



ELK AND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN/ ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DRAFT MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

Summer 2004

I would like to update you on the Elk and Vegetation Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) efforts at Rocky Mountain National Park. As noted in the first newsletter, the elk population has more than tripled since 1969, and concentrations and migration patterns are also outside the range of variation under natural conditions. As a result, willow and aspen stands no longer regenerate effectively, depriving other wildlife of the food and habitat they need to survive. In addition, the increasing numbers of elk are causing property damage and safety concerns in Estes Park.

Recovering, to the extent possible, the natural range of variability in the elk population and affected plant communities requires identifying and implementing measures to maintain, restore, and protect the inherent integrity of natural resources. As lead agency, the National Park Service is cooperating with the Town of Estes Park, the Estes Valley Recreation and Park District, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Grand County, Larimer County, the Town of Grand Lake, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Forest Service to develop a 20 year plan to achieve this end. An Interagency EIS Team has defined the purpose, need, and objectives of the elk and vegetation management plan; formulated the issues involved in meeting the objectives, and developed a list of potential management tools that could be incorporated into the plan alternatives.

In summer and fall 2003, the National Park Service and partners released a newsletter and held a series of public workshops in Estes Park, Loveland, Boulder, and Grand Lake to determine the issues and concerns associated with managing elk and vegetation in and around the park. We have received over 1,100 comments from you, in writing or recorded at the workshops. We are grateful for your input, and took your comments into consideration in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to manage elk and vegetation. The team has developed five draft alternative concepts to meet the project objectives; this newsletter presents these concepts and one alternative that would continue the current management of elk and vegetation (No Action Alternative).

We would like your input on the five alternatives presented in this newsletter. To facilitate this process, four public workshops will be held in communities near the park. You can find specific dates and locations of these meetings on page 10 of this newsletter. Following this public scoping period, the alternatives will be further developed. With your comments, we can reevaluate the direction and scope of each alternative, modifying them as necessary. Next, all alternatives, including any modifications, will be presented and fully analyzed in a draft Environmental Impact Statement, which you will have an opportunity to review in the winter of 2005.

Again, I thank you for your contributions to date and for your interest in Rocky Mountain National Park. I encourage your continued involvement during the EIS process and look forward to your feedback on the draft alternatives presented in this newsletter and on the draft EIS when it becomes available for public review. Understanding the interests and priorities of you, the public, is an important part of the planning and environmental impact statement process. Your participation helps us produce an EIS that is complete, factual, and focused.

Vaughn L. Baker, Superintendent
Rocky Mountain National Park

