutions to the brucellosis issue have been identified. The controversial management of Yellowstone bison has led to several groups petitioning the Service to list Yellowstone bison as threatened under the authority of the Endangered Species Act, to date, Service has found that such a listing is not warranted.

The Service continues to play a vital role in bison conservation. The Service manages six fenced herds on refuges in the Midwest and West, and one additional herd occupies the National Elk Refuge (NER) during winter. The total population varies between 1,200 and 1,500 bison outside of the NER. The Service manages its herds as a single meta-population and regularly transfers animals among refuges (except the NER animals) to maintain genetic diversity. The Service also provides animals in excess of its needs to Native American tribes, bison conservation organizations and occasionally to the general public. Most recently, the Service transferred 10 bison to the Eastern Shoshone Tribe on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming.

IV. NEXT STEPS

- The Service is developing a structured excess bison donation policy that will stress donation to tribes and conservation organizations to further promote bison conservation.
- The Service will continue to work with National Parks Service on a 4-year collaborative science project to develop a comprehensive meta-population management plan for the conservation of the bison genome, in collaboration with International Union on the Conservation of Nature, Tribes, Non-Profit, and for-Profit partners; that can be utilized across DOI and partner herds.

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DATE: July 5, 2017

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Conversation Contents

Fwd: COMPLETE: Region 6 Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith

Attachments:

/2. Fwd: COMPLETE: Region 6 Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith/1.1
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.GrSGUT.v3.docx
/2. Fwd: COMPLETE: Region 6 Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith/1.2
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BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.GrSGMT.v3.docx
/2. Fwd: COMPLETE: Region 6 Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith/1.18
TableofContents.docx

"Morris, Charisa" <charisa_morris@fws.gov>

From: "Morris, Charisa" <charisa_morris@fws.gov>
Sent: Thu Jul 06 2017 15:10:17 GMT-0600 (MDT)
To: Wendy Fink <wendy_r_fink@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: COMPLETE: Region 6 Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.GrSGUT.v3.docx

Attachments:

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BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.GrSGCO.v3.docx
BP.DeputyAssistantSecretary.GrSGMT.v3.docx
TableofContents.docx

Please see below!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Charisa Morris** <charisa_morris@fws.gov>

Date: Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 10:44 PM

Subject: Fwd: COMPLETE: Region 6 Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith

To: Work Email <charisa_morris@fws.gov>

Send to Maureen and Aurelia

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Mogadam, Roya" <roya_mogadam@fws.gov>

Date: July 3, 2017 at 3:26:47 PM EDT

To: "Morris, Charisa" <charisa_morris@fws.gov>

Cc: Noreen Walsh <Noreen_Walsh@fws.gov>, Matt Hogan

<Matt_Hogan@fws.gov>, Anna Munoz <anna_munoz@fws.gov>, Georgia Basso

<georgia_basso@fws.gov>, Matthew Huggler <Matthew_Huggler@fws.gov>, Brady

McGee <brady_mcgee@fws.gov>, Stephanie Potter <stephanie_potter@fws.gov>

Subject: COMPLETE: Region 6 Briefing Papers for Aurelia Skipwith

Hi Charisa-

Region 6 has completed the briefing paper assignment for Aurelia Skipwith's trip to the Region. Here are all the docs on a [google drive](#) and I have also attached the BPs (the attachments for the BPs was too large to email).

There are a total of 17 BPs, a Table of Contents, and Attachments for 6 of the BPs.

Please let me know if you need anything else from us.

-Roya

--

Roya Mogadam
Deputy Assistant Regional Director, External Affairs
Mountain-Prairie Region
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
134 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, CO 80228

Roya.Mogadam@fws.gov
(303) 236-4572

--

Charisa.Morris@fws.gov | Chief of Staff, Office of the Director | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service | 1849
C Street NW, Room 3348 | Washington, DC 20240 | (202) 208-3843 | For urgent matters, please dial cell: 301-875-
8937

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

DATE: July 5, 2017

FROM: Noreen Walsh, Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 303-236-7920

SUBJECT: National Elk Refuge Elk and Bison Management

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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DATE: July 5, 2017

FROM: Noreen Walsh, Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 303-236-7920

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On October 28, 2008, DOI Secretary Kempthorne established the Bison Conservation Initiative. He established the DOI Bison Working Group and charged the group to assess the genetic status and disease surveillance needed for DOI bison. He further charged the group to support tribal bison restoration initiatives and to manage DOI herds as a meta-population. Two publications have been produced by the Working Group, the genetics assessment for DOI Bison was published in 2010 and an assessment of the future potential of DOI lands to either increase or start new herds was published in 2014. The Service currently chairs the DOI Bison Working Group.

There are several current challenges to bison conservation in the west. Perhaps the biggest challenge is the presence of brucellosis in bison and elk in the Greater Yellowstone Area,

including the National Elk Refuge. Brucellosis is a bacterium (*Brucellosis abortus*) that causes cattle, bison, and elk to abort their first fetus after infection. The fetus and other birth materials are the infectious agents and other animals are infected as they mill around the aborted material. Brucellosis is a federally-regulated disease and causes economic hardship to area ranchers. The state livestock boards and the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) have jurisdiction over disease exposed wildlife and bison have been routinely captured and sent to slaughter or destroyed outside of Yellowstone National Park. There have been two National Academy of Sciences assessments of the brucellosis situation in Yellowstone Area, but no publically acceptable solutions to the brucellosis issue have been identified. The controversial management of Yellowstone bison has led to several groups petitioning the Service to list Yellowstone bison as threatened under the authority of the Endangered Species Act, to date, Service has found that such a listing is not warranted.

The Service continues to play a vital role in bison conservation. The Service manages six fenced herds on refuges in the Midwest and West, and one additional herd that occupies the National Elk Refuge (NER) during winter. The total population varies between 1,200 and 1,500 bison outside of the NER. The Service manages its herds as a single meta-population and regularly transfers animals among refuges (except the NER animals) to maintain genetic diversity. The Service also provides animals in excess of its needs to Native American tribes, bison conservation organizations and occasionally to the general public. Most recently, the Service transferred 10 bison to the Eastern Shoshone Tribe on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming.

IV. NEXT STEPS

- The Service is developing a structured excess bison donation policy that will stress donation to tribes and conservation organizations to further promote bison conservation.
- The Service will continue to work with National Parks Service on a 4-year collaborative science project to develop a comprehensive meta-population management plan for the conservation of the bison genome, in collaboration with International Union on the Conservation of Nature, Tribes, Non-Profit, and for-Profit partners; that can be utilized across DOI and partner herds.

Briefing Papers - July 2017

Table of Contents

1. Status Review of the Canada Lynx Distinct Population Segment
2. Upper Colorado River Fish
3. Utah Prairie Dog Litigation and State Coordination Update
4. Conservation of the Sagebrush West and Greater Sage-Grouse in Colorado
5. Conservation of the Sagebrush West and Greater Sage-Grouse in Montana
6. Conservation of the Sagebrush West and Greater Sage-Grouse in Utah
7. Conservation of the Sagebrush West and Greater Sage-Grouse in Wyoming
8. Conservation of the Sagebrush West and the Gunnison Sage-Grouse
9. Removal of Wyoming's Gray Wolves from the Endangered Species List
10. Black-footed Ferret Recovery Efforts
11. Grizzly Bear in the Lower 48 States
12. Status Review for the North American Wolverine
13. National Fish Passage and Fish Habitat Partnership Programs
14. Jackson National Fish Hatchery
15. Managing Invasive Nonnative Sportfish in the Upper Colorado River Basin
16. National Elk Refuge Elk and Bison Management
17. Bison Conservation and Management

Conversation Contents

Tour of the West Itinerary; briefing papers due July 6.

Attachments:

/4. Tour of the West Itinerary; briefing papers due July 6./1.1 Tour of the West Itinerary.pdf

"Foster, Maureen" <maureen_foster@ios.doi.gov>

From: "Foster, Maureen" <maureen_foster@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Tue Jun 27 2017 16:35:31 GMT-0600 (MDT)
To: Bert Frost <Bert_Frost@nps.gov>, Bob Vogel <bob_vogel@nps.gov>, Michael Reynolds <Michael_Reynolds@nps.gov>, Beverly Stephens <grace_stephens@nps.gov>
CC: Wendy Fink <wendy_r_fink@ios.doi.gov>, Virginia Johnson <virginia_johnson@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Tour of the West Itinerary; briefing papers due July 6.
Attachments: Tour of the West Itinerary.pdf

Here is the itinerary for part of the western trip. The Idaho part will follow.

There are many portions that relate to NPS issues. Briefing papers would be great.

She leaves for her trip on July 8 (Saturday). If we could have the BPs by COB on July 6, that would be great.

I will be out of the office next week. Please send them to Wendy who can review them and then give to Tameka for Aurelia's briefing book.

If there are any changes to the trip, I will let you know.

Thanks in advance.

Maureen

Maureen D. Foster
Chief of Staff
Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
1849 C Street, NW, Room 3161
Washington, DC 20240

202.208.5970 (desk)
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Tour of the West – Itinerary

July 8, 2017– July 15, 2017

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Saturday, July 8, 2017

Morning flight from DCA→DIA (cost approximately \$250)

Travel via rental car to Vail, Colorado (cost approximately \$100 for economy; same day drop-off in Vail)

Attend Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Director's Forum

Spend evening in Vail, Colorado (cost approximately \$200/night)

Vail Marriott Resort, Confirmation #94472460

Objective: Meet Western Directors, establish cooperative relationships, and become familiar with wildlife and habitat management issues and agency personnel in the West.

Per Diem Max Lodging Rate: \$261/night

M&IE: \$74/day

Sunday, July 9, 2017

Tour Colorado

Topics of discussion are:

- Gunnison sage-grouse
- Canadian lynx
- Colorado River endangered fishes issues

Travel to Utah

Spend evening in Moab, Utah (cost approximately \$200/night)

La Quinta Inn, Confirmation #3222889597

Objective: Gain knowledge of state led reintroduction efforts for Canadian lynx under ESA, state initiated and secured conservation easements for the protection of critical habitat of Gunnison sage-grouse, and interstate coordination and management of endangered Colorado fishes.

Per Diem Max Lodging Rate: \$162/night

M&IE: \$64/day

Monday, July 10, 2017

Visit Arches National Park

Travel to Cedar City, Utah

Topics of discussion are:

- Utah prairie dog
- Wild horse issues
- Arches National Park
- Bears Ears National Monument

Spend evening in Beaver, Utah (cost approximately \$150/night)

Best Western Paradise Inn, Confirmation #489622264

Objective: Understand agency cooperation and management in regards to national parks and national monuments, application of endangered species recovery criteria in relation to Utah prairie dog, and gain insight on wild horse and burrow management in relation to wildlife habitat management issues.

Per Diem Max Lodging Rate: \$91/night

M&IE: \$51/day

Tuesday, July 11, 2017

Travel to Rock Springs, Wyoming

Topics of discussion are:

- Greater sage-grouse conservation and management
- Oil and gas development
- Wolves
- Black footed ferrets (discussion only)
- Colorado River cutthroat

Travel to and spend evening in Jackson Hole, Wyoming (cost \$217/night)

Elk Country Inn, Confirmation #24LoXJ

Objective: Review state led conservation plans of sagebrush grassland ecotypes and sage-grouse. Understand the challenge and methods of balancing oil and gas development with conservation of wildlife habitats and big game migration corridors. Acquire knowledge of endangered species delisting based on established recovery criteria in relation to wolves and wolf management in the northern Rocky Mountain wolf population. Tour mitigation projects for restoration of Colorado River Cutthroat trout, Round Tail chub, Blue Headed sucker, Flannel mouth sucker. Discussion of ESA relating to biological successes, social failures and the flexibility with ESA on 10(j) provision to advance wildlife conservation and public acceptance (black- footed ferret).

Per Diem Max Lodging Rate: \$217/night

M&IE: \$74/day

Wednesday, July 12, 2017

Travel to Jackson, Wyoming

Main topics of discussion are:

- Yellowstone Grizzly Bears
- Tour National Elk Refuge
- Tour National fish hatchery
- Visit Grand Teton National Park

Spend evening in Jackson Hole, Wyoming (cost \$217/night)

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Per Diem Max Lodging Rate: \$217/night

M&IE: \$74/day

Thursday, July 13, 2017

Travel to Idaho

Main topics of discussion are:

- Bull trout
- Anadromous fishes issues
- Wolverine
- Migratory birds

Spend evening in Boise, Idaho (approximately \$200/night)

Smokey Canyon Outfitters Lodge (the lodge does not provide confirmation numbers)

Objective: Become familiar with issues in relation to hydro-power and the management of Anadromous fish, secure migration and spawning corridors and the federal fish hatchery program. Discuss collaborative multi-state monitoring efforts to determine abundance and distribution of wolverines in the western states. Discussion regarding the management of migratory birds, pelicans and cormorants relation to MBTA provisions for take.

Per Diem Max Lodging Rate: \$110/night

M&IE: \$54/day

Friday, July 14, 2017

Travel to Montana

Topics of discussion are:

- Bison management
- Grizzly bear management
- Wolf management

Visit Elk Meadows Ranch

Topics of discussion are:

- Private lands/public wildlife
- Public access/conservation management

Visit Three Dollar Bridge Fishing Access Site

Topics of discussion are:

- Wild trout management
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Disease threats

Spend evening in Bozeman, Montana (cost approximately \$300/night)

(**Awaiting information on lodging arrangements**)

Objective: Become aware of the coordination efforts between national Parks, state agencies, and private landowners in relation to wildlife migration and management issues. Recognize efforts to conserve native trout species and State and Federal cooperative efforts to state and federal efforts to manage and control Aquatic Invasive Species.

Per Diem Max Lodging Rate: \$152/night

M&IE: \$59/day

Saturday, July 15, 2017

Morning or afternoon flight from BZN→DCA (cost approximately \$900; connect flight only)

M&IE: \$69/day

*All transportation costs from Vail, Colorado, to Bozeman, Montana, will be covered

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"Foster, Maureen" <maureen_foster@ios.doi.gov>

From: "Foster, Maureen" <maureen_foster@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Wed Jun 28 2017 10:46:41 GMT-0600 (MDT)
To: Greg Sheehan <greg_j_sheehan@fws.gov>, Casey Hammond <casey_hammond@ios.doi.gov>, "Basso, Georgia" <georgia_basso@fws.gov>, Charisa Morris <charisa_morris@fws.gov>
CC: Wendy Fink <wendy_r_fink@ios.doi.gov>, "Lewis-Robinson, Tameka" <tameka_lewis-robinson@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Tour of the West Itinerary; briefing papers due July 6.
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