



# NEWS

WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

## G&F To Hold Public Meeting on Bison and Black Bears

Contact: John Henningsen, (307) 733-2321  
Chris Colligan, (307) 733-2321

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JACKSON- The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) will hold a public meeting to present the Brucellosis Management Action Plan (BMAP) for the Jackson bison herd on December 19th, at 7:00 PM, at the Antler Motel conference room. This meeting will be held in conjunction with meetings scheduled for addressing changes to Chapter 3 Black Bear Regulation and the Jackson Bison Herd population objective.

The black bear meeting will address season setting, harvest quotas, and baiting regulations. Regional wildlife managers are proposing to increase female mortality quotas in the region under the guidelines of the recently approved Black Bear Management Plan. The Plan available on the Departments website at <http://gf.state.wy.us/downloads/pdf/BlackBearMgtPlan-Final.pdf>.

The bison BMAP portion of the meeting will allow the public to ask questions about the plan. Written comment will be accepted until January 18th, 2008. A working draft and instructions for providing comment will be placed on the Department's website on December 14th to enable the public to view the bison plan prior to the meeting at <http://gf.state.wy.us/wildlife/Brucellosis/index.asp>. The Jackson bison herd unit encompasses most of Jackson Hole north of Highway 22, including the Bridger Teton National Forest Service, Grand Teton National Park, and the National Elk Refuge.

This plan was designed to identify what livestock producers and wildlife managers can do to reduce brucellosis transmission among wildlife and from wildlife to livestock. Biologists

### Information and Education Services

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Jackson Regional Office  
420 North Cache • Jackson, Wyoming 83001  
Fax (307) 733-2276 • Web site: <http://gf.state.wy.us>

worked with local livestock producers and federal agencies to develop the recommendations outlined in these plans, and now hope to incorporate public input.

Four brucellosis management plan actions are outlined in the document. These include: 1) Reducing the population of the bison herd and subsequently maintaining the herd at population objective, 2) maintaining and enhancing habitat, 3) minimizing risk of transmission by keeping bison and cattle separated, and 4) vaccination of bison. "We looked at all the options that were out there for managing brucellosis and these four are the most feasible," said John Henningsen, BMAP biologist charged with developing the plan. "Some facets of these actions have already been in place, plus we'll continue to look at the possibility of vaccinating as technology improves."

The Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team outlined the BMAP process as a critical step for preventing brucellosis transmission to cattle and regaining the state's brucellosis free status. The state's brucellosis-free status was officially restored in September of 2006.

The Jackson Bison Herd population objective will also be discussed. Currently the objective is 350 – 400 bison with an estimated population of nearly 1,200. The Department is proposing an objective of 500 animals. The Jackson Bison and Elk Environmental Impact Statement was finalized during the summer of 2007. That EIS recognized the primacy of the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission to set a bison population objective for the Jackson Herd and recommended that an objective of 500 would alleviate most concerns with maintaining adequate genetic variability into the future. Once the Commission adopts a new objective, the Department would work to reduce this herd toward the objective over the course of several years using hunter harvest.

The Game and Fish supports the Americans with Disabilities Act. Anyone needing auxiliary aids to attend this meeting should call (800) 843-8096 (in-state only) or 307-875-3223. Every effort will be made for reasonable accommodations.

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