

YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

Trails employees Dustin Rothenberg and Jane Sheffer engaged in Blacktail Suspension Bridge fall protection work

Photo thanks to Chris Glenn



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The road south of Canyon between North Rim Drive and South Rim Drive is closed for a culvert replacement.

The culvert has failed and washed out to the point it requires replacement. This area of the Grand Loop road has a history of movement and this will be one more phase to stabilize the area. The work will consist of replacing approximately 100 feet of culvert that is up to 15 feet deep under the road, with a water main and sewage line that runs down the middle of the road. Maintenance Forces hope to have the road back in service by Wednesday afternoon, May 2, 2012.

We will advise the Communication Center on the reopening of the road once the replacement is complete. During this time of closure, to access Lake and Grant Village, Admin traffic will have to use Craig Pass.

Other road-related items:

Crews have begun plowing the road east of Cooke City later today. Travel is not yet possible over Cooke Pass.

The road from the South Entrance to West Thumb is now open for bicycle traffic. The road is set to open to auto travel May 11.

DUNRAVEN PASS REMINDER: The Canyon-to-Tower road over Dunraven Pass remains closed to motor vehicle travel until Friday, May 25. It will open to bicycle use Friday, May 11. It is currently open to foot travel -- use normal precautions when encountering snow removal or other heavy equipment. Employees and the general public interested in accessing ski terrain or otherwise recreating in the area are subject to these travel restrictions."

REMINDER: The Mexican Pot-Luck retirement lunch for Jim Evanoff is **TODAY** at noon at the Mammoth Community Center. Bring whatever you can come up with – plates & silverware will be provided.

The section of the boardwalk from the **Mud Volcano** parking lot to Dragon's Mouth Spring is temporarily closed in order to facilitate repairs. Watch for motorized equipment on the boardwalk.

Contractors will begin erecting scaffolding around the Headquarters building next week. This is likely to result in some temporary disruption of parking around the building.

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In May and June, the Bear Management Office will be giving **Hiking and Camping Bear Safety Programs** throughout the Park. Attendance is Free!

Bear Safety Training will be given at the following locations, dates, and times: Mammoth Rec Hall, May 7 at 7 pm; Old Faithful Rec Hall, May 14 at 7 pm; Lake Lodge Rec Hall, May 21 at 7 pm; Grant Grayling Dorm Rec Hall, May 30 at 7 pm; Canyon Rec Hall, June 4 at 7 pm; Tower Falls Dorm Rec Room, June 11 at 7 pm.

Come play Rugby (touch, not tackle) on Mondays at 6:00 PM at the Gardiner School field. Fun and fitness for all ages and abilities. We'll teach you to play. More info, contact Mel @ 406-848-2393.

THIS SUNDAY - Pancake Rummage Breakfast Sale Extravangza!!! On **Sunday, May 6th, 2012** the MCC invites all area families to attend a **pancake breakfast** (Morey sourdoughs, bacon, fresh fruit, juice, coffee and great company for a donation to the MCC) and **browse the local rummage**. Great way to start what we hope will be a beautiful spring Sunday! The breakfast will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 1 p.m. – rummage sales at individual homes are encouraged. If you want to participate in an indoor yard sale at the MCC (you sell – you keep the profits), please contact Bianca Klein at 344-2221. We hope to see you there!

The Public Affairs Office will be unstaffed from mid-morning Tuesday until late Wednesday afternoon.

To the organizers and planners, the decorators and delicious food caterers; To the awesome quilt makers, story tellers and crazy skit players; To the set-up and clean-up crews and of course **ALL** of you there to laugh with me: A HUGE THANKS!! You made my party a night to be remembered!!!

Colette Daigle-Berg

IN THE NEWS

Committee revises Yellowstone grizzly count procedures

By KELSEY DAYTON Casper Star-Tribune - Monday, April 30, 2012 8:00 am

http://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/committee-revises-yellowstone-grizzly-count-procedures/article_5e785122-4842-5b48-b15d-bf47517d89f8.html

JACKSON, Wyo. — Researchers will employ new techniques and scale back mortality rate monitoring areas in an effort to better estimate the greater Yellowstone ecosystem's grizzly bear population.

There are an estimated 593 grizzlies in the area, with a margin of error between 422 and 652. The number comes from an estimated 56 females with cubs. According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grizzly conservation strategy for the area established in 1993, there must be a minimum of 48 females with cubs.

The population estimates are conservative, said Mark Haroldson, a U.S. Geological Survey biologist and member of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee's study team.

The 100,000 square-kilometer grizzly mortality study area is too large and doesn't account for bears that leave the core area, get into trouble in peripheral areas and then are counted as mortalities even though they've migrated beyond the primary population boundaries, Haroldson said.

"We're being penalized for an expanding population," he said.

The Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee voted April 19 to trim the mortality study area to 50,000 square kilometers, which will be the same area used for population estimates.

The subcommittee is under the umbrella of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, which guides the animal's recovery efforts in the United States and Canada. The subcommittee focuses on bears in the Yellowstone National Park area and is composed of federal, state, county and tribal partners. The grizzly bear population dwindled to near extinction in the Yellowstone area during the 1970s.

Currently, populations are estimated by counting females grizzlies with cubs and then making sure only a certain percentage of that population died each year, said Chris Servheen, grizzly bear recovery coordinator for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Counts are held during flyovers, from the ground and by trapping.

Haroldson's proposal also adopted April 19 will count females from the air. During specific flight patterns, both collared and non-collared bears will be counted. Wildlife managers know how many collared grizzlies are in the area and will be able to create a ratio of how many collared bears were seen of the total collared population. That same ratio will be applied to non-collared bears. For example, if 50 percent of collared bears are spotted, it will be assumed the number of non-collared bears seen on the flight is 50 percent of the non-collared population in the area.

The new and old counting methods will be applied for the next two field seasons to see if the population estimates differ.

According to the conservation strategy, if the grizzly population falls below 48 females with cubs for two consecutive years, land managers must try to understand why those standards were exceeded and create a detailed recommendation on how to meet and maintain the standard in the future, Servheen said.

The bears also must occupy 16 of 18 bear management areas and no two adjacent areas can be unoccupied for six years. The criteria shows the animals are reproducing throughout the area, he said.

Servheen stressed that wildlife officials aren't proposing changing grizzly management strategy, just where bear mortality is counted.

Haroldson said 40 grizzlies died in the management area in 2011.

Females, males and dependent young each have a mortality limit that under the conservation strategy isn't supposed to be exceeded. For females it's 9 percent of the estimated population; for males it's 15 percent. Both targets were exceeded last year.

If the mortality limits are exceeded for two consecutive years, managers must try to figure out what is happening in the grizzly populations.

The limits have been exceeded in three of the past four years, Haroldson said. Between 1986 and 2011, the limits were exceeded five times in the female population and seven times in the male population. Some of those years were "fractionally" over the limits, Haroldson said.

The new boundaries and counting methods should provided a more accurate population number and will likely keep the percentage of deaths within the desired limits, he said.

"If the population wasn't biased low, we probably wouldn't have exceeded," Haroldson said.

Teton County resident Sam Coutts said the subcommittee needs to get a handle on the actual population of grizzlies in the area.

"We don't have any idea how many are here," he said.

He questioned the ability to manage a population of uncertain size. He also thinks the current estimates are much lower than the actual population number.

Big predators, like grizzlies, are becoming so numerous they are "on top of residents," he said.

Coutts said wildlife managers should take advantage of best-available technology, such as thermal imaging used by the military, to get a fast and accurate grizzly count.

"This is a waste of taxpayers' money," he said about new efforts to count the bears.

However the bears are counted, there has been a decline in population growth, Haroldson said, noting the population is now considered stable. The grizzly population began to stabilize in the early 2000s, he said. It is unclear if that was because the bears reached the maximum number that could be supported by resources in the area, or if it was because of other factors such as the decline in whitebark pine — a major food source for bears.

Even with a stable population, grizzlies have reached numbers that show they have recovered in the area, Servheen said.

"I think we are going to have to move from a program of recovery to a program of management," he said.

The committee will put the changes out for public review.

Yellowstone 'Super-Eruption' Less Super, More Frequent Than Thought

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/04/120430101036.htm>

ScienceDaily (Apr. 30, 2012) — The Yellowstone "super-volcano" is a little less super -- but more active -- than previously thought.

Researchers at Washington State University and the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre say the biggest Yellowstone eruption, which created the 2 million year old Huckleberry Ridge deposit, was actually two different eruptions at least 6,000 years apart.

Their results paint a new picture of a more active volcano than previously thought and can help recalibrate the likelihood of another big eruption in the future. Before the researchers split the one eruption into two, it was the fourth largest known to science.

"The Yellowstone volcano's previous behavior is the best guide of what it will do in the future," says Ben Ellis, co-author and post-doctoral researcher at Washington State University's School of the Environment. "This research suggests explosive volcanism from Yellowstone is more frequent than previously thought."

The new ages for each Huckleberry Ridge eruption reduce the volume of the first event to 2,200 cubic kilometers, roughly 12 percent less than previously thought. A second eruption of 290 cubic kilometers took place more than 6,000 years later.

That first eruption still deserves to be called "super," as it is one of the largest known to have occurred on Earth and darkened the skies with ash from southern California to the Mississippi River. By comparison, the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens produced 1 cubic kilometer of ash. The larger blast of Oregon's Mount Mazama 6,850 years ago produced 116 cubic kilometers of ash.

The study, funded by the National Science Foundation and published in the June issue of the *Quaternary Geochronology*, used high-precision argon isotope dating to make the new calculations. The radioactive decay rate from potassium 40 to argon 40 serves as a "rock clock" for dating samples and has a precision of .2 percent. Darren Mark, co-author and a post-doctoral research fellow at the SUERC, recently helped fine tune the technique and improve it by 1.2 percent -- a small-sounding difference that can become huge across geologic time.

"Improved precision for greater temporal resolution is not just about adding another decimal place to a number, says Mark. "It's far more exciting. It's like getting a sharper lens on a camera. It allows us to see the world more clearly."

The project asks the question: Might super-eruptions actually be products of multiple, closely spaced eruptions through time? With improved temporal resolution, in times to come, maybe super-eruptions will be not quite so super.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 221 AM MDT TUE MAY 1 2012

The Winter Weather Advisory for Yellowstone National Park has been Cancelled

Today...Breezy. Mostly cloudy with scattered snow showers and rain showers in the morning...then partly cloudy with isolated rain showers in the afternoon. Highs 40 to 46. Southwest winds 15 to 25 mph. Gusts up to 40 mph in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 30 percent.

Tonight...Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated thunderstorms and snow showers. Lows 22 to 28. Southwest winds 20 to 25 mph decreasing to around 15 mph after midnight. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.

Wednesday...Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Isolated thunderstorms and snow showers in the morning...then isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs 42 to 48. South winds around 15 mph shifting to the southwest 20 to 25 mph with gusts to around 40 mph in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.

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IN THE NEWS

Jim Evanoff retiring after overseeing Yellowstone National Park recycling projects

BY BRETT FRENCH FRENCH@BILLINGSGAZETTE.COM

Yellowstone National Park is known for its geysers, not its garbage.



Jim with Bianca Klein at his retirement lunch Tuesday. That's also Jim in the image in the background doing a "Regis" at an employee Christmas party some years back! (Thanks to Jim Peaco for the photo)

Yet the roughly 3 million visitors to the park each year generate about 4,000 tons of trash.

Thanks to Jim Evanoff, the park's environmental protection specialist, Yellowstone has become a regional and national leader in diverting a large portion of that garbage from landfills.

"In the last nine years or so, Jim's been focused predominantly on making Yellowstone a greener place when it comes to environmental sustainability," said Steve Iobst, deputy superintendent of Yellowstone.

Diverting garbage

Many of the sustainability projects have been funded through partnerships with corporations, universities and private businesses assembled by the Yellowstone Park Foundation, the park's nonprofit fundraising arm. Xanterra Parks and Resorts, which runs concession operations in the park, has been a valued partner in making its operations more earth friendly.

Plastic pop bottles thrown in a trash can in Yellowstone now go to a Georgia company that recycles them into carpet backing. Glass bottles are crushed in Livingston and used as sand. Food waste is composted at a plant outside West Yellowstone and used in landscaping projects. Fry oil from

food operations is now burned in boilers at Mammoth and Old Faithful. And alternative fuels are used in park vehicles.

Evanoff also has overseen other sustainability initiatives — such as recycling of small propane cylinders and bear spray canisters.

The diversion of garbage from landfills just made sense to Evanoff because parks are all about preserving natural resources. Yet most of the nation's parks have no one like Evanoff to coordinate such projects, he said.

And by the end of this week, Yellowstone will no longer have Evanoff. He is retiring.

"We're going to miss him a lot," said Karen Kress, president of the Yellowstone Park Foundation. "He's been instrumental in Yellowstone environmental stewardship programs."

Iobst said it's uncertain whether Evanoff's position will be filled, although the park plans to continue working on the projects in which he was involved.

Kress said it's imperative that the park have a person like Evanoff on staff.

"There's going to be a lot of work to be done and Jim won't be there," she said. "He was Mr. Sustainability."

Park career

In his 32 years with the National Park Service, Evanoff has moved across the West, including a job that allowed him to rappel off the top of Mount Rushmore to clean the presidential faces carved there. For the past 24 years, he's worked at Yellowstone. And 20 years ago, he "kinda created" his new position after being hired on to the park's maintenance and operations division.

"The park gave me the latitude to do what I wanted and never said stop, so I kept on going," he said Friday.

Evanoff, an energetic, trim, white-haired 60-year-old, sat down following a presentation to the Yellowstone Business Partnership at Rock Creek Resort, south of Red Lodge. His talk to the group covered a variety of issues underlined with a main theme of how the park's management of wildlife, natural resources and visitors has changed dramatically since the park was created in 1872.

What was seen as bad back in the early years of the park — such as wolves and grizzly bears — are now believed to be key to balancing the ecosystem's wildlife. And some things that were seen as good back then — such as feeding bears refuse from hotels and roadside garbage dumps for visitors' entertainment — are no longer allowed. "Yellowstone was the world's first national park, so we want to be the first to do the right thing," Evanoff said.

Surrounding national forests and national wildlife refuges have joined in where Yellowstone has led. Together, they have created a group to focus solely on sustainability in the entire ecosystem.

"We just completed what has never been attempted, a greenhouse gas emissions inventory," he said.

"We developed and produced an action plan to mitigate or reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and reduce fuel consumption."

As Yellowstone has taken bold environmental steps, Evanoff said gateway communities have eventually followed, realizing that similar ventures are in their best interest.

Educating tourists

Looking to the future, Evanoff said Yellowstone National Park's biggest environmental challenge will be educating the millions of annual visitors to the park in only a day-and-a-half — the average stay for most tourists — on environmental stewardship.

"You don't have a lot of time," Evanoff said.

But if those national and international visitors can leave more informed, sustainability has a chance of being sowed in other regions.

"If we can do it with our high elevation, remoteness and access issues, don't tell me that someplace in Iowa can't do it, too," he said.

Even though he's retiring, Evanoff promised to stay engaged in environmental issues and possibly do some consulting as well as a little log furniture building.

But he has mixed emotions about leaving his career. He still loves putting on the Park Service uniform. And Evanoff said there's nothing like standing along the Old Faithful boardwalk on a summer day as a crowd of hundreds gathers to watch "their" geyser erupt.

"If I miss it, I'll do something about it," he said.

'WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?'

Montana eyes expanded bison reintroduction

By TOM LUTEY tlutey@billingsgazette.com

Montana officials are discussing the possibility of reintroducing bison statewide, one month after releasing quarantined Yellowstone National Park bison to Fort Peck Reservation.

"What we're talking about is what are the options in Montana as far as bison?" said Ron Aasheim, Fish, Wildlife and Parks spokesman. "We're at the very start of the process. You know there are a lot of different opinions."

Viewed as a disease threat and killed for leaving Yellowstone National Park during the 1990s, bison are now making their way into the state despite ranchers' fears of brucellosis.

A herd of 63 bison from Yellowstone were relocated March 19 to the Fort Peck Reservation. The animals had spent years in captivity before the move to confirm they weren't infected with brucellosis, a disease known to cause spontaneous abortions in livestock.

Another 130 quarantined Yellowstone bison on media mogul Ted Turner's Flying D ranch in Gallatin Canyon will also soon be ready for transfer. It is inevitable there will be interest in moving those animals to other parts of Montana, now that the Fort Peck herd has been established.

"Because of the translocation taking place, ultimately there will be people interested in going further," Aasheim said, though exactly how far remains to be seen.

FWP will hold eight three-hour public meetings across Montana beginning on May 14 in Missoula. Glasgow will host a meeting on May 16, Billings on May 21, Miles City on May 22 and Bozeman on May 24.

These are the kind of meetings the Montana Stockgrowers Association said the state should have had before relocating bison to the Fort Peck Reservation. The move sparked an unresolved lawsuit by ranchers seeking to block the transfer. Half the Fort Peck animals were to go to the Fort Belknap Reservation, but that transfer has been blocked by the court at least until May 11.

"This is something that we think they should have done before they moved any bison," said Ariel Overstreet of the Montana Stockgrowers Association. "They should have considered the big picture."

Opposing bison relocation is a policy written into the Montana Stockgrowers' bylaws. The ranching group worries that brucellosis not only provides a physical threat to the cattle industry, but also a market threat as other states responding to potential brucellosis exposure turn away Montana cattle, which bring more than \$1 billion to the state annually.

Brucellosis is a disease eradicated in livestock nationwide, except in the portions of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho surrounding Yellowstone National Park where bison and elk are known carriers. It wasn't easy getting rid of the disease, which was prevalent in the dairy industry in the 1950s. Inspectors went from ranch to ranch testing livestock. A positive test meant the rancher's entire herd had to be killed. A single year's loss to brucellosis in 1952 Montana totaled \$400 million.

But the disease hasn't been a problem in the bison relocated to Fort Peck, and neither has the perception of infection been a threat to Eastern Montana cattle. Nebraska, one of the first states to slap import rules on Montana cattle after a positive brucellosis test a couple of years ago in cattle outside Yellowstone, indicated Monday that it had no plans to extend the rule to other Montana cattle. Nebraska livestock officials said they were aware that Montana had relocated Yellowstone bison to Fort Peck.

The Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of Fort Peck accepted the animals because Yellowstone Park bison are part of a rare genetically pure herd. There were impure bison already on the reservation, bison with cattle genes, but to have the real thing on the Eastern Montana prairie for the first time in more than a century was exceptional.

"This is our legacy herd," said Robbie Magnan, the tribe's fish and wildlife director. "The height of these animals, even the females, is huge. I've seen the buffalo around Fork Belknap, other areas, you look at these buffalo and the females are bigger than their bulls."

When the bison arrived from Yellowstone, people piled into cars and escorted them to their temporary holding pen north of Poplar. The reception was not unlike the welcoming tribal members received over the last decade when returning from Montana's national park border with truckloads of slaughtered bison packed in snow. The tribes were invited to cut up bison killed for leaving the park in the winter. It was on one of those trips that Magnan and others began thinking about someday returning to Fort Peck with living bison.

"In 2004, we brought up our concerns with the intertribal buffalo council about how we could get them back alive rather than dead," Magnan said. "Those animals were starving, so what do you think the meat looked like? You're eating something that was starving to death."

In a multi-agency effort, the government several years ago began quarantining bison that tested negative for brucellosis. The thinking was that if no cases of the disease arose, the bison could be used as a genetically pure source to repopulate portions of the West, where they once roamed freely before aggressive hunting nearly wiped them out. Some of the bison relocated to Fort Peck were born in quarantine. There are a half-dozen calves now being born in a pen on the reservation, as the herd waits for better fencing before being released.

The tribes agreed to fence the bison with an elaborate 8-foot high woven-wire fence, but that requirement has since been downgraded to a multi-strand barbed wire fence with two electric wires. Magnan said he has 5,100 acres for the bison with more to come. The tribes won millions of dollars from the federal government in a lawsuit over federally mismanaged mineral rights and other land revenue streams that should have benefited the people of Fort Peck.

For the bison, the tribes are aggressively buying deeded pastureland, Magnan said.

Not all the tribes' neighbors support the relocation. State Sen. John Brendan, R-Scobey, has fought with his Fort Peck Reservation neighbors over bison for years. The tribes already have a sizable herd of hybrid bison, which have gotten out and eaten a neighbor's wheat. Brendan said there are real property issues for people living beside the bison compound. He collaborated with other lawmakers in 2011 to require that a plan be crafted before any bison were relocated. No plan was drafted for the bison relocated to Fort Peck.

Gov. Brian Schweitzer, a Democrat, counters that when it comes to dealing with sovereign nations, which the tribe is, the law Brendan and others supported doesn't apply.

Regardless, Brendan, like Overstreet with the Stockgrowers, thinks a plan was in order.

"The tribes have not been able to contain the buffalo they now have," he said.

Overstreet, who has worked the bison issue for the Stockgrowers, said there are just too many unanswered questions for Montana to be relocating Yellowstone Park bison. The state's latest proposal suggests the animals be "managed as a Montana wildlife species." Overstreet wonders what that means. Managed like deer? Managed like the bison on the refuge in Moise, where vaccinations are standard and poor genetic traits are selectively thinned out?

"Is that the kind of management scheme, or is it going to be the management scheme of Yellowstone National Park, where they essentially don't

manage it?" Overstreet said.

Magnan believes that satisfactory answers to critics will come in time. He's counting on it.

"What I'm waiting for is one year from now, so that I can tell people who said we couldn't do it, that they're eating crow," he said.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 2:21 am MDT May 2, 2012

Today: Scattered snow showers before noon, then scattered rain showers. Some thunder is also possible. Partly sunny, with a high near 42. Southwest wind 7 to 10 mph increasing to between 15 and 18 mph. Winds could gust as high as 28 mph. Chance of precipitation is 40%. Total daytime snow accumulation of less than a half inch possible.

Tonight: A 10 percent chance of snow showers after midnight. Partly cloudy, with a low around 23. West southwest wind between 8 and 16 mph, with gusts as high as 23 mph.

Thursday: A slight chance of snow showers before noon, then rain showers likely. Some thunder is also possible. Partly sunny, with a high near 46. South southwest wind between 7 and 13 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70%. New snow accumulation of less than a half inch possible.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cooke Pass is open to all traffic.

Sliding Meadows is another story. Crews need a few hours this morning to get everything dressed up. They will evaluate the situation this morning with hopes of opening by mid-day today.

The Comm Center will be notified when the road reopens to traffic. A reminder, until repairs are completed, access Lake and Grant Village, Admin traffic will have to use Craig Pass.

We're set to open the East Entrance to visitor travel as scheduled Friday morning. The road from the South Entrance to West Thumb is now open for bicycle traffic. The road is set to open to auto travel May 11.

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The Executive Safety Committee (ExSC) minutes for the April 17, 2012 meeting can be accessed on the P drive at P:\Executive Safety Committee (ExSC) Minutes\2012 or on the Yellowstone SharePoint Safety Office Site. To access the minutes from the Yellowstone SharePoint Safety Office Site under the left hand navigational tool bar titled Libraries click on Executive Safety Committee (ExSC). Open the folder named ExSC Minutes. Open the folder named 2012. Open the document named 4-17-12.

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Hank Quintana

IN RESPONSE TO A READER'S QUESTION

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Are the Rangers and YCR going to haze the "Mammoth" black bear to another area soon?

We'd like to thank Kerry Gunther for providing a great answer to this specific question, and for sharing valuable additional information about the collective challenges we all face regarding bear management here in the park:

Each time that the "Mammoth" black bear enters the development and it is reported to Ranger or Bear Management Office staff, the bear will be hazed out, if it is safe for the public and staff to do so.

Black bears are especially difficult to haze because when threatened they generally climb a tree to escape the threat and show submission rather than flee. Hazing provides only a short term solution (a few hours, maybe a few days if we are lucky).

The next question we often get asked is why we don't capture and move the "Mammoth" black bears (there are at least 3 of them) to a remote location.

Unfortunately, translocation rarely works. Bears both grizzly and black have a strong affinity for their established home ranges and a remarkable homing ability. Most bears will return from wherever we move them to in a few days to a few weeks. We could move the "Mammoth" black to the South Boundary of the park and it could be back in Mammoth in 3 to 4 days. Bears that are dumped into areas where they are not familiar with the resources often don't do well or are killed by other bears. So translocation is rarely successful and even if the bear does not come back, it often just moves the problem to someone else's District.

So unfortunately, our management options are really limited to capture and euthanize the bear or try to teach it the boundaries of the development. The green irrigated, fertilized lawns of Mammoth make it more difficult, because the lawns are the best, most nutritious food around this time of year, and it is extremely difficult to teach a bear to avoid the best available food.

Bears have only 7 months to consume all the nutrition they need to survive for 12 months. In another week or two, cow elk will start utilizing the Mammoth lawns for food and calving. Elk calves are the most sought after bear food during late May through early July. So we can expect bear activity in and around Mammoth for the next 6 weeks.

Everyone needs to be Bear Aware and to report sightings of bears.

RECENT NEWS RELEASES

05/01/2012

Interior Selects Google Apps for Government for Cloud Email and Collaboration Services

Contract will provide modern, high-tech service as part of Interior's IT Transformation

WASHINGTON – As part of a major efficiency initiative that will leverage modern technology to save up to \$500 million in taxpayer dollars by 2020, the Department of the Interior today announced a contract award for Department-wide cloud email and collaboration services using *Google Apps for Government*. This award is part of Interior's IT Transformation initiative to provide employees with 21st century IT and support good government practices by reducing waste, cutting costs and integrating services.

"This award is a great example of how our IT Transformation initiative is already delivering value to the Department," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "Implementing a Department-wide, cloud-based email system that helps modernize the ways we do business while cutting costs is good government, plain and simple. We will continue to identify efficiencies to save time and taxpayer dollars using advances in technology to provide better service for less."

This contract, which was awarded to *Google Apps for Government* provider Onix Networking will consolidate Interior's email services into a single modern system and simplify the Department's future data storage requirements. Users will have the option to use web-based tools or traditional desktop software to access the new system. New video and audio chat features will complement traditional email communication tools, while *Google Docs, Calendar and Sites* will enhance the Department's collaboration capabilities.

This service will have a seamless integration with mobile devices, further supporting Interior's dedication to employees who travel often or are located in remote field locations.

"With this award, Interior will move into the 21st century by delivering a highly integrated, cost-effective, and evolving cloud-based platform," said Rhea Suh, Interior Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget.

Interior's phased procurement approach begins with this award, which requires the vendor to demonstrate they can meet the Department's objectives for an integrated suite of tools and services, information assurance and regulatory compliance. Upon completion, Interior plans to exercise the next contract option and migrate more than 90,000 mailboxes from its seven disparate on-premise email systems to the new cloud email system by the end of December 2012.

"We look forward to providing state-of-the-art communication and collaboration tools, desktop video, document sharing and new messaging technologies to help Interior employees work more effectively with each other and with external partners," said Andrew Jackson, Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary for Technology, Information and Business Services. "Not only do we get the features we want in a desired security environment, but our workforce will get the cutting edge technology that many of them use in their personal lives."

The implementation of a single enterprise-wide email system will replace seven different existing email systems at Interior, cutting waste and eliminating redundancy. Completion of the procurement for cloud email and collaboration services directly supports IT Transformation's goal to transform Interior's IT systems into an agile, reliable, and cost effective service that better supports IT services across the entire Department.

"Our approach represents a unique and thoughtful way to ensure we are replacing our on- premise systems with truly cutting edge cloud based technologies that meet the Department's needs," stated Bernard Mazer, Interior's Chief Information Officer. "This is a significant step forward in our efforts to bring Department employees the email and collaboration tools they need to more effectively support our mission."

Today's award covers the first option for up to 60 days at \$17,248. The total contract value is \$34,872,728 over seven years.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 238 AM MDT THU MAY 3 2012

Today...Mostly cloudy. Isolated snow showers and rain showers in the morning...then numerous rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds in the afternoon. Little or no snow accumulation. Highs 46 to 52. Southwest winds around 15 mph in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 70 percent.

Tonight...Breezy...cloudy. Scattered rain showers...snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the evening...then scattered snow showers after midnight. Lows 26 to 32. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Friday...Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Isolated rain showers and snow showers in the morning...then scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds in the afternoon. Highs 47 to 53. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph. Chance of precipitation 40 percent.

WE WANT YOUR SUBMISSIONS!

Have something to share with other NPS employees in the park? We're especially interested in items occurring outside Mammoth, and in getting digital photos of employees at work!

Please remember to send your text or photo submissions for the newsletter to us at YELL_Public_Affairs@nps.gov (not individual's email), so that whoever is doing the newsletter that day has access to it. Thanks!

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Friday, May 4, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ROAD UPDATES

- The East Entrance opened for the season this morning.
- Cooke Pass is open to all traffic.
- The culvert has been replaced at Sliding Meadow. The road south of Canyon has reopened to all vehicle travel.
- The road from the South Entrance to West Thumb is now open for bicycle traffic. The road is set to open to auto travel May 11.
- The Canyon-to-Tower road over Dunraven Pass remains closed to motor vehicle travel until Friday, May 25. It will open to bicycle use Friday, May 11. It is currently open to foot travel -- use normal precautions when encountering snow removal or other heavy equipment. Employees and the general public interested in accessing ski terrain or otherwise recreating in the area are subject to these travel restrictions."

The section of the boardwalk from the **Mud Volcano** parking lot to Dragon's Mouth Spring is temporarily closed in order to facilitate repairs. Watch for motorized equipment on the boardwalk.

Contractors will begin erecting scaffolding around the Headquarters building next week. This is likely to result in some temporary disruption of parking around the building.

Spring Reminder: You must call for an underground utility line locate if you are going to disturb the ground in any way, anywhere within Yellowstone National Park! Call the NPS Locate Coordinator 2 full business days before you plan to dig (307-344-2470). Mark the perimeter of your dig with white paint, pin flags or other markers and prepare a printed or hand drawn map of your dig site. Call before you dig, wait the required time, respect the marks, and excavate with caution.

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Everyone needs to be Bear Aware and to report sightings of bears.

RECENT NEWS RELEASES

May 3, 2012

Yellowstone's East Entrance Opens Friday

The East Entrance to Yellowstone National Park opens to automobile travel for the season at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, May 4.

With repairs completed on a section of road temporarily closed south of Canyon Junction, this allows all park visitors early spring access between the East Entrance, Fishing Bridge, and Canyon.

The road from the park's North and West Entrances to Madison, Canyon and Old Faithful opened as scheduled on April 20.

Roads from the Lake area and from Old Faithful south to West Thumb/Grant Village and the park's South Entrance are scheduled to open May 11.

The road from Gardiner, Montana, through the park's North Entrance to Mammoth Hot Springs and Cooke City, Montana, is open to automobiles all year, weather permitting.

Earlier this week, crews from Yellowstone National Park began the spring clearing of US-212 east of Cooke City, Montana. The section of road linking the park's Northeast Entrance with WY-296, the Chief Joseph Scenic Highway, is now open to auto travel. Plow crews from both the park and the Montana Department of Transportation are working to open the road from the junction of WY-296 over the Beartooth Pass to Red Lodge, Montana, by May 25.

Park crews are also making progress clearing snow from the road linking Canyon and Tower Fall over Dunraven Pass. It is also scheduled to open to travel on May 25.

Limited visitor services are available at this time of year, but some facilities are currently open at Old Faithful, Canyon, and Mammoth. For information on facility opening dates, please visit http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/open_closedates.htm.

Visitors should be aware that spring in Yellowstone is very unpredictable and often brings cold temperatures, high winds and falling snow. Even cleared sections of roads can be narrow and covered with a layer of snow, ice and

debris. Drivers should use extreme caution as road clearing operations can be ongoing at any time throughout the park. In the case of extreme weather conditions, temporary road closures are also possible with little or no advance warning.

Updated Yellowstone National Park road information is available 24 hours a day by calling 307-344-2117.

For information on roads outside of the park from Cooke City over Colter Pass to the Chief Joseph Scenic Highway, travelers in Wyoming may dial 511; those outside of Wyoming may call 1-888-996-7623, or visit the Wyoming Department of Transportation website at <http://www.wyoroad.info/>.

For information on the Beartooth Highway to Red Lodge, Montana, travelers in Montana may dial 511; those outside Montana may call 1-800-226-7623, or visit the Montana Department of Transportation website at <http://mdt511.com/>.

IN THE NEWS

Al-Qaida magazine urges terrorists to set wildfires in Montana

By GWEN FLORIO of the Missoulian | Posted: Friday, May 4, 2012 6:10 am

Terrorists who want to strike fear in the hearts of Americans would do well to set wildfires in Montana, al-Qaida advises in the most recent issue of its English-language magazine, Inspire.

“It is difficult to choose a better place other than in the valleys of Montana where the population increases rapidly,” Inspire’s “AQ Chef” columnist writes.

The magazine disappeared for a while after its founders, Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, were killed last year in a U.S. missile strike.

But it recently reappeared online, its grammatically challenged cover urging “It is of your freedom to ignite a firebomb.” Inside, the AQ Chef gives three pages detailing the recipe for an “ember bomb” – along with the suggestion to deploy such bombs in Montana.

Not if the Missoula County Sheriff’s Office has anything to do with it.

“We are an equal-opportunity law enforcement agency,” said sheriff’s Detective Jason Johnson. “We don’t care who it is. If they do anything to try to harm Missoula County citizens, we’re gonna stop ’em.”

News of the Inspire article spread among federal agencies Thursday.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the U.S Forest Service, works closely with its partners within the intelligence community, including both the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice on any terrorist threats, including threats of this nature,” said Forest Service spokesman Brandan Schulze.

“We are asking Forest Service employees, law enforcement and the general public to continue to be vigilant for any signs of wildfires, and to report unusual circumstances or situations that seem out of the ordinary for outdoor recreation on all public lands,” he said.

The Inspire article states that America has more houses in the “country sides” than cities, and tells readers that on Aug. 6, 2000, “wildfires extended on the sides of a valley, south of Darby town. Six separated fires started and then met to form a massive fire that burnt down tens of houses.”

The 2000 wildfires were the Northern Rockies' worst in 50 years. In Montana alone, nearly 1 million acres burned, more than one-third of that in the Bitterroot National Forest.

The article also mentions destructive wildfires in Australia in 2002 and in 1983, and asks, "Is it possible for us to cause a similar destructive impact using a similar weapon?"

That's where the ember bomb comes in. The instructions include using a clock, washing machine timer or acid to set the bomb afire.

After the list of complicated instructions, Inspire also suggests simply using a lit cigarette or a magnifying glass placed atop tinder in the sunlight.

The magazine says wildfires can cause "significant losses to the factories and companies of wooden products and everything that is linked to this trade." Its research apparently did not uncover the disastrous effects of the recession upon the wood products industry.

U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., who sits on the Homeland Security Committee, said Thursday that "no corner of this country is immune to terrorism, and we can never let our guard down. I will work tirelessly on the Homeland Security Committee to ensure the safety of all Americans."

Meanwhile, al-Qaida members might not want to try their ember bombs – or cigarettes, or magnifying glasses – here, Johnson said.

The sheriff's office has had years of experience dealing with folks cooking meth in the woods, Johnson said.

"We're well aware of the ways arsonsists start fires," he said. "We know the tactics."

And he added, "I'd want to send a message to anybody in our neck of the woods who shares ideas with al-Qaida: We have dedicated forces who will aggressively go after anyone who gets into that stuff."

WEATHER

The National Weather Service in Great Falls has issued a [Winter Weather Advisory](#) from 8:00 p.m. tonight until Noon Saturday for areas of Southwest Montana above 5,500 feet including West Yellowstone and Bozeman Pass.

Rain, changing to snow is expected to begin this evening continuing overnight, with snow accumulations of 2-4 inches possible with up to 6 inches at ridge tops.

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 329 AM MDT FRI MAY 4 2012

Today...Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Chance of rain and snow in the morning...then scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs 47 to 53. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Tonight...Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Isolated thunderstorms early in the evening. Scattered rain showers in the

evening. Scattered snow showers in the late evening and overnight. Lows 24 to 30. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph in the evening. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Saturday...Cloudy. Scattered snow showers in the morning...then scattered rain showers...snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs 37 to 43. West winds around 15 mph in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

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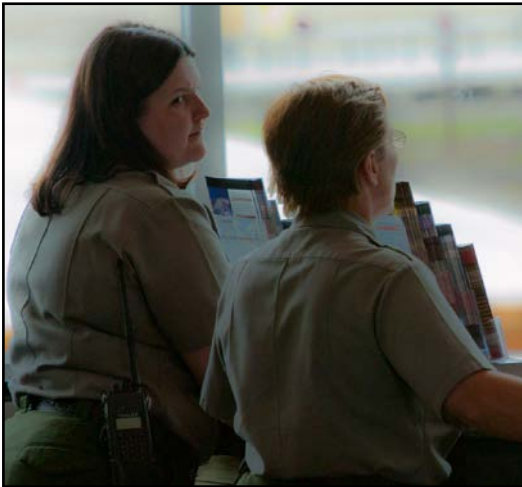
Back issues of the newsletter are available at [P:\YNP@Work Published Issues](#)

YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Monday, May 7, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Park Rangers Andrea Eide (left) and Rita Garcia work the front desk Sunday (4/29) at the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center.

Thanks to Jay Elhard for the photo.

The section of the boardwalk from the **Mud Volcano** parking lot to Dragon's Mouth Spring is temporarily closed in order to facilitate repairs. Watch for motorized equipment on the boardwalk.

Contractors will begin erecting scaffolding around the Headquarters building this week. This is likely to result in some temporary disruption of parking around the building.

There will be **NO open gym** at the **Mammoth Community Center** the week of May 7-11 due to LE training.

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on Sunday, May 13. Spend a few hours or all day doing a self-service citizen science project. Count and enjoy birds in Yellowstone by yourself or with friends. For more information or to sign up for an area where you will count, please call Katy Duffy at 307-344-2296 or email katy_duffy@nps.gov.

If you would prefer to watch and count birds with a group, Katy will be leading an annual ranger-led birdwatching car caravan on Saturday, May 19 on the West Entrance Road. Meet at the Madison Picnic Area at 8

a.m. The morning of birdwatching will be followed by free bird-related activities and programs at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone from 1 - 5 p.m.

All are welcome to attend the Employee Safety Committee Meeting scheduled for 10:00 am Wednesday May 9 at the Visitor Education Center Conference Room in Canyon.

Agendas and minutes can always be found at the Employee Safety Committee Sharepoint site at <http://inpyellshare/emsc>.

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- - - - -

From Judge Cole: Maurine and I want to thank all of the wonderful people who organized and attended our retirement party on April 17th. It brought back a flood of memories of our years here. We have made so many good friends, and those friendships will remain even as we go our separate ways. What a privilege it has been to live and serve in Yellowstone.

Thanks to YNP's own Ryan Seacrest (Steve Iobst) for being such a genial, gracious, and good looking host.

Thanks to everyone for the spectacular gifts. We plan to write to each of you. I once said that all I wanted when I left here was the picture of the bear ambling by the "Leaving Yellowstone" sign.....and I got two.

To Tim, Nick, Bonnie and the Yellowstone Rangers: thank you for the Guardhouse star, the flag, and most especially, the salute at the end. It was extraordinary. We almost lost it.

Thank you again,
Steve Cole

IN THE NEWS

Wyoming tourism director anticipates good summer

By BOB MOEN - Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) -- Despite high gasoline prices, Wyoming is expected to have a strong tourist season this summer, state tourism director Diane Shober said.

"All the indications right now look very good, and I think that's even in light of where we've been with gas prices and they seem to be stabilizing and even in some cases dropping," Shober said. "I've been doing this for nine years, and every year at this time we discuss gas prices and what impact it may have on the consumers' ability to travel, and fortunately while we see some changes in how people modify their behaviors while traveling, the good news is we still know that the American public still gets out and travels."

Tourism is Wyoming's second largest industry, generating about \$2.8 billion and nearly 30,000 jobs last year.

"I would estimate that this year we will see the same level of approximately 30,000 jobs that will be supported by the travel industry," Shober said Wednesday. "Out of all jobs in Wyoming, about 10 percent are supported through the tourism industry."

In order to sustain and grow the industry, the state spends millions of dollars a year promoting itself as a destination for travelers.

This year, Wyoming is spending about \$7 million on advertising campaigns in places such as Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Oklahoma City, Denver and Salt Lake City.

The advertising campaign includes TV, magazines, radio and social media.

Shober said Wyoming isn't advertising this year in any new markets but is increasing the frequency of its television and other ads in markets that it has targeted in the past.

"That certainly helps in deepening that visibility of the Wyoming message," she said.

A typical visitor to Wyoming is someone who enjoys national parks, mountains and other outdoor recreation.

"They may be a very active adventure traveler or they may be a more passive adventure traveler," Shober said. "It certainly wouldn't be somebody who would enjoy a beach vacation or is looking for what a city environment would offer."

While the state's tourism industry hasn't completely recovered to pre-recession levels in terms of visitor spending, tax collections and jobs, Shober said last year's season came close to closing the gap. Her office is seeing increasing numbers of people inquiring about a vacation in Wyoming this year.

"The indications are that things will be good this summer," she said.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 201 PM MDT MON MAY 7 2012

Tonight...Clear. Lows 24 to 30.

Tuesday...Partly cloudy. Highs 55 to 61.

Tuesday Night...Partly cloudy. Lows 29 to 35.

Wednesday...Breezy...sunny. Highs 58 to 64. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph in the afternoon.

Wednesday Night...Partly cloudy. Isolated rain showers and snow showers after midnight. Lows 31 to 37. Southwest winds around 15 mph. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Randy Baum, Facility Manager, speaks with CNN reporters about Yellowstone's recycling and sustainability initiatives, including the bear spray and propane canister recycling programs. The crew was here to tape a segment on how the park is leading the charge to Go Green. Air date is TBD. (NPS photo, Dan Hottle)

Tracy Ammerman, Chief of Interpretation from Glacier National Park, presents the NPS George and Helen Hartzog award for Service by a Youth Group to the Montana Council Boy Scouts in Missoula over the weekend. This is the first time the NPS has presented this award to the Boy Scouts. The local Gardiner scouts won the Montana Council Anniversary Week Service award for joint service projects between a Cub Scout Pack and a Boy Scout Troop for 2012.

(Thanks to Lori Wilkinson in CSS for the photo)



Tech Services IMPORTANT!: Supervisors of Seasonal Employees: For all seasonal employee check-ins arriving in groups of four or more, you must call Tech Services at x2470 and send the Yellowstone National Park Technology Services Check-in Form two days prior to sending your employees to Mammoth for ID cards, radios, pagers, and computer log-on. Tech Services check-in hours are from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm to allow staff to prepare and process new and returning employees. Thank you!

The section of the boardwalk from the **Mud Volcano** parking lot to Dragon's Mouth Spring is temporarily closed in order to facilitate repairs. Watch for motorized equipment on the boardwalk.

Trail crew will be conducting some blasting work and testing at Frog Rock on Wednesday May 9th. The explosives work is very small in nature, thus will not include a large noise disturbance. They will need to close the area to all access and secure the entrance at the barricade leading in to the pit proper. The area will be secured between the hours of 9:00 am and 2:00 pm. Please call x2357 with any questions, access needs, or concerns.

Contractors will begin erecting scaffolding around the Headquarters building this week. This is likely to result in some temporary disruption of parking around the building.

The **Employee Safety Committee** meets Wednesday, May 9, 2012, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Visitor Education Center Conference Room at Canyon Village. Agenda items will include a demo of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for eyes, discussion about providing a wellness newsletter for employees, training on carcass dump safety protocol, and discussion on information sharing between employees, work groups and the Committee. To attend via conference call dial 888-930-9220 and enter participant pass code 1885448. Agendas and minutes can always be found at the Employee Safety Committee Sharepoint site at <http://inpyellshare/emsc>.

There will be **NO open gym** at the **Mammoth Community Center** the week of May 7-11 due to LE training.

The **Mammoth Community Center** board would like to thank everyone who attended the Pancake Rummage Breakfast Sale. There was a wonderful turnout and the next event was being planned even while the pancakes were still flipping! The intention is to help bring the Mammoth/Gardiner families together while helping strengthen the strong bond that has existed in the Yellowstone community for more than 100 years. It is such a joy to see families building new relationships at these get-togethers. Again, thank you for taking time out of your morning to build a strong community!

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on Sunday, May 13. Spend a few hours or all day doing a self-service citizen science project. Count and enjoy birds in Yellowstone by yourself or with friends. For more information or to sign up for an area where you will count, please call Katy Duffy at 307-344-2296 or email katy_duffy@nps.gov.

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Contact Chris Glenn or Cager Messer with questions at 307-344-2357.

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From Judge Cole: Maurine and I want to thank all of the wonderful people who organized and attended our retirement party on April 17th. It brought back a flood of memories of our years here. We have made so many good friends, and those friendships will remain even as we go our separate ways. What a privilege it has been to live and serve in Yellowstone.

Thanks to YNP's own Ryan Seacrest (Steve Iobst) for being such a genial, gracious, and good looking host.

Thanks to everyone for the spectacular gifts. We plan to write to each of you. I once said that all I wanted when I left here was the picture of the bear ambling by the "Leaving Yellowstone" sign.....and I got two.

To Tim, Nick, Bonnie and the Yellowstone Rangers: thank you for the Guardhouse star, the flag, and most especially, the salute at the end. It was extraordinary. We almost lost it.

Thank you again,
Steve Cole

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IN THE NEWS

Yellowstone Bison To Be Pushed Back Into Park

Associated Press, May 8, 2012

Government officials plan to haze a large herd of migrating bison back into Yellowstone National Park this week - an annual event that is again drawing opposition from wildlife advocates and American Indian groups. Montana state veterinarian Marty Zaluski says an estimated 400 bison are outside the park in the West Yellowstone area.

Government workers could start driving the animals back into Yellowstone using a helicopter as early as Wednesday. Hundreds of bison leave the park annually during winter to graze at lower elevations. A state-federal agreement calls for the animals to be back in Yellowstone by May 15 to protect cattle from brucellosis. That's a disease carried by many bison. The Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council says the bison should be allowed to return to the park on their own.

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The rest of the wolf story

Retiring Yellowstone specialist offers insight to park

Brett French, Billings Gazette, May 6, 2012

The introduction of gray wolves from Canada into Yellowstone National Park was a national media sensation in 1995. It had been almost 70 years since the last wolf to live in the park had been killed, so the work was a controversial conservation story.

On April 27, I heard a new side to the historic event. Jim Evanoff, the park's environmental protection specialist who retired on Thursday, was talking to a gathering at the Yellowstone Business Partnership in Red Lodge. Here, as Paul Harvey would say, is the rest of the story about that first shipment of wolves.

Airport exchange

Fearing a crush of journalists when the first 14 Canadian wolves were to arrive in Montana in mid-January 1995, the park's staff leaked false information that the wolves were being flown into the Missoula airport, Evanoff said. The idea was to keep the event low-key to lessen the stress on the sedated animals.

The wolves had been placed in aluminum animal crates for the flight. At Bozeman, the Park Service backed up a goose-necked horse trailer and off-loaded the crates into the trailer for the ride to park headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyo.

With law enforcement providing an escort, the group first had to detour to a gas station to fuel the truck towing the trailer. As a precaution, Evanoff said, he peeked into the horse trailer at the gas station to make sure the cages were intact. That's when he saw one of the cage doors had been forced open and the wolf was gone. Frantically, he scanned the trailer looking for the animal. Then he saw its eyes glaring back from up in the gooseneck end of the trailer.

Apparently wolf No. 10, a male, had managed to escape his cage, breaking off its two canine teeth in the process. With no drugs to sedate the animal, the park staffers halted their fuel purchase and immediately struck out for Mammoth. They decided that should the wolf jump out of the trailer, it would have to be shot.

Strange twist

Luckily for the crew, that wasn't necessary. They made it to Mammoth, pulled into a garage and had a biologist sedate the animal so it could be returned to its cage and transported to a fenced enclosure. The wolves were kept

in fenced areas inside the park to acclimate them to their surroundings in the hope that they wouldn't light out for Canada when released into Yellowstone.

Wolf No. 10, the original alpha male of the Rose Creek pack, did roam after his release. He sauntered to near Red Lodge with a female that gave birth to eight pups.

The same male wolf is now famous for being shot outside Red Lodge in April 1995. The man responsible for the shooting was caught and served jail time in addition to paying a fine.

Park paraphernalia

Evanoff's talk to the group charted the history of Yellowstone and how its management has changed in the 140 years since it was created by Congress. Here are some other tidbits from his talk.

The roughly 3 million visitors a year to Yellowstone National Park arrive in about 1 million vehicles. The average visitor stays only 1.5 days.

Many years ago, to ensure more trout were available to anglers, park staff would go to Molly Island in Yellowstone Lake every spring and smash pelican eggs, because pelicans eat trout.

The single most complex job in Yellowstone, according to Evanoff, is removing snow from its roadways in the spring. The 12-week operation burns about 1,300 gallons of fuel a day and costs about \$1 million.

Solar panels that were installed for a project at Mammoth Hot Springs only contributed 6 percent to the electricity use of the area, but because the panels were visible, people reduced their electricity consumption.

Yellowstone contains more than 2,000 bear-proof canisters for garbage that are emptied every day. When the garbage trucks are not being used they are parked behind a 10-foot-high fence. Forty percent of Yellowstone's waste comes from food.

After realizing that hundreds of tiny shampoo bottles were tossed into the garbage from Yellowstone's 2,000 hotel rooms every day, Xanterra Parks and Resorts, which operates the park's hotels, switched over to cornstarch-based bottles that are biodegradable.

"This is not a contractual demand," Evanoff pointed out. "Xanterra has stepped up to do this."

Don't get Evanoff started on Coleman. The camping conglomerate wouldn't help Evanoff in his attempt to find a way to recycle the steel propane canisters that campers use for their grills and lanterns and then toss in Yellowstone's trash cans. So he raised grant money and found a Billings engineering company to create a \$50,000 machine that drains any remaining gas — which is used to power the machine — and then punctures the cylinders so they can be recycled. Coleman later approached Evanoff to see if Yellowstone would endorse their new "key" system for expelling any excess gas from the canisters into the atmosphere. Their cost to roll out the key system, Evanoff said, was \$685,000.

University of Oregon finishes Atlas of Yellowstone

Associated Press, May 8, 2012

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK - It took nine years, about 100 experts and 30 cartographers to complete, but a University of Oregon-led project to create an atlas of Yellowstone National Park is done.

The Atlas of Yellowstone, published by the University of California Press, was first envisioned nine years ago as a class project in the university's geography department.

The book has about 800 maps and graphics covering topics including archaeology, evidence of climate change, vegetation, bison movement, art, the economy and vegetation in the region, including both Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks.

Collaborators included Yellowstone National Park, the University of Wyoming, Montana State University and area museums. Funding partners included the universities, the Yellowstone Park Foundation and Canon U.S.A.

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Yellowstone East Entrance sees faithful and lucky among park's early visitors

By Ruffin Prevost

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — There are few things in life that seem to be all things to all people, but Yellowstone National Park took on that role Friday, as everyone from lucky accidental tourists, faithful photographers, middle school students and hardcore snowboarders flocked to the park on the first day the Yellowstone East Entrance was open for the 2012 summer season.

<http://www.yellowstonegate.com/2012/05/yellowstone-east-hosts-lucky-faithful-visitors/>

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 225 AM MDT TUE MAY 8 2012

Today...Partly cloudy. Highs 55 to 61.

Tonight...Partly cloudy. Lows 29 to 35.

Wednesday...Mostly sunny. Highs 58 to 64. Southwest winds around 15 mph in the afternoon.

Wednesday Night...Partly cloudy. Lows 31 to 37. Southwest winds around 15 mph in the evening.

Thursday...Cooler. Mostly cloudy. Scattered rain showers and snow showers in the morning...then scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs 45 to 51. West winds around 15 mph. Chance of precipitation 30 percent.

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Wednesday, May 9, 2012

NO PUBLICATION TODAY

YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Thursday, May 10, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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The section of the boardwalk from the **Mud Volcano** parking lot to Dragon's Mouth Spring is temporarily closed in order to facilitate repairs. Watch for motorized equipment on the boardwalk.

Contractors have begun erecting scaffolding around the Headquarters building this week. This is likely to result in some temporary disruption of parking around the building.

Mountain Mobil Auto Glass will be at the Mammoth Garage May 17, 2012. If you are in need of glass work on Government vehicles please call Randy Froelich 307-344-2322. For personal work please call Randy Stands at 406-220-7891.

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IN THE NEWS

Montana judge blocks transfer of Yellowstone bison

By MATTHEW BROWN, Associated Press, May 9, 2012

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) -- A Montana judge on Wednesday halted further transfers of Yellowstone National Park bison, dealing a significant blow to a government-sponsored conservation effort struggling to overcome livestock industry opposition.

The order from Judge John McKeon in Blaine County has the immediate effect of blocking the pending move of several dozen Yellowstone bison to the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. McKeon said the animals must remain on the Fort Peck Reservation, where about 60 bison were transferred in March by state and tribal officials.

More broadly, the order blocks state wildlife officials from arranging future transfers of Yellowstone bison while a lawsuit against the program from ranchers and property rights groups is pending.

The relocations are part of an attempt to curb the periodic slaughter of bison leaving the park. But many ranchers fear the bison could spread disease and compete with cattle for grazing.

In his order for a preliminary injunction, McKeon said the potential injury to the plaintiffs in the case outweighed whatever damage the state might suffer if the bison program is put on hold.

Plaintiffs' attorney Cory Swanson said the ruling protects his clients from possible losses to their livestock operations caused by bison.

"We're happy about it and feel it protects our clients from what we felt sure were future conflicts we weren't going to be compensated for. This eliminates that danger until we can get the whole case decided," Swanson said. The plaintiffs previously dropped a request that the bison at Fort Peck be returned to the park.

Mark Azure with the Fort Belknap Fish and Wildlife Department said tribal officials still hoped to get Yellowstone bison onto their reservation but were not going to make any move until further consultation with attorneys.

The Fort Belknap Reservation is located in north-central Montana and is home to the Assiniboiné and Gros Ventre Indians. Although the tribes were not named as defendants in the case, Azure said he did not want to risk compromising the state's long-term goal of moving bison onto more public and tribal lands.

"From the get-go, it's really never been about just Fort Belknap and Fort Peck," he said. "This is another bump in the road, but I wouldn't say it's the end. I don't know that we're going to stop just because of this."

Sarah Elliot, a spokeswoman for Gov. Brian Schweitzer, said in a statement that the administration disagreed with the judge's characterization of bison as a large predator, a term defined in Montana law as bears, mountain lions and wolves.

Bison once numbered in the millions on the Great Plains and played a central role in American Indian life, providing meat for food, and pelts for clothing and shelter. The animals also feature prominently in many Native American religious ceremonies.

Tim Preso, a Bozeman lawyer who intervened in the case on behalf of environmentalists, said his clients were considering an appeal to the Montana Supreme Court to get the injunction lifted.

The March 19 shipment of bison to Fort Peck came without prior public notice and during a snowstorm - a maneuver by the Schweitzer administration and tribes that was meant to get the bison to Fort Peck ahead of a possible court injunction.

Three days later, McKeon issued a restraining order that temporarily barred any more bison transfers. The plaintiffs contend that later that same day four more bison were shipped to Fort Peck, possibly violating the order. A contempt of court motion filed by the plaintiffs over the second shipment remains pending.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 846 AM MDT THU MAY 10 2012

Hazardous Weather Outlook

Rest Of Today...Cloudy with scattered rain showers. Highs 47 to 53. West winds around 15 mph early in the morning. Chance of showers 30 percent.

Tonight...Mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers and snow showers in the evening...then mostly clear after midnight. Lows 20 to 26. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.

Friday...Mostly sunny in the morning then becoming partly cloudy. Highs 47 to 53.

Friday Night...Partly cloudy. Lows 23 to 29.

Saturday...Mostly sunny in the morning then becoming partly cloudy. Highs 53 to 59.

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IN THE NEWS

Advocates claim early start to hazing puts calves at risk (with video on link)

LAURA LUNDQUIST, Bozeman Chronicle, May 10, 2012

http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/wildlife/article_f082752e-9a4d-11e1-8ce8-001a4bcf887a.html

WEST YELLOWSTONE – A sign beside the highway heading north out of West Yellowstone flashed, “Animals on roadway – next 10 miles.” It was a clue that Wednesday morning was the start of Montana’s spring ritual of hazing bison back into Yellowstone National Park.

“It’s happening a little earlier this year because everything is greening up faster,” said Montana Department of Livestock rider Jeff Mount as he and five other riders waited for their cue near the South Fork of the Madison River south of Horse Butte.

The occasional beat of helicopter blades served as another clue as a state helicopter flew a low, random pattern around the Horse Butte peninsula.

The pilot was looking for bison sheltering the trees, and after chasing them out, he radioed their locations to the riders.

Every winter, bison migrate around 10 miles outside the park to drop their calves in about 100 square miles of

lush, mostly-flat lands between the park boundary and Hebgen Lake. Calves are usually born in late April and May.

Every spring, the DOL — in cooperation with the park, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service — forces the bison back into the park, usually by May 15. Mount and his riders would be herding a dozen outlying bison east across the South Fork and along the southern side of the Madison River into the park. At some point, riders from Horse Butte would herd their bison across the river to join them.

The trek won't stop there. Buffalo Field Campaign spokeswoman Stephany Seay said the riders take the combined herd another seven miles to Conger Knoll the second day and push them farther into the Firehole River area on the third day.

"Some of these calves are just a few days old, and you can see some are still trailing their umbilical cords," Seay said, watching bison being herded on Horse Butte. "They've already been going for four hours without rest and they're tired. Especially since the riders tend to herd aggressively."

A dozen riders rounded up around 300 bison on Horse Butte, an area proposed for year-round bison habitat by FWP because no cattle graze there. The proposal has support from residents and conservationists but the approval process will take a few years.

The air was abuzz with radio calls because also following the bison were a dozen Buffalo Field Campaign workers. They pedaled mountain bikes furiously along the forest roads, marking the progress of the roundup and radioing highlights to the other members.

"The horsemen are trespassing on the Galanis property," one worker radioed from Horse Butte. Seay explained that the Galanis family allows bison on their property but denies the state access. So the helicopter must herd the bison off the property to Forest Service land where the riders take over.

Apparently, the riders got too anxious and strayed across the boundary. They all work for the state, and the drive costs less if they can do it in less time.

But, last year's hazing operation proved there are other ways to save money that benefit bison.

Last year, because of high snowpack and a cool spring, the agencies didn't move the bison until June 2, more than three weeks later than this year. The majority of the calves had been born so bison stayed in the park. If bison are moved before they drop their young, they try to return to the Horse Butte calving grounds, and riders have to haze them back.

"The DOL didn't want to wait, but the Forest Service put its foot down," Seay said. "All the agencies agreed last year that it cut a quarter of the budget."

Mount, who has participated in hazing operations for five years, said moving the bison earlier this season was better because there would be fewer calves. Seay said the calving season came late this year, and yet awkward young were trailing a quarter to a third of the females.

The riders are supposed to cut out of the herd any mothers that are calving or any calves that are struggling, Mount said.

"It's not our purpose to stress these animals," Mount said.

Seay, who has observed bison hazing for nine years, said riders can cut animals out of cattle herds, but it doesn't work with bison so some calves may perish in the drive.

"Bison are like elephants because they have strong family ties," Seay said. "A mother won't allow her calf or herself to be separated from the herd. The riders don't know that.

"We could learn something from bison about how to be a family."

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Are Hungry Bears in Yellowstone Attacking Humans for Food?

Jeff Hull, Outside Magazine, May 7, 2012

For 24 years, from 1986 until 2010, there were no mortal encounters with grizzlies in Yellowstone National Park. But four deadly incidents over the past two summers have hikers on edge, reigniting the fierce debate over bear management.

<http://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/natural-intelligence/The-Grizzly-Truth.html?page=1>

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 213 AM MDT FRI MAY 11 2012

Today...Mostly sunny in the morning then becoming partly cloudy. Highs 48 to 54.

Tonight...Partly cloudy in the evening then clearing. Lows 25 to 31.

Saturday...Mostly sunny in the morning...then partly cloudy with isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs 54 to 60. Chance of thunderstorms 20 percent.

Saturday Night...Partly cloudy in the evening then clearing. Lows 27 to 33.

Sunday...Mostly sunny. Highs 61 to 67.

Sunday Night...Mostly clear. Lows 31 to 37.

WE WANT YOUR SUBMISSIONS!

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Monday, May 14, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Starting at 7:30a.m. **North District** will be doing some grinding and blade work around the North Entrance kiosk from May 14-17. There will be some short Delays. Contact is Everett Munson at x2350 or Tom Cunningham at x2818.

Mountain Mobil Auto Glass will be at the Mammoth Garage May 17, 2012. If you are in need of glass work on Government vehicles please call Randy Froelich 307-344-2322. For personal work please call Randy Stands at 406-220-7891.

For Mammoth employees who live in Gardiner please join us for a bicycle "**Group Ride to Work**" up the Old Gardiner Road Tuesday May 15th – meet at the North Entrance Gate at 6.15am – we won't leave you behind! Call Stacey Gunther (X2239) if you are interested.

The abstract submission period for the **11th Biennial Scientific Conference on the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem** ends tomorrow, May 15, 2012.

Call for abstracts: <http://gyesciconf.greateryellowstonescience.org/callforabstracts2012>

Submit an abstract: http://gyesciconf.greateryellowstonescience.org/submit_abstract_2012

Wilderness Fall Protection class in Yellowstone May 21-24 with trainers from Gravitec - the folks who wrote the NPS Fall Protection Handbook for DO50B. The class will focus on the design and implementation of backcountry fall protection systems using natural anchor points in the field. The class is planned for two classroom days in Mammoth (park headquarters) and two days in the field. Students completing this 40 hour course will receive training at the "Competent Person" Level consistent with ANSI Z359 Fall Protection Code. Contact Chris Glenn or Cager Messer with questions at 307-344-2357.

IN THE NEWS

Montana FWP to hold Missoula meeting on bison conservation plan

ROB CHANEY of The Missoulian

MISSOULA -- An open house on bison management in Missoula on Monday won't cover a lot of reasons bison have been in the news lately.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has a long-term bison conservation plan up for public review. But it has little to do with last week's hazing bison along the borders of Yellowstone National Park, or the delivery of 80 bison to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in March, or the court order blocking further bison relocations issued on Thursday – or even a new tentative staffing agreement on the National Bison Range at Moiese.

Monday's meeting will cover how to manage free-ranging bison as a wildlife species in the state of Montana, including how wild herds would affect the environment, cattle grazing, hunting opportunities and other issues. The scoping meeting is the beginning of a three-year process that results in an environmental impact statement for bison management. It will research topics such as the ability of bison to spread disease to domestic livestock, competition between bison and other wildlife, rangeland needs and availability, damage to fencing, public safety, and how bison would be legally classified for hunting, raising or protecting.

Where the bison would be turned loose hasn't been decided. Informal proposals have included the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area, Bob Marshall Wilderness and various Indian reservations. FWP hopes to have some relocation sites chosen by this summer.

Bison and cattle have mingled in Utah's Henry Mountains as well as on ranches in Saskatchewan. However, one of FWP's research goals is to learn how the two species compete for forage, whether they compete for water as well, and whether they might interbreed.

While many bison in the United States have some cattle genes from past interbreeding efforts, the two animals don't readily mix in the wild.

Preliminary FWP proposals prefer about 1,000 bison for a free-ranging herd to be self-sustaining and genetically preserved. If a single area could not be found to support that large a herd, smaller sites might need to have individuals transferred from time to time to keep the gene pool diverse.

The minimum free-ranging herd size would be about 400 animals. The agency is also considering using even smaller herds as research populations for future programs.

Disease monitoring would be a major part of the project. Cattle producers have struggled to keep brucellosis out of their herds, and maintaining Montana's brucellosis-free legal status has an impact on the amount of testing and certification expense they incur on the way to market.

While bison in Yellowstone National Park have been found to carry brucellosis, so have wild elk outside the park. Studies vary on how easy it is for one species to transfer the disease to another. FWP plans to use only bison certified disease-free in any relocation efforts.

FWP manages some bison as a game animal while the Montana Department of Livestock classifies others as a "species requiring disease control." Other bordering states might also have issues with bison that cross state lines, as might owners of domestic bison.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 218 AM MDT MON MAY 14 2012

Today...Sunny. Highs 64 to 70.**Tonight...**Clear. Lows 33 to 39.**Tuesday...**Mostly sunny in the morning...then partly cloudy with isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds in the afternoon. Highs 66 to 72. Southwest winds around 15 mph late in the afternoon. Chance of thunderstorms 20 percent.**Tuesday Night...**Partly cloudy. Slight chance of rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the evening. Lows 37 to 43. Southwest winds around 15 mph in the evening. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.**Wednesday...**Partly cloudy with slight chance of rain showers in the morning...then mostly cloudy with slight chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs 64 to 70. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.**Wednesday Night...**Mostly cloudy with slight chance of thunderstorms in the evening...then partly cloudy after midnight. Lows 35 to 41. Chance of thunderstorms 20 percent.**WE WANT YOUR SUBMISSIONS!**

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Tuesday, May 15, 2012



Seasonal interpretive Rangers hone their presentation skills last week during a sample visitor talk at Artist Point. (NPS photo, Jay Elhard)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day! Saturday May 19. Join the annual ranger-led birdwatching car caravan on the West Entrance Road beginning at the Madison Picnic Area at 8 a.m. The morning of birdwatching will be followed by free bird-related activities and programs at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. For more information, contact Katy Duffy at 307-344-2296 or katy_duffy@nps.gov

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Wilderness Fall Protection class in Yellowstone May 21-24 with trainers from Gravitec - the folks who wrote the NPS Fall Protection Handbook for DO50B. The class will focus on the design and implementation of backcountry fall protection systems using natural anchor points in the field. The class is planned for two classroom days in Mammoth (park headquarters) and two days in the field. Students completing this 40 hour course will receive training at the "Competent Person" Level consistent with ANSI Z359 Fall Protection Code. Contact Chris Glenn or Cager Messer with questions at 307-344-2357.

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IN THE NEWS

Judge blocks helicopter hazing of wild bison

Associated Press

HELENA - A federal judge on Monday blocked Montana officials from driving wild bison back into Yellowstone National Park with a helicopter after wildlife advocates argued hazing from the air could harm grizzly bears in the area.

The ruling by U.S. District Judge Charles Lovell grounds plans by the Montana Department of Livestock to hire a helicopter Tuesday to haze about 70 bison out of the Hebgen Basin west of the park before cattle are moved into the area to graze.

Christian Mackay, the agency's executive officer, said he will instead ask the state wildlife department and National Park Service for additional personnel to assist six or eight horseback riders now slated to drive the bison on the ground. He said he did not know how effective they will be without the noise from the air to scare the animals.

"We're about to find out," Mackay said. "We're going to put forth every effort to return them to the park."

Hazing is an annual event to drive back bison that had wandered from the park in search of food at lower elevations during the winter. The helicopter flights are authorized and paid for by the state Department of Livestock in coordination with state and federal agencies that oversee the Interagency Bison Management Plan that governs bison movements around Yellowstone.

Lovell granted the temporary restraining order after a hearing in Helena in which attorneys for the wildlife advocacy group Alliance for the Wild Rockies argued state and federal officials had not properly studied how the use of helicopters affects grizzly bears.

Grizzlies are threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, and the advocacy group says the hazing flights can drive bears from their habitat around the Yellowstone ecosystem.

"The helicopter can't distinguish between a bison and a grizzly bear," alliance attorney Rebecca Smith said. "These areas are the last habitat refuges for grizzly bears."

Smith said there is scant analysis on the effects of helicopters on grizzlies contained in the Interagency Bison Management Plan that is used as the authority for hazing operations. The bison management plan assumes grizzlies will still be in their dens when the hazing occurs, when in reality bears are very active in May, June and July.

The advocacy group wants the agencies involved in the Interagency Bison Management Plan to conduct a new scientific study on the effects on grizzlies.

Department of Justice attorney Coby Howell argued a bear fleeing a short distance after being startled once by a helicopter is a temporary displacement that does not threaten the entire species.

The bison management plan already accounts for grizzlies by ordering a hazing operation to stop when there is one in the path, he said.

"We don't deny there are grizzly bears in the area. If actual operations run into a grizzly bear, then they cease," Howell said.

The livestock agency twice last week used a helicopter to haze bison back to the park, but 70 of those bison have returned to the Horse Butte Peninsula west of Yellowstone, Mackay said.

Smith said the Department of Livestock doesn't actually know the location of grizzlies outside the park because it does not coordinate with the U.S. Forest Service. A Forest Service employee spotted a grizzly a half-mile away before hazing operations began last Wednesday, and the operation was not halted.

The Alliance for the Wild Rockies last year had asked Lovell to block the helicopters, but Lovell ruled against them after determining the state agency had completed its hazing operations and concluding there were technical problems with the advocacy group's request.

Lovell, in granting the temporary restraining order, did not say why he was ruling in favor of the wildlife advocates. But the lawsuit the group filed last year challenging the use of helicopters is still pending, and Lovell said during Monday's hearing that he was surprised that the Department of Livestock would order additional helicopter hazing before that case had been resolved.

Lovell also said that the problems he found with the group's previous request last year had been fixed, and he questioned what state and federal agencies had done to specifically address bears at the site of a hazing operation when their population already has been diminished.

"Great care should be taken to make sure they're not taken or distressed in noncompliance of the law," Lovell said.

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Military families to get free pass to national parks

By Paul Courson, CNN, May 15, 2012

Washington (CNN) -- Members of the U.S. military and their families are now eligible for free passes to national parks and monuments as part of a program timed to celebrate Armed Forces Day on Saturday, the White House announced.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar was to issue the first passes Tuesday at an event in Yorktown, Virginia. The passes normally costs \$80 and cover admission to 2,000 locations managed by the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service and other federal agencies.

Under the program, military members and their dependents will only need to show Defense Department identification to get the free passes.

"We have a new way to thank those who serve their country in the military," Salazar said Monday.

The program will cost \$2 million to \$6 million in lost revenue, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis said.

"We collect about \$150 million in fees nationwide, so we don't think that this amount of decrease will be significant to the overall operations of the service," Jarvis said.

In a conference call with reporters, Jill Biden -- the wife of Vice President Joe Biden -- said, "We are so pleased to be putting out a welcome mat for our military families at America's most beautiful and storied sites."

Jill Biden and First Lady Michelle Obama are leading a national effort called Joining Forces designed to provide support to military members and their families.

The action by the White House moves ahead of legislation proposed last year called the National Parks Freedom Pass Act.

The legislation, introduced in July by Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana, would cut the cost of the annual pass in half for active duty military members. The bill also would expand a \$10 lifetime pass for retired military by removing the current minimum age of 62.

A similar House bill remains in committee. That proposal from Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Florida, calls for a lifetime half-price pass for members of the military.

White House officials made no mention of either bill in their announcement.

In addition to honoring those who have defended the country, Salazar noted strong ties between the parks and the military, going back to the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872.

When that park was created, security and supervision were provided by the mounted force of the Army, the Cavalry. They were considered the first park rangers until the National Park Service was created 44 years later.

Yellowstone super-volcano less super, more active

PlanetEarth Online, May 15, 2012

The super-volcano beneath Yellowstone National Park may be less super, but more active, than previously thought. An eruption is "long overdue," say scientists.

<http://earthsky.org/earth/yellowstone-super-volcano-less-super-more-active>

WEATHER**NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY**

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 218 AM MDT MON MAY 14 2012

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Wednesday, May 16, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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North District will be doing some grinding and blade work around the North Entrance kiosk from May 14-17. There will be some short Delays. Contact is Everett Munson at x2350 or Tom Cunningham at x2818.

The **Employee Express** (EEX) system will be down between 7am and 12pm Eastern Standard Time, Saturday, May 19th, for implementation of the Spring 2012 release. Contact Nathan Anderson at x2051 with questions.

Mountain Mobil Auto Glass will be at the Mammoth Garage May 17, 2012. If you are in need of glass work on Government vehicles please call Randy Froelich 307-344-2322. For personal work please call Randy Stands at 406-220-7891.

There will be **NO open gym** this week at the Mammoth Community Center due to LE training.

Friday, June 8th at 7PM, the **Mammoth Community Center** will hold a screening of the film "Where the Yellowstone Goes" at the MCC. The evening will begin at 6 pm with music, brews poured by Red Lodge Ales, the usual concession options, a great sponsor raffle and a chance to visit before the film begins.

The film follows a 30-day drift boat journey down the longest "undammed" river in the lower 48. Intimate portraits of locals in both booming cities and dusty, dwindling towns along the Yellowstone River, illustrate the history and controversies surrounding this enigmatic watershed leading to questions about its future. Connect with colorful characters, get lost in the hypnotic cast of a fly rod, and experience silhouetted moments of fireside stories on this heartfelt river adventure from the Gateway to Yellowstone National Park in Gardiner, Montana to the confluence of the Missouri River at historic Fort Buford, North Dakota.

Following the film, join the director, producer and some of the cast for a question and answer session. In all, it will be a great night in Yellowstone!

Tickets are available on line: <http://mammoth-wtyg.eventbrite.com/> or at a higher cost at the door. The event is made possible by our sponsors - The Flying Pig Rafting Company (www.flyingpigrafting.com) and by Headwaters of the Yellowstone B&B (www.headwatersyellowstone.com) and ALL proceeds will benefit the Mammoth Community Center.

If you have any questions, or if you'd like to volunteer, please send us an email at board@mammothcommunity.org

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RECENT NEWS RELEASES

May 16, 2012

Active Duty US Military Offered Free Entrance to All National Parks

On May 19 – Armed Forces Day – the National Park Service will begin issuing an annual pass offering free entrance to Yellowstone and the all 397 national parks for active duty military members and their dependents. <http://www.nps.gov/yell/parknews/active-duty-us-military-offered-free-entrance-to-all-national-parks.htm>

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May 15, 2012

Free Programs Mark Migratory Bird Day In Yellowstone

Like clockwork each spring, many migratory birds return to or fly over environments like Yellowstone National Park en route to their breeding areas.

<http://www.nps.gov/yell/parknews/12028.htm>

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IN THE NEWS

State kicks off bison meetings amid legal fray

Associated Press, May 15, 2012

MISSOULA, Mont. (AP) -- Montana wildlife officials have kicked off a statewide tour to gauge public opinion on the reintroduction of wild bison to public lands, even as a court order blocking efforts to restore the animals was appealed Tuesday to the state Supreme Court.

Dozens of people turned out in Missoula to weigh in on the potential for bison to be returned to parts of Montana where they have been absent since the 1880s. That's when bison herds across the West were wiped out by commercial hunting.

Resistance to their return has been on the rise within the livestock industry. Ranchers and landowners at Monday's meeting sported anti-bison buttons and warned of damage the animals could cause. Wildlife advocates and hunters spoke in favor of adding another wild animal to the landscape, The Missoulian reported <http://bit.ly/LNB2vF>

Supporters of bison have a powerful ally in outgoing Gov. Brian Schweitzer, who on Tuesday announced the state was appealing a district court ruling that blocked further transfers of Yellowstone National Park bison. About 60 park bison had been moved to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in March over the objections of some ranchers and eastern Montana officials.

Schweitzer said Tuesday that ample room remains on Montana's vast landscape for bison. He also insisted the Yellowstone animals were moved legally. "We're just taking it right to the Supreme Court," the Democratic governor told The Associated Press.

Environmental groups also have appealed the order from Judge Ronald McKeon, who last week granted a temporary restraining order sought by plaintiffs in the case to bar more bison relocations.

Schweitzer said fears of bison crowding out cattle or wildlife from grazing space were overstated.

"We've got 150,000 head of elk, 500,000 head of deer, antelope that are free-roaming, along with moose and bighorn sheep and mountain goats," Schweitzer said. "It's a long-time before there's a herd of buffalo that will compete for grass with any of the other wildlife species or cattle."

Despite all the attention bison have drawn in recent years, state bison specialist Arnie Dood said no management plan for the animals exists. Monday's meeting was the first in a series to gather informal comments about what the plan should consider.

By this fall, wildlife officials should have enough public response to flesh out a proposal of where and how many bison might be wanted or tolerated, Dood said.

Chinook-area rancher Vicki Hofeldt said that a group of bison on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation were "destructive animals" that plowed through fences to find food on private land.

Jim Posewitz of the Helena Hunters and Anglers responded that bison are the last major wild animal to be returned to Montana's landscape, and his group favors allowing bison to roam in the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge.

"We don't think it's asking too much to find a piece of public land to do this," Posewitz said.

Huson rancher Tom Richardson called the state's management of wolves a failure and said he had little faith the agency would handle bison any better. He also questioned where the agency would get the money for this effort.

Wildlife advocate Kit Fischer said the bison population could be controlled by hunting. He also said that landowners shouldn't be expected to take a financial hit because of the reintroduction.

Other issues raised included dealing with the potential for passing disease between bison and domestic livestock, how bison would affect other wildlife in their territory and who would be in charge of managing them.

Additional public hearings are scheduled this month in Kalispell, Glasgow, Helena, Billings, Miles City, Great Falls and Bozeman.

By fall 2013, a draft environmental impact statement is expected to be available for official public review and comment. A final decision to either approve the reintroduction or shelve the idea could arrive around the end of 2014.

Wildlife spotters hit Yellowstone Park for spring viewing

Martin Kidston, Billings Gazette, May 16, 2012

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — On a bluff overlooking Hayden Valley, Matt Spoor and Alison Theobald focus their spotting scope on a distant ridge.

http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/wildlife-spotters-hit-yellowstone-park-for-spring-viewing/article_62257bb5-d1d3-5374-aefa-2820ddf91bd8.html

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 253 AM MDT WED MAY 16 2012

Hazardous Weather Outlook

Today...Partly cloudy in the morning then becoming mostly cloudy. Isolated dry thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds in the afternoon. Highs 65 to 71. Southwest winds around 15 mph late in the afternoon.

Tonight...Mostly cloudy. Scattered rain showers and isolated dry thunderstorms in the evening...then isolated thunderstorms after midnight. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds. Lows 34 to 40. Chance of precipitation 30 percent.

Thursday...Mostly cloudy. Scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the morning...then scattered thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds. Highs 58 to 64. Southwest winds around 15 mph late in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 40 percent.

Thursday Night...Cloudy. Scattered thunderstorms in the evening... Then scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms after midnight. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds. Lows 31 to 37. Southwest winds around 15 mph in the evening. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

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YNP@Work

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Thursday, May 17, 2012



Watch Your Step!! Snakes like this hefty Bullsnake seen yesterday at the Mammoth Credit Union enjoy being out and about in the warm spring grass just as much as you do! (NPS Photo, Georgia McAdams)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Roth TSP** feature has arrived and you will be able to designate your first contributions on May 21, 2012 (Pay Period 12) which will then be effective in Pay Period 13.

There are two ways you can start to designate your TSP contributions to include TSP Roth. Beginning May 21, 2012, you can login to www.employeeexpress.gov and make your designations there or you can fill out the attached TSP-1 & TSP-1C form and send to the HROC - Benefits Branch and they will enter your new TSP contributions through our internal HR system. If you use Employee Express, you do not have to complete any forms, the entire designation is through the website. If you want to complete the TSP-1 or TSP-1C form, you must then send it back to HROC - Benefits Branch by either faxing the form to 303-985-6945 or you can go to our work order system OnTrac and quickly create a work order ticket and attach the TSP-1 or TSP-1C form directly to the ticket. To use our OnTrac work order system from a Government computer go to:

<https://hrhelp.nps.gov>. As with most employee benefit changes, we encourage you to use either Employee Express or our internal OnTrac system to be able to track the status of your request. Reminder: The TSP-1C form is for employees Age 50 and over who would like to make TSP Catch-Up contributions.

Roth TSP is an important new feature that will give you greater flexibility in the tax treatment of your employee contributions. It will allow you to make after-tax contributions to your TSP account. These Roth contributions are tax-free when withdrawn; their earnings are also tax-free as long as certain IRS Requirements are met.

You should carefully consider whether Roth TSP would be to your advantage. As with all tax matters, you should seek the advice of a qualified tax or financial advisor for information pertaining to your specific tax situation. In the meantime, visit www.tsp.gov to find answers to general questions about the Roth TSP.

If you have any additional questions about the Roth TSP, please do not hesitate to call the HROC at 1-877-642-4743 and ask to speak to your Regional Employee Benefits Branch representative.

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The **fire season outlook** for the Park is now available at P:/2012 Fires.

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Yellowstone Radio Training Annual Requirement Information: All National Park Service employees in Yellowstone are required to complete a radio training course or refresher each calendar year. This year, two options are provided to meet the requirement:

1. Classroom Instruction: New permanent, term, and seasonal employees, new Volunteers-In-Parks (VIPs), and those returning from breaks in service of over twelve months, are required to attend the two hour classroom training course. Instructions to access the Radio Training Calendar / Sign-up are at the bottom of this email. Supervisors can email YELL_Radio_Shop to schedule a classroom course. RVP supervisors may request LE and EMS specific courses that address specific features such as encryption.

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Contact John Darr at 2431, Trent Coppinger at 2434, or Bret De Young at 2070 if you have questions.

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The **Employee Express (EEX)** system will be down between 7am and 12pm Eastern Standard Time, Saturday, May 19th, for implementation of the Spring 2012 release. Contact Nathan Anderson at x2051 with questions.

- - - -

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day! Saturday May 19. Join the annual ranger-led birdwatching car caravan on the West Entrance Road beginning at the Madison Picnic Area at 8 a.m. The morning of birdwatching will be followed by free bird-related activities and programs at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. For more information, contact Katy Duffy at 307-344-2296 or katy_duffy@nps.gov

There will be **NO open gym** this week at the Mammoth Community Center due to LE training.

Friday, June 8th at 7PM, the **Mammoth Community Center** will hold a screening of the film "Where the Yellowstone Goes" at the MCC. The evening will begin at 6 pm with music, brews poured by Red Lodge Ales, the usual concession options, a great sponsor raffle and a chance to visit before the film begins.

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If you have any questions, or if you'd like to volunteer, please send us an email at board@mammothcommunity.org

Wondering who your **Employee Safety Committee** (EmSC) representative is? A current roster is available at the Employee Safety Committee Sharepoint site at <http://inpyellshare/emsc>.

Contact your District or Division EmSC representative to share comments, concerns or ideas in regards to employee safety and wellness.

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RECENT NEWS RELEASES

May 16, 2012

Active Duty US Military Offered Free Entrance to All National Parks

On May 19 – Armed Forces Day – the National Park Service will begin issuing an annual pass offering free entrance to Yellowstone and the all 397 national parks for active duty military members and their dependents. <http://www.nps.gov/yell/parknews/active-duty-us-military-offered-free-entrance-to-all-national-parks.htm>

May 15, 2012

Free Programs Mark Migratory Bird Day In Yellowstone

Like clockwork each spring, many migratory birds return to or fly over environments like Yellowstone National Park en route to their breeding areas.

<http://www.nps.gov/yell/parknews/12028.htm>

IN THE NEWS

Montana hazes bison back into park on horseback

By SUE ROESLER, The Prairie Star | May 15, 2012

Captured bison bulls will be part of a brucellosis study to sterilize females in target group.

Montana government workers are hazing bison back into Yellowstone National Park this week so cattle can begin grazing with less fear of contracting brucellosis.

Marty Zaluski, state veterinarian for Montana, said he was one of several hazing the bison back into the park on horseback, Tuesday, May 15.

“Yesterday (May 14) U.S. District Judge Charles C. Lovell issued a temporary restraining order to prevent the use of helicopters for hazing efforts,” Zaluski said. They have been rounding up and moving the bison back into the park on horseback this week, he said.

“We have identified about 70 bison that we are moving back into the park,” Zaluski said.

He added there were no domestic bison herds in the area, so they knew all the bison found wandering outside the park borders were from Yellowstone Park herds.

Wildlife advocates had asked the court to stop helicopter hazing, claiming the low-flying copters could harm grizzly bears in the area, according to court documents.

At the beginning of the bison hazing, government workers rounded up 10 bison bulls for analysis to be part of a unique USDA-APHIS study intended to vaccinate females from becoming pregnant, Zaluski said.

USDA-APHIS is conducting the study, headed by Jack Ryan, a USDA-APHIS veterinarian based in Fort Collins, Colo. Ryan has conducted numerous studies on bison, wildlife, brucellosis and the vaccine, Zaluski said.

The vaccine is called GonaCon. According to USDA-APHIS literature on the vaccine, it is a gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) immunocontraceptive vaccine developed by scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC).

“What GonaCon does is it causes an animal’s body to make antibodies against its own GnRH to prevent the animal from becoming pregnant,” Zaluski said.

He said USDA-APHIS has developed a hypothesis through several studies that identifies the age of female bison that would most likely be carrying and spreading brucellosis, which would cause them to shed, abort or calve animals with brucellosis.

The studies have demonstrated the older a female becomes the more they become acclimated to the disease and less likely they are to spread the disease, Zaluski said. “Most of the bison females spreading the disease are close to the younger breeding age,” Zaluski said.

Out of the 10 bulls captured before the hazing effort began, all were tested for brucellosis and only three were brucellosis-free and thus could be used in the study, he said. “This is a very brucellosis prevalent area,” Zaluski said. The bison would be paired with females that had been given the vaccine.

If the vaccine works as it has done in other testing, they would then be able to give the vaccine to the relatively small number of targeted females in the park herd that are in the prime breeding age and have been exposed to the disease, he said.

Brucellosis is caused by a group of bacteria known specifically as the genus *Brucella*, according to the Montana Department of Agriculture. In cattle and bison, the disease usually localizes in the reproductive organs and/or the udder, and bacteria are shed in milk or via the aborted fetus, afterbirth, or other reproductive tract discharges, according to the Montana DOA.

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Wolf found near Pine Ridge migrated from Yellowstone

Kevin Woster Journal staff | May 16, 2012

The gray wolf found dead Monday morning near Pine Ridge made a 400-mile journey from Yellowstone National Park to southwest South Dakota in less than two months, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wolf specialist said Tuesday.

Mike Jimenez of Jackson, Wyo., said information received from the radio-transmitter collar on the wolf identified it as a 3- to 4-year-old male that was part of a wolf pack in the southeast part of Yellowstone.

“This wolf was born in Yellowstone Park and was part of the Yellowstone Delta Pack, about a dozen animals in the very far southeastern corner of the park,” Jimenez said. “It was a pack member there until late March or early April and then it took off.”

The wolf was checked and weighed by tribal wildlife specialists in Pine Ridge, who contacted the Fish and Wildlife Service. It weighed 130 pounds, making it a “sizable wolf,” Jimenez said.

The wolf apparently died when struck by a vehicle late Sunday or early Monday along U.S. Highway 18 east of Pine Ridge. It probably migrated away from its home ground in search of a mate and new territory, Jimenez said.

Wolves are likely to leave established range when those areas are filled up with other wolves, he said. Sometimes they continue on long migrations and end up in areas, such as western South Dakota, where chances of finding a mate and establishing a pack are slim, he said.

“More of the suitable places are filled up with wolves, so they’re expanding, and you get these kinds of dispersals,” Jimenez said.

Wolves show up in South Dakota from time to time, sometimes migrating west from populations in the Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan or east from the populations in Montana and Wyoming.

State Game, Fish & Parks Department officials have said they have not found any evidence of established wolf populations in South Dakota, where the habitat base for the large predators is more limited than in the Yellowstone area.

But Jimenez said it is possible that a wolf pair couldn't take up breeding in the Black Hills region. The issue would be human tolerance, he said.

"There's no reason they couldn't from a wolf's perspective," Jimenez said. "The problem for them is that the further they get from a wolf population, the lower the chances of finding a mate."

There are other potential problems, however, from a human perspective.

"The real problem is conflict with people," Jimenez said. "If you get wolf dispersal to areas heavily used for livestock grazing, wolves tend to get in trouble."

Some wolves can co-exist near humans if they have plentiful wild game, such as elk and deer. Others, however, find they like livestock. Large expanses of public land without grazing livestock help wolves stick to wild game and stay out of trouble, Jimenez said.

It is unlikely that a pack has established itself anywhere in western South Dakota without being detected, he said.

"Wolves are not very subtle," he said. "When you see packs forming, they don't stay hidden very long."

Wildlife spotters hit Yellowstone Park for spring viewing

Martin Kidston, Billings Gazette, May 16, 2012

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — On a bluff overlooking Hayden Valley, Matt Spoor and Alison Theobald focus their spotting scope on a distant ridge.

http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/wildlife-spotters-hit-yellowstone-park-for-spring-viewing/article_62257bb5-d1d3-5374-aefa-2820ddf91bd8.html

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 232 AM MDT THU MAY 17 2012

Hazardous Weather Outlook

Today...Mostly cloudy. Isolated thunderstorms in the morning...then scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds and small hail in the afternoon. Highs 56 to 62. Southwest winds around 15 mph in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Tonight...Cloudy. Scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds and small hail in the evening. Lows 31 to 37. Southwest winds around 15 mph early in the evening. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Friday...Cloudy. Scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds and small hail in the morning. Highs 45 to 51. West winds around 15 mph late in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Friday Night...Mostly cloudy. Scattered snow showers and isolated rain showers in the evening...then isolated snow showers after midnight. Lows 25 to 31. West winds around 15 mph in the evening. Chance of precipitation 30 percent.

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Friday, May 18, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Roth TSP** feature has arrived and you will be able to designate your first contributions on May 21, 2012 (Pay Period 12) which will then be effective in Pay Period 13.

There are two ways you can start to designate your TSP contributions to include TSP Roth. Beginning May 21, 2012, you can login to www.employeeexpress.gov and make your designations there or you can fill out the attached TSP-1 & TSP-1C form and send to the HROC - Benefits Branch and they will enter your new TSP contributions through our internal HR system. If you use Employee Express, you do not have to complete any forms, the entire designation is through the website. If you want to complete the TSP-1 or TSP-1C form, you must then send it back to HROC - Benefits Branch by either faxing the form to 303-985-6945 or you can go to our work order system OnTrac and quickly create a work order ticket and attach the TSP-1 or TSP-1C form directly to the ticket. To use our OnTrac work order system from a Government computer go to: <https://hrhelp.nps.gov>. As with most employee benefit changes, we encourage you to use either Employee Express or our internal OnTrac system to be able to track the status of your request. Reminder: The TSP-1C form is for employees Age 50 and over who would like to make TSP Catch-Up contributions.

Roth TSP is an important new feature that will give you greater flexibility in the tax treatment of your employee contributions. It will allow you to make after-tax contributions to your TSP account. These Roth contributions are tax-free when withdrawn; their earnings are also tax-free as long as certain IRS Requirements are met.

You should carefully consider whether Roth TSP would be to your advantage. As with all tax matters, you should seek the advice of a qualified tax or financial advisor for information pertaining to your specific tax situation. In the meantime, visit www.tsp.gov to find answers to general questions about the Roth TSP.

If you have any additional questions about the Roth TSP, please do not hesitate to call the HROC at 1-877-642-4743 and ask to speak to your Regional Employee Benefits Branch representative.

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The **fire season outlook** for the Park is now available at P:/2012 Fires.

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The newly released NWS Climate Prediction Center's outlook for June, July, and August forecasts:

-- Normal temps for Montana and above normal temps for NW Wyoming
-- Well below normal precip for Western and SW Montana and below normal precip for NW Wyoming and Central MT.

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/seasonal.php?lead=1

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Following the film, join the director, producer and some of the cast for a question and answer session. In all, it will be a great night in Yellowstone!

Tickets are available on line: <http://mammoth-wtyg.eventbrite.com/> or at a higher cost at the door. The event is made possible by our sponsors - The Flying Pig Rafting Company (www.flyingpigrafting.com) and by

Headwaters of the Yellowstone B&B (www.headwatersyellowstone.com) and ALL proceeds will benefit the Mammoth Community Center.

If you have any questions, or if you'd like to volunteer, please send us an email at board@mammothcommunity.org

Employee Safety Committee: Minutes from the May 9 Employee Safety Committee Meeting have been posted to the Sharepoint site at: <http://inpyellshare/emsc> You will find them located under Documents-Agendas and Minutes, folder Meeting Minutes, folder 2012 Meeting Minutes, pdf document Employee Safety Committee Meeting Minutes 5-9-2012

Wilderness Fall Protection class in Yellowstone May 21-24 with trainers from Gravitec - the folks who wrote the NPS Fall Protection Handbook for DO50B. The class will focus on the design and implementation of backcountry fall protection systems using natural anchor points in the field. The class is planned for two classroom days in Mammoth (park headquarters) and two days in the field. Students completing this 40 hour course will receive training at the "Competent Person" Level consistent with ANSI Z359 Fall Protection Code. Contact Chris Glenn or Cager Messer with questions at 307-344-2357.

IN THE NEWS

National Park Unit Should Remain a Sanctuary for Newly Recovered Species

Tom Kiernan, President, National Parks Conservation Association, Huffington Post, May 18, 2012

By the end of the 1920s, the gray wolf had been eradicated from the greater Yellowstone ecosystem of northwestern Wyoming and southwestern Montana. This species had called this beautiful, mountainous region home for thousands of years, but was pushed out by human development and largely unfounded fears. And the environment suffered for it. Without a top predator, the elk and other grazing species here became lazy, damaging the health of habitats and other species by staying too long in one location and compromising their own genetic make-up.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tom-kiernan/endangered-species-parks_b_1521063.html

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 234 AM MDT FRI MAY 18 2012

Hazardous Weather Outlook

Today...Cloudy. Numerous snow showers with possible showers and thunderstorms in the morning...then scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds and small hail in the afternoon. No snow accumulation. Highs 43 to 49. Chance of precipitation 60 percent.

Tonight...Mostly cloudy. Isolated thunderstorms in the evening... Then intermittent sprinkles after midnight. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds and small hail in the evening. Lows 25 to 31. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.

Saturday...Mostly cloudy. Isolated rain showers and snow showers in the morning...then slight chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs 49 to 55. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.

Saturday Night...Mostly cloudy with intermittent sprinkles and slight chance of thunderstorms in the evening...then partly cloudy after midnight. Lows 27 to 33. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.

Sunday...Partly cloudy in the morning then clearing. Highs 55 to 61.

Sunday Night...Mostly clear. Lows 32 to 38.

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Monday, May 21, 2012

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Celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month! Join Yellowstone National Park employees marching in the parade and staffing an informational table about the park at the 2012 Montana Pride in Bozeman on Saturday, June 16. All NPS, concessions (Xanterra, Delaware North, Yellowstone Park Service Stations, and Medcor), and Yellowstone Association employees and volunteers are welcome. Straight allies, especially parents, friends, and family of LGBT loved ones, are

especially encouraged to attend and participate in Pride. For more information, contact Kevin Franken at 307-344-2514 or Kevin_Franken@nps.gov.

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IN THE NEWS

Officials wrestle with hazing Yellowstone bison during birthing season

By EVE BYRON Independent Record, May 20, 2012

WEST YELLOWSTONE — The lone bison moved slower than the rest of her herd last week as they wandered west across Highway 287, one of about 40 animals defying the earlier attempt by a dozen men on horseback to push them east into Yellowstone National Park. A closer look revealed the reason she was lagging behind — two small legs protruded from her womb, and she appeared ready to finish giving birth once she reached the shelter of the nearby pine trees.

The cow didn't appear distressed or impaired as she slowly lumbered across the highway, stopping traffic as she crossed the asphalt. But she symbolized the concerns of various environmental groups, who have long complained that hazing the bison that have migrated outside Yellowstone back into the park is hard on pregnant cows as well as newborn calves.

"I've seen them push babies that have collapsed or that are trying to nurse," said Stephany Seay, a member of the Buffalo Field Campaign, which monitors the hazing effort. "Our patrols noticed one calf that had just been born — you could still see its umbilical cord — and the mom still had the afterbirth attached. We pointed it out to the agents, and they couldn't have cared less."

However, state and federal officials say they do use special care with bison that have either just given birth or are about to do so.

"We make every effort to leave them behind if we see them going into labor, as well as if it's a cow with a young calf that can't travel well," said Christian Mackay, Montana Department of Livestock's executive officer. "We try to keep it as low impact as possible."

Al Nash, a spokesman for the park, said pregnant bison and the calves are a concern for all of the state and federal partners involved in the Interagency Bison Management Plan, known as the IBMP.

"I have heard a variety of people involved in that operation discuss issues about choosing not to move a given set of animals because by their appearance they may be about to give birth or just have given birth," Nash said.

The reason the bison are hazed back into the park during their calving season has to do with brucellosis, a disease that causes animals to miscarry and has been found in the afterbirth of infected animals.

Ranchers fear that grazing cattle might pick up the disease, so the IBMP partners — the Department of Livestock, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Yellowstone National Park, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and three tribes — decided to put time and space between bison and cattle.

Nash noted that they try to haze bison back into the park around May 15, which is when enough snow should have melted to allow them to graze on grass. Ranchers can put cattle on leased public lands after June 15. "It's about physical and time separation of bison and cattle coming onto the landscape ... of about a 30-day period," Nash said. "So if by any chance there was fetal material on the ground at this time in the spring, there should be adequate sunlight, heat or scavengers to take that material away or make it noninfectious prior to the cattle going onto the landscape."

Nash is quick to add that pregnant bison roam even without being hazed.

"My impression is that there are times that people think of bison as wild, free cows and that's not a very good way to characterize how they live and use the landscape," Nash said. "Bison don't just stand somewhere, even if you're talking about a cow that's just about ready to give birth or has just given birth."

"Bison are always on the move, even during the whole process of birth and subsequent to it. There's some lying around, but these are herd animals that move together. Still, if she felt the need to stop, she would have."

So far this year, using helicopters and horseback riders, about 75 bison have been hazed into Yellowstone.

However, many have also wandered back out of the park, especially after a federal court judge in Helena last week put a two-week temporary restraining order in place, halting helicopter hazing. The Alliance for the Wild

Rockies requested the restraining order, saying that the bison hazing also was disturbing grizzly bears, which are under federal protection as a threatened species.

Now, about a dozen men on horseback from a variety of state and federal agencies are trying to push the animals from outside the western border of Yellowstone back into the park. But without the swirling dust and throbbing pulse of helicopter rotors, the bison are less inclined to move, according to Rob Tierney, the DOL bison programs manager.

On Wednesday, Tierney stood at the Bakers Hole campground as crews on horseback along the Madison River flanked a herd edging toward Yellowstone. He noted that they've had quite a bit of success with returning the bison to the park, but that the process is slower without the helicopters, which were in use for at least 12 years.

"With the horses, bison tend to just stop, whether they've gone a mile or five miles. Then it's almost impossible to move them with horses," Tierney said. "They get annoyed by the helicopters, but with the horses — they don't pay much attention to them."

Seay said she's seen the riders fire "crackers" from shotguns and use sticks or polls to prod the bison, but they're not doing it here. Also, unlike years past, when the hazing effort resembled a Wild West rodeo at times, the effort along the Madison River is fairly slow-paced, with the riders quietly moving the bison forward.

"They're not a bunch of wild cowboys; they're the same guys every year, and they know what they're doing,"

Tierney said. "These are people with wildlife experiences, and while sometimes it may appear that they run amok, it's not that way, although you do end up bouncing around a little bit."

Still, Seay and others remain opposed to any hazing.

"Some (bison) were able to cross the river, but some calves are being swept downstream," Seay said. "Without the helicopters, the riders are being more aggressive. At one point, they were trying to move slower and in came seven riders galloping through the national forest, trying to kick the hazing into overdrive.

"This is just a big waste of taxpayers' dollars."

Tierney, who's been at ground zero during much of the ongoing hazing controversy, readily agrees that everyone is entitled to their own opinions, and adds that they're trying to be responsive to people's concerns.

"What we're doing today is a lot different than what we did 10 years ago," Tierney said.

"We used to haze year-round, then came the bison hunt, then the animals were allowed out here throughout the entire hunt until Feb. 15 and now they're still here after May 15 — and there's more changes to come.

"But some days it seems like we can never give enough."

U.S. News Ranks The Best Summer Vacations

Names Top Destinations for the Summer Travel Season

Washington, DC – May 21, 2012 – Summer is just around the corner. So today, *U.S. News Travel* released eight vacation rankings to help people plan their summer trips. These rankings focus on three key characteristics of

summer vacations: affordability, quality of beaches, and family-friendliness. The full rankings are available online at <http://travel.usnews.com/>.

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[Best Summer Vacations](#)

#1 Nice
#2 Mykonos
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#1 Yellowstone
#2 Orlando - Walt Disney World
#3 Yosemite

[Affordable Family Vacations](#) [Family Beach Vacations in the USA](#)

#1 Yosemite
#2 Grand Canyon
#3 Yellowstone

#1 Outer Banks
#2 Maui
#3 San Diego

The new rankings identify the top vacation spots based on a methodology that combines expert and consumer opinions. They reflect how strongly a destination is recommended by travel experts *and* U.S. News Travel website users.

"The summer vacation is an established American tradition," said Chad Smolinski, Vice President of Rankings and Reviews at *U.S. News & World Report*. "Taking into account over 300,000 user votes and thousands of travel expert opinions, the U.S. News vacation rankings provide travel recommendations you can trust."

Today's launch is a part of the 2012-2013 *U.S. News Best Vacations* rankings. In total, more than 200 destinations were considered in the current rankings. The complete vacation ranking lists are published at <http://travel.usnews.com>.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 250 AM MDT MON MAY 21 2012

Today...Breezy. Mostly sunny in the morning then becoming partly cloudy. Highs 65 to 71. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph in the afternoon.

Tonight...Breezy. Partly cloudy in the evening...then mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers after midnight. Lows 37 to 43. Southwest winds 15 to 25 mph. Chance of showers 20 percent.

Tuesday...Breezy...cooler. Numerous rain showers and isolated thunderstorms. Highs 51 to 57. Southwest winds 20 to 25 mph with gusts to around 40 mph. Chance of precipitation 70 percent.

Tuesday Night...Breezy...colder. Mostly cloudy. Scattered rain showers...snow showers and isolated

thunderstorms in the evening... Then scattered snow showers after midnight. Lows 25 to 31. West winds 15 to 25 mph. Chance of precipitation 40 percent.

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Tuesday, May 22, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Beartooth Pass is scheduled to open to the public on May 25, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. Wyoming and Montana Departments of Transportation's will be the official entities who notify of opening. It must be Memorial Day as there are storm fronts moving in later this week!

The **Roth TSP** feature has arrived and you will be able to designate your first contributions on May 21, 2012 (Pay Period 12) which will then be effective in Pay Period 13. If you have any additional questions about the Roth TSP, please do not hesitate to call the HROC at 1-877-642-4743 and ask to speak to your Regional Employee Benefits Branch representative.

The **fire season outlook** for the Park is now available at P:/2012 Fires.

Celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month! Join Yellowstone National Park employees marching in the parade and staffing an informational table about the park at the 2012 Montana Pride in Bozeman on Saturday, June 16. All NPS, concessions (Xanterra, Delaware North, Yellowstone Park Service Stations, and Medcor), and Yellowstone Association employees and volunteers are welcome. Straight allies, especially parents, friends, and family of LGBT loved ones, are especially encouraged to attend and participate in Pride. For more information, contact Kevin Franken at 307-344-2514 or Kevin.Franken@nps.gov.

IN THE NEWS

Yellowstone Superintendent Dan Wenk outlines winter use, summer plans for Cody leaders

By Ruffin Prevost, Yellowstone Gate, May 22, 2012

CODY, WYO. — Though summer is just around the corner, Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Dan Wenk presented two vastly different possible scenarios for managing Sylvan Pass during a briefing Monday for local business owners.

Wenk and Grand Teton National Park Superintendent Mary Gibson Scott spoke to Cody Country Chamber of Commerce members as part of the town's National Parks Day, a six-decade tradition where park managers share insights on the coming summer tourist season with business leaders in the gateway community.

One alternative outlined in a draft winter use management plan to be released next month would see Sylvan Pass operating as it was during the 2011-12 winter season, Wenk said.

Another alternative would see a “total closure” of the pass, including no use of a howitzer cannon to blast snow from the hillside. Under that alternative, the pass would be opened when snow is cleared mechanically and melts naturally from the mountain, Wenk said.

The 1.5 mile stretch of road at an elevation 8,524-feet lies between the East Gate and Fishing Bridge, and is subject to ongoing risk of avalanches throughout the winter. A 2007 winter-use plan proposed closing the pass, but public outcry from Cody residents and pressure from Wyoming elected officials brought about a working group and discussions with park officials that later resulted in a reversal of that decision.

Various conservation groups have objected to the risk, cost and potential environmental effects of using a cannon to mitigate avalanche risks along the pass.

Wenk said no determination has been made about whether either of the two scenarios he discussed would be chosen by the National Park Service as part of the preferred alternative for winter use management. But he said he hoped Cody residents would consider the proposal with open minds when it is released.

“I believe in this winter use plan — if you will look at it with recognition and open eyes — that we can make the park quieter, cleaner and we can allow for an increase in visitation to Yellowstone National Park,” he said.

Another alternative, though not necessarily a preferred one, to be included in the draft plan will allow one daily non-commercially-guided trip with up to five snowmobiles departing from each entrance, Wenk said.

That alternative was included as a result of comments from Cody residents and others made during the scoping process for winter use planning earlier this year, he said.

Wenk made an apparent acknowledgement of the contentious debate over Sylvan Pass in the past several years when he said he understood that it may not have always been a pleasure for Park Service personnel to visit Cody.

But he said that hasn’t been the case since he became superintendent.

“I think we’re really working on developing a good relationship between the park and Cody, and I appreciate all the efforts that you have made to be great leaders of Yellowstone National Park,” he said.

A shrinking Park Service budget, including a \$35 million annual base budget for Yellowstone that is down about 5 percent from 2010, means that a call from some Cody residents to expand the summer season are virtually certain to go unfulfilled.

“Not only are we not expanding seasons, but we have to be very concerned about how we maintain the level of services that we provide in the park,” Wenk said.

“We’re past the point in the National Park Service where we can take it out of programs that don’t affect visitor services,” he said.

“The National Park Service is going through the same thing that every other federal agency is going through, with a high level of stress and a desire to cut federal budgets,” he said.

Public access

Steve Torrey, a Cody resident who attended Monday's luncheon, said the Park Service should do a better job of managing costs, and the agency should open roads as soon as possible.

He said Yellowstone employees enjoy administrative use of park roads in winter, summer and during shoulder seasons — including for personal recreation — while allowing taxpayers into the park less as public use seasons shrink.

Wenk said the Park Service had made “baby steps” over the winter in moving forward on bison management, working with the state of Montana to increase tolerance of the wandering wildlife in the gateway communities of West Yellowstone and Gardiner.

Working to curtail predatory lake trout in Yellowstone Lake will be a priority again this year, with the Park Service and Yellowstone Park Foundation each spending \$1 million to keep four boat crews working to remove invasive lake trout, which feed on cutthroat trout. The native cutthroat are an important food source that affects more than 40 different species in the park, Wenk said.

Scott also addressed the Cody luncheon gathering, saying that Grand Teton was ready to welcome what she hopes will be a strong stream of summer visitors. She speaks Tuesday to Grand Teton area residents, making more extensive remarks as part of an annual address in Moose, Wyo.

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Major Lodging Changes Coming To Yellowstone National Park

David and Kay Scott, National Parks Traveler, May 20, 2012 - 1:30am

Significant changes are in the offing for lodging operations in parts of Yellowstone National Park, where officials envision tens of millions of dollars of improvements.

<http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2012/05/major-lodging-changes-coming-yellowstone-national-park9934>

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U.S. News Ranks The Best Summer Vacations

Names Top Destinations for the Summer Travel Season

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[Family Vacations in the USA](#)

- #1 Yellowstone
- #2 Orlando - Walt Disney World
- #3 Yosemite

[Affordable Family Vacations](#) [Family Beach Vacations in the USA](#)

#1	Yosemite	#1	Outer Banks
#2	Grand Canyon	#2	Maui
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WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 824 AM MDT TUE MAY 22 2012

Hazardous Weather Outlook **Special Weather Statement**

Rest Of Today...Windy. Rain showers likely and isolated thunderstorms early in the morning...then numerous rain showers... Snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Little or no snow accumulation. Highs 44 to 52. Southwest winds 15 to 25 mph increasing to 25 to 30 mph late in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 70 percent.

Tonight...Breezy...cloudy. Scattered rain showers and snow showers in the evening...then chance of snow showers after midnight. Lows 26 to 32. West winds 15 to 25 mph until early morning. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Wednesday...Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Chance of snow showers in the morning...then chance of rain showers...snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs 38 to 44. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph in the late morning and afternoon. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Wednesday Night...Mostly cloudy. Chance of snow showers and rain showers in the evening...then chance of snow showers after midnight. Lows 23 to 29. West winds around 15 mph in the evening. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Wednesday, May 23, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Please note - the June 11th employee **spring orientation** for the Mammoth area will be held in GARDINER, **not** at the Mammoth Elementary School/MCC.

Wednesday, May 30, Lake Mess Hall

Thursday, May 31, Old Faithful, Yurt

Monday, June 11, Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, Gardiner.

The schedule and topics are located in the P:/ Drive under the MENUS folder.

Sample Democratic and Republican party **voting ballots** for the Gardiner community are located on the P:/ Drive under the MENUS folder.

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Our goal is to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all employees. By bringing any safety concerns forward, YOU can help Yellowstone meet that goal. As always, this information is available on the Employee Safety Committee Sharepoint Site at: <http://inpyellshare/emsc>.

IN THE NEWS

FWP searches for new bison reintroduction issues

LAURA LUNDQUIST, Bozeman Chronicle, May 23, 2012

Bozeman-area residents will be the last to weigh in but probably won't have the least to say about how Montana might restore free-ranging bison to state lands.

On Thursday evening, the public will be able to raise issues for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to consider when it develops an environmental impact statement on the potential restoration of bison outside Yellowstone National Park.

"It's not a hearing," said bison restoration specialist Andrew Dood. "We don't have a restoration program yet."

When any federal agency — or agencies in several states — proposes projects that can affect the environment, its first step is to study ecological, social and economic factors that are then mixed and matched in the options of an environmental impact statement.

FWP will develop the bison reintroduction EIS as required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act, even though bison are normally managed by the Montana Department of Livestock.

FWP managers have already identified a number of issues including public safety, interactions with other wildlife and cattle, overgrazing, brucellosis and agency oversight.

The listening meetings are an attempt to ferret out additional information that may have been overlooked. No reintroduction locations are proposed yet.

FWP managers have already heard numerous arguments repeated at town meetings in the past two weeks.

"A lot of the major issues are already known," Dood said. "But we want to hear from everyone because some people have brought things up from a different angle."

Last week in Billings, they split about 80 attendees into small groups so all could comment. The majority represented the agricultural community and were opposed to reintroducing bison. Many questioned the cost of maintaining a herd.

The meeting in Missoula hosted a smaller but more balanced group of about 40 pro- and anti-reintroduction speakers who raised a wider variety of issues, from hunting to the difference between domestic and wild bison.

In Bozeman, some organizations are already planning their comments.

Spokesman Glenn Hockett said the Gallatin Wildlife Association supported the process.

"We've been pushing the state to start the process," Hockett said. "I'm confident there are places in Montana where wild bison can be managed, but I'm curious to find out what we hear at the meeting."

John Youngberg of the Montana Farm Bureau said he'd attend along with a number of bureau members. They oppose reintroduction and intend to raise questions about funding, management and brucellosis.

"There are so many things that are up in the air that they haven't answered," Youngberg said. "Unless you can keep bison well-fed, which requires a huge area, they are going to eat and move on. There's not enough room anymore for bison."

Stephanie Seay of the Buffalo Field Campaign said she would be commenting on the fact it wouldn't take much to demonstrate the feasibility of reintroduction – just allow them to stay in the Horse Butte area where they naturally migrate.

"Right outside the (Yellowstone National) Park, we can allow themselves to restore themselves naturally," Seay said.

The EIS process is a long one, offering more opportunity for public comment as the initial and then final drafts are written, considered and published. The final EIS is scheduled for publication two years from now.

The Bozeman meeting is the last of an eight-city tour to collect public comment. It starts with an open house at 6 p.m. followed at 7 p.m. by the comment period at the Holiday Inn, 5 Baxter Lane.

Comments can be submitted online until June 25 at <http://1.usa.gov/bison-eis>.

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'Untamed Americas' dazzles with rare wildlife footage

By Chuck Raasch, USA TODAY

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK – Karen Bass is on a bear hunt.

The British-born producer of National Geographic's four-part *Untamed Americas* series, airing June 10-11 on the group's networks, is searching for a glimpse of Quad Mom, a Yellowstone grizzly. The bear's successful hunt to feed her two cubs is a highlight of Bass' series on the natural world from Alaska to the southern tip of South America.

<http://www.usatoday.com/life/television/news/story/2012-05-22/wild-americas-national-geographic/55141722/11>

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Native Habitat for America's Last Wild Buffalo Is Guaranteed by Treaty, Tribes Say

By Terri Hansen May 23, 2012

Can this country restore the last genetically pure wild buffalo penned in at Yellowstone National Park (YNP) as wildlife? James (Jimmy) St. Goddard, hereditary chief of the Blackfeet Nations, believes so.

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2012/05/23/native-habitat-for-americas-last-wild-buffalo-is-guaranteed-by-treaty-tribes-say-114258>

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 227 AM MDT WED MAY 23 2012

Hazardous Weather Outlook
Special Weather Statement

Today...Numerous snow showers and rain showers in the morning... Then numerous rain showers...snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Snow accumulation up to 1 inch. Total snow accumulation up to 2 inches. Highs 38 to 44. West winds around 15 mph. Chance of precipitation 70 percent.

Tonight...Mostly cloudy. Scattered snow showers and rain showers in the evening...then scattered snow showers after midnight. Lows 23 to 29. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Thursday...Cloudy. Scattered snow showers in the morning...then rain showers...snow showers likely and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Snow accumulation up to 1 inch. Highs 38 to 44. Chance of precipitation 60 percent.

Thursday Night...Mostly cloudy. Chance of snow showers...rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the evening...then chance of snow showers after midnight. Lows 23 to 29. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Thursday, May 24, 2012

Hazardous Weather Outlook Special Weather Statement

Public Travel: Numerous sections of park roadways have already been impacted by adverse spring weather over the past 24 hours. Currently at the time of publication, roads from Old Faithful to West Thumb over Craig Pass and from Fishing Bridge to the East Entrance are CLOSED to all automobile travel. With strong storms heading our way over the next few days, it is likely these conditions will only worsen.

Admin Travel: Current restrictions require a 4x4 vehicle and/or chains from OF to West Thumb, and a 4x4 AND park radio from Fishing Bridge to the East Entrance.



For all updated travel related information, remember to call the public road line at x2117 or the Admin Travel line at x7115.

Oh...And Happy Memorial Day weekend!!!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Beartooth and **Dunraven Passes** are SCHEDULED to open Friday, but that remains to be seen. And if you enjoy fishing in the snow, you can do that, too, as the fishing season officially begins in the park this weekend!!

Please note - the June 11th employee **spring orientation** for the Mammoth area will be held in GARDINER, **not** at the Mammoth Elementary School/MCC.

Wednesday, May 30, Lake Mess Hall

Thursday, May 31, Old Faithful, Yurt

Monday, June 11, Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, Gardiner.

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IN THE NEWS

Yellowstone Park ready to float winter use plan

By MARK HEINZ, Cody Enterprise, May 23, 2012

A “preferred alternative” for winter use in Yellowstone Park might include limited non-commercial sledding, and cessation of howitzer shelling to mitigate avalanches on Sylvan Pass.

With Yellowstone facing a shrinking budget, the expansion of seasons past their current dates also probably is not feasible, park superintendent Dan Wenk said.

Yellowstone’s budget has shrunk about five percent (\$10 million) since fiscal year 2010, Wenk said Monday during National Parks Day at Cody Club.

It’s hoped a winter use plan can be in place for the 2012-13 season, Wenk said.

That might include one daily non-commercial sledding trip, he said. (That would allow members of the public, with certain training or certification, to snowmobile in the park without hiring a commercial guide to lead them.)

Yellowstone wants to quit using the howitzer cannon to bring down avalanches on Sylvan Pass, and not have a specific target date for opening the pass in the spring, Wenk said.

There has been strong local support for non-commercial sledding in Yellowstone, but some people have expressed disappointment in Yellowstone’s proposals so far, saying they remain too restrictive.

A written draft of YNP’s preferred winter use alternative will be released June 22.

A public meeting on the matter is scheduled July 19 at the Holiday Inn. Park spokesman Al Nash said a time for the meeting hasn't yet been set.

Regarding other matters, Wenk says Yellowstone has increased efforts to educate visitors on how to avoid grizzlies, and how to behave if they encounter a bear.

For the first time in the park's history, in 2011 there was more than one fatal grizzly mauling during the same season. One man was killed in separate incidents in both July and August.

Efforts also will continue to cull lake trout from Yellowstone Lake, where they threaten native Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

About 211,000 lake trout were removed last year, and YNP and its partners hope to eliminate even more this year, Wenk said.

"We will probably never completely eliminate lake trout, but we hope to get them down to as few as possible," he added. "Cutthroat are a vital species that directly affect 42 other species native to Yellowstone, including grizzlies and osprey."

Road construction in Yellowstone this year will include work on the route between Tower Junction and Tower Falls, Wenk said. There also will be chip sealing on Sylvan Pass beginning in mid-summer, he said.

It's also hoped a slumping problem on the lake side of the road at "nine mile" (west of Sylvan Pass) can be repaired this summer or early fall, Wenk said. Part of the road there washed out during unusually high runoff last spring and a traffic light controls one-way traffic through the short stretch.

YNP contract comes with \$135M price

The concessions and lodging contract for Yellowstone Park – currently held by Xanterra Parks & Resorts – is up for bid.

Park superintendent Dan Wenk says in return for a 20-year contract, the successful bidder will be required to invest about \$135 million into the park.

Xanterra's contract expires at the end of November 2013.

Investment improvements under the new contract will include redevelopment of lodging at Canyon, renovation of the Fishing Bridge RV Park, phase two of the renovation of Lake Hotel and new concession employee housing at Lake and Old Faithful.

Rehabilitation of the Mammoth Haynes Photo Shop, and changes necessary to provide year-round lodging at the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, also will be included.

The contract also will require the successful bidder to spend an additional six percent of gross revenues on repair and maintenance of assigned facilities, and pay a franchise fee of about 4-7 percent to the park, depending on terms.

Xanterra reported gross receipts of about \$90 million for 2011.

WEATHER**NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY**

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 741 AM MDT THU MAY 24 2012

Rest Of Today...Mostly cloudy. Scattered snow showers in the morning...then scattered rain showers...snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds and small hail in the afternoon. Highs 39 to 45. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Tonight...Mostly cloudy. Scattered snow showers...rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the evening...then scattered snow showers after midnight. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds and small hail in the evening. Lows 23 to 29. Chance of precipitation 40 percent.

Friday...Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Chance of snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the morning...then rain showers...snow showers likely and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Snow accumulation up to 1 inch. Highs 40 to 46. East winds 15 to 20 mph. Chance of precipitation 60 percent.

Friday Night...Rain showers...snow showers likely and isolated thunderstorms in the evening...then snow showers likely after midnight. Snow accumulation of 1 to 3 inches. Lows 26 to 32. East winds around 15 mph. Chance of precipitation 70 percent.

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YNP@Work

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Friday, May 25, 2012



On Memorial Day the flag is displayed at half staff until noon and at full staff from noon to sunset.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dunraven Pass did NOT open to travel as originally scheduled for 8:00 this morning. Its status will be reevaluated later today.

All other park roads are open to public travel. Snow tires are advised.

The **Beartooth Pass** will NOT open to travel as originally scheduled for 9:00 this morning. The status of this road will be re-evaluated Saturday.

The National Weather Office in Riverton advises that a disturbance will bring enhanced precipitation to Wyoming today and tonight. Snow levels this morning are expected to be 6500 to 7000 feet...rising to 8000 to 9000 feet in the afternoon. Mountain snowfall of 3 to 6 inches with locally higher amounts is possible across western Wyoming.

After a short break late tonight and early Saturday morning...snow will resume over the higher elevations of western Wyoming...with significant snow expected Saturday afternoon through Sunday. An additional 4 to 8 inches of snow is possible across the higher elevations of northwest Wyoming. Mountain passes are expected to become slick and hazardous by Saturday evening.

Conditions are expected to improve late Sunday and Monday as this system moves northeast into Montana.

Winter Storm Warnings remain in effect for areas surrounding the park including [West Yellowstone, Bozeman Pass](#), and [Cooke City](#).

For all updated travel related information, remember to call the public road line at x2117 or the Admin Travel line at x7115.

Please note - the June 11th employee **spring orientation** for the Mammoth area will be held in GARDINER, **not** at the Mammoth Elementary School/MCC.

Wednesday, May 30, Lake Mess Hall
Thursday, May 31, Old Faithful, Yurt
Monday, June 11, Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, Gardiner.

The schedule and topics are located in the P:/ Drive under the MENUS folder.

Employee Safety Committee-Wellness Information; Here are your monthly wellness updates. Check them out at the EmSC Sharepoint site at: <http://inpyellshare/emsc> under Documents-Wellness Program, folder Personal Best Documents, folder June where you will find wonderful information provided by Personal Best. Topics include: Nutrition, Fitness, Health Tracks and a great recipe for TRAIL MIX. JUNE is Men's Health Month, check out the Health Tracks update for some tips on how to stay healthy. ENJOY! Print and post these in your work areas so your keep WELLNESS IN MIND all month long.

Sample Democratic and Republican party **voting ballots** for the Gardiner community are located on the P:/ Drive under the MENUS folder.

Do you know what resources are available to you to resolve a **safety related issue** you encounter at work?

Every employee has a variety of options available to them to help resolve safety related issues including: speak with your **Supervisor**, contact the **Safety Office**, discuss the issue with your **District or Division Employee Safety Committee Representative**, or consult with a **Collateral Duty Safety Leader** about the subject.

Note: a Collateral Duty Safety Leader is a competent person with specialized experience that directs, advocates and mentors others to follow safety and health practices. These programs include but are not limited to hazard communication, respiratory protection, lockout/tagout, and permit required confined space entry.

Our goal is to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all employees. By bringing any safety concerns forward, YOU can help Yellowstone meet that goal. As always, this information is available on the Employee Safety Committee Sharepoint Site at: <http://inpyellshare/emsc>.

IN THE NEWS

27 bison trucked into Yellowstone

MICHAEL BECKER, Bozeman Daily Chronicle Staff Writer | Posted: Friday, May 25, 2012 12:15 am

More than two dozen bison near West Yellowstone were rounded up, loaded onto trucks and hauled back into Yellowstone National Park on Thursday, according to bison advocates and the state wildlife department.

In a written statement, the Buffalo Field Campaign said 27 bison — 12 newborn calves, 12 mothers and three 2-year-old animals — were captured at the Montana Department of Livestock's Duck Creek trap, which is located on private land on the western edge of the park.

The animals were released at Fountain Flats inside Yellowstone in the early afternoon, according to the bison watchdog group's statement.

"While we hail the decision not to slaughter these animals, we are deeply disappointed in Montana's stubborn refusal to let wild bison be wild bison," Dan Brister, executive director of the Buffalo Field Campaign, wrote in the statement. "How long will we treat our last wild bison like livestock, separate newborn calves from their mothers, and allow the Department of Livestock to dictate their fate?"

DOL spokesman Steve Merritt said the intent was to get the bison back into the park in the most efficient way possible.

"They had been hazed a couple of times, and we didn't want to put any more stress on the cow-calf pairs," he said.

Merritt said this was the first time he had heard of livestock officials simply loading bison onto trucks and moving them, rather than hazing them back into the park.

He said he didn't know whether trucks would be used to move any more of the bison that remain outside the park's boundaries. Decisions about hazing operations are evaluated on a day-by-day basis, he said.

On May 14, U.S. District Judge Charles C. Lovell issued a 14-day restraining order barring the use of helicopters in hazing operations near the park. Wildlife advocates had argued that the helicopters could harm grizzly bears in the area.

Helicopter hazing would have been the best option, said John Youngberg, vice president of government affairs for the Montana Farm Bureau. It's the fastest and easiest hazing method and puts less stress on the bison than loading them into trucks and hauling them long distances, he said.

"This is an option I don't think they envisioned would happen, but this is one of the few options they have left," Youngberg said. "I don't think this is probably the best for the bison, I'll tell you that up front."

Each winter, bison migrate about 10 miles out of the park to drop their calves in the area between the park boundary and Hebgen Lake.

The fear is that the bison will transmit brucellosis to cattle in the area, so each spring, the Department of Livestock and other agencies force the bison back into the park — usually by May 15. That gives about 30 days leeway before ranchers start moving their cattle to the area in mid-June.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 638 AM MDT FRI MAY 25 2012

Today...Breezy. Numerous snow showers in the morning...then numerous rain showers...snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Snow accumulation of 1 to 2 inches. Highs 38 to 44. East winds 15 to 20 mph. Chance of precipitation 70 percent.

Tonight...Breezy. Numerous rain showers...snow showers and isolated thunderstorms in the evening...then numerous snow showers after midnight. Snow accumulation of 1 to 3 inches. Lows 26 to 32. East winds 15 to 20

mph until early morning. Chance of precipitation 70 percent.

Saturday...Numerous snow showers and rain showers in the morning... Then numerous rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Snow accumulation up to 2 inches. Highs 42 to 48. South winds around 15 mph late in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 70 percent.

WE WANT YOUR SUBMISSIONS!

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Back issues of the newsletter are available at [P:\YNP@Work Published Issues](#)

YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Tuesday, May 29, 2012



Members of the American Legion Post #118, Gardiner, Perform a flag raising ceremony in observance of Memorial Day at the Gardiner (Tinker's Hill) Cemetery on Monday, May 28.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The road over Dunraven Pass is now OPEN to all public travel. All other park roads are open as well.

Please note - the June 11th employee **spring orientation** for the Mammoth area will be held in GARDINER, **not** at the Mammoth Elementary School/MCC.

Wednesday, May 30, Lake Mess Hall

Thursday, May 31, Old Faithful, Yurt

Monday, June 11, Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, Gardiner.

The schedule and topics are located in the P:/ Drive under the MENUS folder.

Yellowstone's Victim Services is requesting volunteers who would be willing to open their hearts and their home as a short term emergency placement shelter for children. There are occasional situations

where a child is displaced from their custodial parent for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a child is traveling with an adult that has been arrested, injured in a motor vehicle accident, or needs to be removed from an abusive situation and very far from home. Because of extreme distances, logistics, and jurisdictional issues (MT verses WY), a child may be victimized/traumatized further if forced to make a several hour journey in the night while tired, hungry, and scared, to be transferred to yet another stranger with the Dept of Family Services (DFS). It is particularly difficult where a child, who lives in Mammoth (WY), attends school in Gardiner, MT and is in a potentially abusive home, and needs to be placed temporarily in a safe environment. If we could place that child in Mammoth, there would be much less disruption in his/her life.

All that is required is a clear background check for any adults in the home. All NPS employees have already completed an adequate background check. Other adults in the home may simply have an NCIC criminal history run by submitting a complete name and date of birth. This information is transferred to the WY Dept of Family Services where they will also do a check to make sure the home has not been "flagged" in their files. A Yellowstone victim advocate or investigating ranger must also do a walk through to make sure there are no immediate hazards. That's it. All that we are asking is that, in the event an emergency exists, a child will have a safe and secure place to sleep, and basic needs are met. You would not be expected to transport the child or travel anywhere. The victim advocates in the park will assist with any transportation, logistics, or notifications of other family members/DFS, etc. It is unlikely in most situations that you would be needed more than 1 to 2 nights - just until rangers and advocates have had a chance to sort things out and get a plan in place with the appropriate Dept of Family Services.

We are hoping to have volunteers in the interior as well as in Mammoth. Please take some time and consider this request. Please email me or call Tara Ross at 307-543-2559 if you are interested.

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The Mammoth Community Center is excited to announce that we will be hosting a screening of the film "**Where the Yellowstone Goes**" at the MCC on June 8th, 2012 at 7PM.

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Sample Democratic and Republican party **voting ballots** for the Gardiner community are located on the P:/ Drive under the MENUS folder.

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IN THE NEWS

Enzi leads effort on bison as 'national mammal'

May 27, 2012 - The Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) -- Western lawmakers want to elevate the Plains bison to a status similar to that of the iconic bald eagle with legislation to declare the burly beasts America's "national mammal."

Bison advocates launched a "vote bison" public relations campaign Friday to coincide with the bill.

The National Bison Legacy Act introduced in the Senate is backed by lawmakers from Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota and Rhode Island.

The largely symbolic measure would provide no added protections for the estimated 20,000 wild bison in North America. And the bald eagle would still hold a somewhat loftier role as the national emblem, as declared by the Second Continental Congress in 1782.

But supporters said the bison legacy bill would afford overdue recognition to a species that has sweeping cultural and ecological significance. Bison -- North America's largest land animal -- already appear on two state flags and the official seal of the U.S. Department of Interior.

"The North American bison is an enduring symbol of America, its people and a way of life," said Wyoming Republican Sen. Mike Enzi, chief sponsor of the bill along with South Dakota Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson. Tens of millions of bison, also known as buffalo, once roamed most of North America. They were heavily relied on by many American Indian tribes who harvested the animals for food and materials to make clothing and shelter.

Overhunting reduced the population to about 1,000 animals by the turn of the 20th century.

That's when conservationists, including President Theodore Roosevelt, intervened to save the species from extinction. Beyond today's wild herds in places like Yellowstone National Park, there are an estimated half-million bison, including animals in commercial herds, many of which have mixed cattle genetics.

Yet resistance to free-roaming bison lingers.

In Montana, livestock producers and property rights advocates have filed lawsuits to stop the spread of an animal that ranchers say can tear down fences, spread disease and compete with domestic cattle for grass.

Last week in Boulder, Colo., city officials citing cost concerns and public opposition rebuffed a proposal from Ted Turner to donate a bison herd for viewing along U.S. Highway 36.

John Calvelli with the Wildlife Conservation Society, one of the "vote bison" campaign sponsors, said the effort is meant to transcend political concerns and instead mark the animal's place in American cultural history.

"This isn't about getting into the middle of these issues of bison and property rights," he said. "No matter what political stripe you come from, we can all agree on the important role that bison have played."

Other sponsors of the campaign are the Intertribal Buffalo Council, which includes 57 tribes, and the National Bison Association.

In recent years, federal and state agencies, wildlife advocates and Indian groups have revived efforts to put wild bison on more parts of the Western landscape.

That includes the transfer in March of about 60 Yellowstone bison to northeastern Montana's Fort Peck Reservation.

The Interior Department also has been considering bison for public lands, including Badlands National Park on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and Great Sand Dunes National Park in Colorado.

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Yellowstone Park's bear spray information outdated and contradictory

Dave Smith, Examiner.com

Yellowstone National Park's bear spray information is outdated and contradictory; it omits a key fact that could save lives. The National Park Service uses a long-winded "Bear Pepper Spray" video that's laughably amateurish.

The video shows two people ambling through the woods carrying rifles, but a National Park Service paper on "Using bear spray to deter an aggressive bear" says the spray is "Better than a firearm."

Then why show people carrying firearms? It seems contradictory to tell people bear spray is better than a firearm, and then show a video with people carrying firearms. The message the public gets might be, "carry both bear spray and a firearm."

In a discussion about "Firearms in Parks" found at "Laws & Policies," Yellowstone Park says, "Firearms should not be considered a wildlife protection strategy. Bear spray and other safety precautions are the proven methods for preventing bear and other wildlife interactions."

If Yellowstone Park officials don't want people carrying firearms for protection against bears, why show video of people carrying *rifles*?

The Bear Pepper Spray video shows people using bear spray on seven occasions. One time a man fires the bear spray from a hip holster, once a man uses two hands to fire bear spray, and on five occasions people are shown firing bear spray one-handed.

It's possible to fire bear spray one-handed, but is it a good idea for a person who just bought their 1st can of bear spray for a hike in Yellowstone? No, says Center for Wildlife Information Director Chuck Bartlebaugh. In a 2011 news article titled, "Spray . . . then pray," Bartlebaugh said your can of bear spray "must be held with two hands so it doesn't tilt upwards" when fired.

Two hands. Bartlebaugh recently said, "In tests to see how people would use bear spray, we gave cans to 50 people and had them aim and spray as though a bear were out in front of them. In almost every test, the force of the propellant pivoted the can in their hand so the spray was going into the air above the target. While they were shooting into the sky disabling birds and butterflies, a bear would go right under the cloud unaffected. That's why we recommend that most people use both hands when using bear spray."

The "Bear Pepper Spray" video does not tell people to use both hands when deploying bear spray. Instead, the Bear Pepper Spray video usually shows people using bear spray one-handed.

In addition to the Bear Pepper Spray video, Yellowstone National Park's webpage on "Your Safety in Bear Country" features six separate links that provide detailed information about bear spray. None of them tell people to use both hands when using bear spray.

After two fatal grizzly bear attacks in 2011 on hikers in Yellowstone Park, the Associated Press did an article titled, "Bear Attacks Lead to Renewed Focus on Safety."

The main thing the National Park Service and other agencies are doing is telling people to carry bear spray and know how to use it. But the agencies are not telling people to use two hands with bear spray.

Yellowstone needs a new bear spray video and up-to-date information on bear spray at its website.

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 248 AM MDT TUE MAY 29 2012

Hazardous Weather Outlook

Today...Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Isolated rain showers and snow showers in the morning...then scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds in the afternoon. Highs 51 to 57. Southwest winds 15 to 20 mph in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation 40 percent.

Tonight...Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Scattered rain showers and isolated thunderstorms in the evening...then slight chance of rain and snow after midnight. Lows 30 to 36. West winds 15 to 20 mph in the evening. Chance of precipitation 50 percent.

Wednesday...Cloudy with a 20 percent chance of rain and snow in the morning...then partly cloudy in the afternoon. Highs 49 to 55. West winds around 15 mph in the afternoon.

Wednesday Night...Partly cloudy in the evening then becoming mostly cloudy. Lows 30 to 36. West winds around 15 mph in the evening.

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YNP@Work

A Daily Newsletter for NPS Employees of Yellowstone National Park

Wednesday, May 30, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The staff of YNP@Work monitors news channels daily for significant stories related to Yellowstone, and strives to make these stories available to our employees on a daily basis so that they may stay informed. We realize not ALL news about the park we publish in the newsletter is GOOD news, but it is our goal to present both sides, good OR bad, so that our staff can see what's in the media on both sides of the fence. We don't publish negative stories simply to give them more publicity and anger our readers. We do so with the hope that it may promote a healthy discourse among staff about what people outside our gates are saying about us publicly. Maybe it's a topic that could lead to us doing something differently or better. Maybe it IS just a bad writer with an unfounded grudge! Either way, we believe it would be a disservice should we print only the happy news and pretend that everyone out there loves everything we do. As always, we welcome any and all suggestions -- both the praise AND criticism -- we receive about the newsletter in hopes that it will only get better with each issue.*

The road over Dunraven Pass is now OPEN to all public travel. All other park roads are open as well. Our maintenance crews plowing the Beartooth Highway are working hard to try and open the road over the pass by midday today.

Please note - the June 11th employee **spring orientation** for the Mammoth area will be held in GARDINER, **not** at the Mammoth Elementary School/MCC.

TODAY, Lake Mess Hall
Thursday, May 31, Old Faithful, Yurt
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several hour journey in the night while tired, hungry, and scared, to be transferred to yet another stranger with the Dept of Family Services (DFS). It is particularly difficult where a child, who lives in Mammoth (WY), attends school in Gardiner, MT and is in a potentially abusive home, and needs to be placed temporarily in a safe environment. If we could place that child in Mammoth, there would be much less disruption in his/her life.

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Car-poolers Wanted: Christina, in our Visitor Services Office is looking for a ride to the Old Faithful Orientation - please call her at extension 2107

Did you know that Delaware North has a mandatory car-pool policy? All employee emails are sent each time an employee needs to travel to/from Bozeman/West Yellowstone or any of their interior business locations. That is a good and green idea!

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On Friday, June 8, the **Mammoth Community Center** will be hosting a screening of the film "Where the Yellowstone Goes" to raise monies to administer and improve the MCC for all members of the community. Discounted tickets are available on line through www.wheretheyellowstonegoes.com. Live Bluegrass music, a raffle with prizes from area businesses, Red Lodge Ale and a full assortment of concessions (candy!) will be available along with on-site childcare. Any questions? Please contact us at board@mammothcommunity.org with any questions or if you'd like to volunteer. Should be a great night out for a great cause!

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Celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month! Join Yellowstone National Park employees marching in the parade and staffing an informational table about the park at the 2012 Montana Pride in Bozeman on Saturday, June 16. All NPS, concessions (Xanterra, Delaware North, Yellowstone Park Service Stations, and Medcor), and Yellowstone Association employees and volunteers are welcome. Straight allies, especially parents, friends, and family of LGBT loved ones, are especially encouraged to attend and participate in Pride. For more information, contact Kevin Franken at 307-344-2514 or Kevin.Franken@nps.gov.

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IN THE NEWS**Yellowstone Park proposing big changes to concession contract**

Martin Kidston, Billings Gazette, May 30, 2012

MAMMOTH, Wyo. — The National Park Service is looking to create a new concession contract in Yellowstone National Park late next year, and it will ask the winning bidder to complete \$134 million in improvements to visitor lodging and other services as part of the bargain.

Outlined in a draft of Yellowstone's new business opportunities plan, the proposed changes also would see the park increase the franchise fees it receives from the concessionaire, while giving the company a firm 20-year contract to sweeten the deal.

Park spokesman Al Nash said Tuesday that while a number of concessionaires operate in Yellowstone, the current plan affects only the park's largest operator, Xanterra Parks and Resorts, whose contract is set to expire in November 2013.

"We're looking to replace or update our existing visitor facilities," Nash said. "We looked at where we wanted some of these facilities to be in the future, and we worked to devise a contract that we thought would offer a competitive business opportunity while achieving our goals for serving the American public."

Xanterra officials didn't return calls Tuesday. Gross revenues reported by the company in Yellowstone increased from roughly \$79 million in 2008 to more than \$86 million in 2010.

The company runs the park's hotels, cabins and campgrounds, along with 27 revenue-producing food and beverage outlets and nine retail locations.

Like all concessionaires operating in Yellowstone, Xanterra pays the park franchise fees based upon its revenues. In 2010, those fees generated \$2.1 million for the park, though that could increase substantially if the fee is raised from its current 2.5 percent to 6.8 percent, as proposed.

Nash said the park can't use the funding to replace its base operating budget. With federal funding tight, he said, the park is looking for ways to tackle needed improvements while maintaining a friendly business atmosphere with concessionaires.

"It's not just our operating budget, it's the money available to do the major renovations and construction," Nash said. "We believe this is the most viable funding source to get some of this work done."

The Park Service believes that the plan and its suggested improvements would help increase the revenue potential for the park and the concessionaries operating with it.

The proposed improvements include upgrades to lodging and RV parks throughout Yellowstone, along with existing food and beverage services.

"We, the public, own all the facilities in Yellowstone," Nash said. "They get assigned to a concession operator to serve the public. The contract calls for certain maintenance every year, but to upgrade them, the money must come from somewhere."

Among the proposed improvements, the new concessionaire would be required to add lodging rooms at Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel by converting space now used for administrative functions and by renovating 14 cabins used by employees for visitor use.

At the Old Faithful Snow Lodge, the new concessionaire would be required to construct a 77-room employee dormitory and convert 67 cabins now used by workers to overnight accommodations for visitors.

Improvements would also be required at Lake Yellowstone Hotel, Canyon Lodge and Lake Lodge, where the winning concessionaire would be asked to rehabilitate 19 cabins, relocate 15 other cabins and demolish an employee dormitory before replacing it with a 60-room project.

Across the park, the projects are likely to cost around \$134 million and must be completed between 2015 and 2018. Nash said the successful bidder will receive a 20-year contract to help create incentive and recoup costs.

“We’re going to require the successful bidder to put in a substantial amount of money in the early years of the contract to address the real needs,” Nash said. “It’s money we’d be less likely to find through federal appropriations. We felt operating this long-term contract was a mechanism to encourage prospective bidders that there are good business opportunities here.”

Roughly 30 percent of Yellowstone's more than 4 million visitors annually stay overnight in the park, and 90 percent stay at concession-operated facilities, the Park Service said.

Xanterra has generated more than \$85 million in revenue each of the past few years. Lodging accounts for 46 percent of that revenue, followed by food and beverages at 30 percent and retail at 14 percent.

With the park looking to raise the franchise fees from 2.5 to 6.8 percent while asking the winning concessionaire to invest \$134 million in lodging and other improvements, some fear that the result could lead to parkwide price increases as the winning company tries to recover costs.

Some also say that the improvements could change the feel of Yellowstone, turning a rugged experience in the nation’s oldest national park into a more refined and upscale outing.

“One of the comments we hear back is a concern on how expensive it’s getting to stay in the park,” said Mark Pearson, conservation director for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, based in Bozeman.

“The thing that catches your attention in the plan is how they talk about the various improvements resulting in a higher average daily rate for lodging to make it more appealing for someone to bid on these contracts.”

Nash said price increases are possible down the road as the cost of doing business goes up. He said it’s likely that such costs won’t be isolated to Yellowstone.

“The contract requires (the concessionaire) to apply to the Park Service for any rate changes,” Nash said. “We have entire oversight over the charges that concessionaries operate, what services they offer and what products they offer for service, and we manage the rates.

“Will room costs go up over the life of this contract? Sure. But I expect over the next 20 years, we’ll see some inflation in prices everywhere.”

WEATHER

NWS Zone Forecast for: Yellowstone National Park, WY

Issued by: National Weather Service Riverton, WY

Last Update: 238 AM MDT WED MAY 30 2012

Early This Morning...Mostly cloudy with scattered rain showers and isolated snow showers. Lows 30 to 36. West winds around 15 mph with gusts to around 30 mph. Chance of precipitation 30 percent.

Today...Cloudy. Scattered rain showers in the morning. Highs 49 to 55. West winds around 15 mph in the late morning and afternoon. Chance of showers 50 percent.

Tonight...Mostly cloudy in the evening then becoming partly cloudy. Lows 30 to 36. West winds around 15 mph early in the evening.

Thursday...Mostly cloudy. Isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Some thunderstorms may produce gusty winds in the afternoon. Highs 55 to 61. West winds around 15 mph in the afternoon. Chance of thunderstorms 20 percent.

Thursday Night...Mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers in the evening...then partly cloudy with isolated rain showers and snow showers after midnight. Lows 34 to 40. West winds around 15 mph in the evening. Chance of precipitation 20 percent.

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