



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region



IN REPLY REFER TO:

FWS/R6/062487

Mail Stop 60130

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Denver Federal Center

Denver, Colorado 80225-0486

STREET LOCATION:

134 Union Boulevard

Lakewood, Colorado 80228-1807

Walter E. Congdon, Civil Deputy Lake County Attorney
Office of the Lake County Attorney
106 Fourth Avenue East
Polson, Montana 59860-2183

APR 7 2016

Dear Mr. Congdon:

We have received your letter dated February 22, 2016, regarding the future of the National Bison Range and associated properties administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in Lake County, Montana. You have styled your letter as a protest pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) based on your apparent conclusion that a decision has been made. At the outset, I want to clarify that there has been no final decision, and no proposal for action. The only activities that have occurred thus far have been discussions with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) about the future of the National Bison Range, which could include a legislative solution.

The Service had a discussion on February 5, 2016, and has had subsequent conversations with the CSKT since then about the possibility of the Service supporting legislation that would transfer the lands comprising the National Bison Range. This discussion was limited to the National Bison Range; there was no discussion of transferring the management of Pablo, Nine-Pipe or any other properties under Service administration in Lake County, Montana. Moreover, because legislation would be required to accomplish any transfer of the National Bison Range, there is no certainty as to when, or even if, any action would occur. If legislation is proposed directing transfer of the National Bison Range the Service will comply with applicable laws as directed by Congress.

Your letter also requests "copies of the work done thus far" and a request to be involved as a cooperating agency. We are interpreting this as a request for a copy of the environmental assessment that was begun in 2010. The following is a link to the *Draft Environmental Assessment for a Draft Annual Funding Agreement*: <http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/AFA-2014/index.html>.

I appreciate your interest in the National Bison Range. If you need further information, please contact me at (303) 236-7920 or the Assistant Regional Director for the National Wildlife Refuge System in the Mountain-Prairie Region, Will Meeks, at (303) 236-4303.

Sincerely,

Deputy Regional Director

cc: Jeff King