



## Exotic Species Management Plans



### Project Milestones

- Public Scoping Comment Period (June 30 - July 29, 2015)
- Public meetings: in Study Butte July 14, and in Alpine July 15
- Prepare Plans / Environmental Assessments
  - Exotic Animals
  - Trespass Livestock
  - Exotic Plants
- Public Review of Plans/EAs
- Prepare decision document
- Release decision document

Big Bend National Park proposes to develop and implement plans for managing non-native (exotic) animals, trespass livestock, and exotic plants in the park. The Plans will provide guidance and a framework for decisions related to protecting Big Bend's natural and cultural resources from the impacts of non-native, exotic species over the coming decades.

NPS Policies direct that exotic species..."will be managed – up to and including eradication – if control is prudent and feasible and the exotic species interferes with natural processes and the perpetuation of natural features, native species or natural habitats."

Environmental Assessments (EAs) will be prepared for each management plan in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) explores a

reasonable range of alternatives to meet objectives; 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to park resources and values; 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts; and 4) describes an approach and methods for long term exotic species management.

The NPS encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process. The public has two opportunities to formally participate in the planning process - during the initial public scoping period and later, during public review of the Plans/EAs. At this time, we invite you to help identify issues, and to express any ideas, comments, or concerns regarding exotic species management in the park. Comments submitted during this initial public scoping period will be considered during preparation of the EAs.

## About the Park

Established in 1944, Big Bend National Park is nestled inside a bend of the Rio Grande as it flows along 118 miles of the US/Mexico border. At 1,252 square miles, Big Bend is the largest Chihuahuan Desert protected area.

The park's 1,300 plant, 75 mammal, 56 reptile, 11 amphibian, 40 fish, and 450 bird species are all linked to diverse geology and topography. Many species are unique to the Chihuahuan Desert and some occur only in the park. Adjacent public and private lands share most of these species. Diversity varies from the river riparian zone at 1,800 feet elevation through desert and grassland to the Chisos Mountains woodland and Emory Peak at 7,800 feet.

The park also has a rich human history, from 12,000 years ago to the recent historic period. Since the 17th century, Spanish, Mexican, and American settlers farmed, ranched, and mined in the area. Historic buildings illustrate border life in the early 20th century. The National Park Service is charged with preserving this natural and cultural heritage and providing for its enjoyment by the public. Into this setting, protection of natural and cultural resources from damage by exotic species is a fundamental management responsibility.





## Possible Actions

The Plans/EAs will propose and evaluate exotic species management strategies to protect natural and cultural resources, prevent the spread of exotic species, and mitigate or restore already impacted areas of the park, using a variety of options that may include:

- Round-up and live removal of trespass livestock using mounted wranglers and increased aircraft support. Lethal livestock control is not proposed.
- Removal of exotic feral hogs and aoudad (Barbary sheep) using lethal measures, including aerial shooting and ground-based trapping and shooting.
- Coordinate exotic species management activities with neighboring Texas and Mexican government agencies, private landowners, and conservation organizations.
- Eradicate red-eared sliders from park waters through trapping and euthanasia.
- Investigate management options for bullfrogs, green treefrogs and nutria in high priority areas, such as the endangered Big Bend mosquitofish ponds at Rio Grande Village.
- Treat exotic plant species such as African buffelgrass, giant reed, saltcedar, and Lehmann's lovegrass where feasible using mechanical methods, herbicides, biocontrols, prescribed burns, and a combination of approaches and tools.
- Prevent introduction and spread of exotics through monitoring, early detection and rapid response.
- Educate the public on exotic species prevention.
- Restore priority areas damaged by exotic species.

## Resources and Concerns

The Plans/EAs will analyze potential impacts to a number of resources including:

- Soils and vegetation
- Native wildlife
- Aquatic species
- Threatened and endangered species
- Water quality, floodplains, and wetlands
- Cultural resources
- Wilderness areas
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Recreation resources
- Visitor experience
- Park operations



## Please Help by Participating

### Submit Comments

Public comments will help the NPS identify issues, develop alternatives, and guide the analysis during preparation of the Plans and Environmental Assessments.

The NPS requests comments be submitted online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/bibe>.

Comments may also be submitted via e-mail to [bibe\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:bibe_planning@nps.gov), or mailed to: Superintendent, Attn: Exotic Species Management Plans, PO Box 129, Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834

Comments will be accepted between June 30 and July 29, 2015. Mailed comments must be postmarked by July 29.

### Attend a Public Meeting

Park representatives will provide presentations and displays, answer questions and accept written comments.

**Tuesday, July 14, 2015**

Study Butte, Texas

Brewster County Multi-Purpose Facility

6 - 7 pm

**Wednesday, July 15, 2015**

Alpine, Texas

Sul Ross State University

Morgan Conference Center

Room 210

6 - 7 pm