



Welcome

TO THE OPEN HOUSE FOR THE
GRAND CANYON BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN/
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

AGENDA

- 6:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Sign-in and Open House
- 6:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. NPS Presentation
- 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Open House



View looking west from Powell Plateau

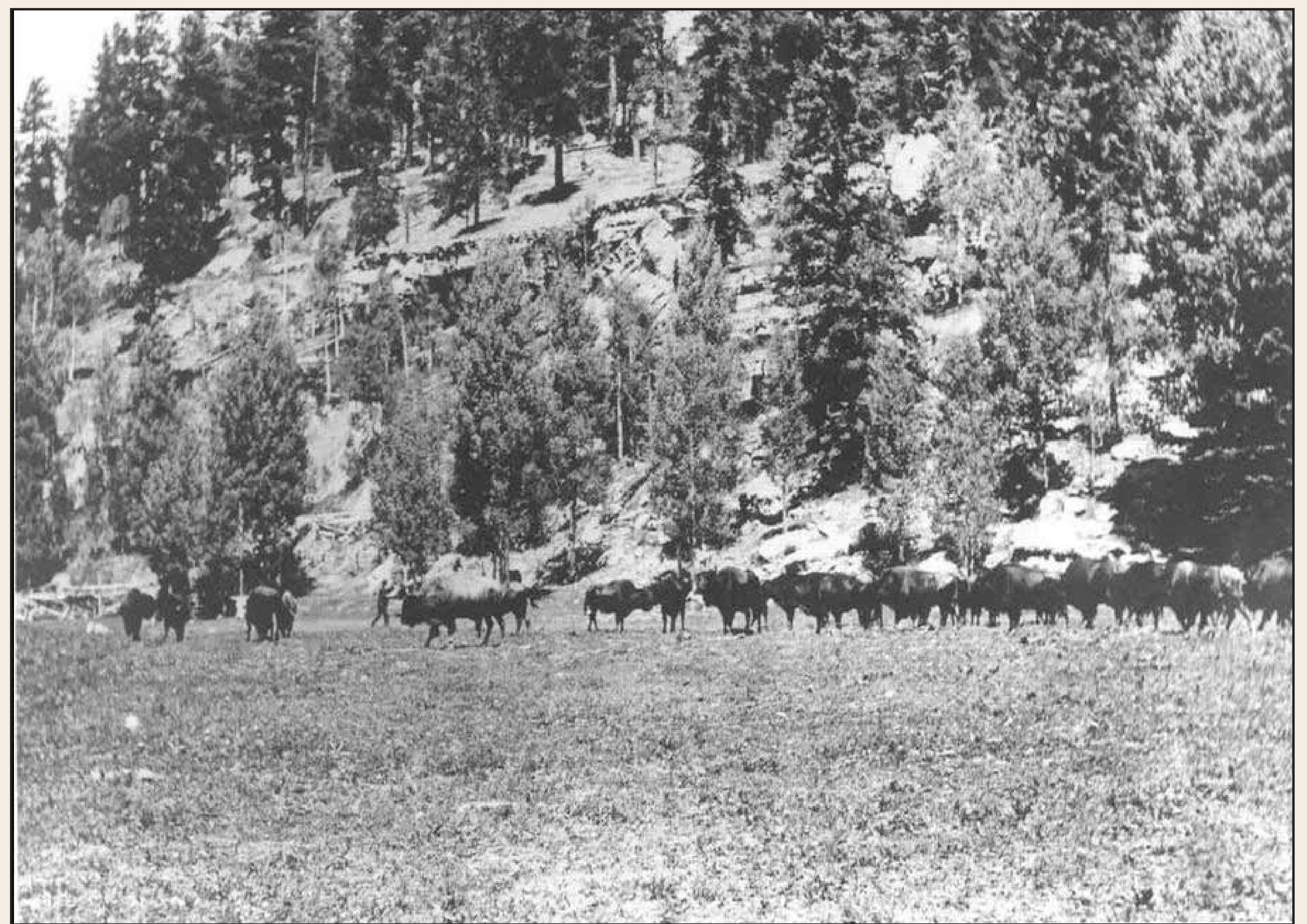
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK
BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



Bison on the Kaibab Plateau

LOOKING BACK

- Bison now found at Grand Canyon National Park are descendants of bison brought to Arizona in June 1906 by Charles “Buffalo” Jones. Descendants of these bison have been managed since 1950 by the state of Arizona in the House Rock Wildlife Area on the Kaibab National Forest, through an interagency agreement with the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.
- By the late 1990s, the “House Rock herd” was spending more time off the House Rock Wildlife Area by venturing onto the North Rim of the Grand Canyon National Park.
- Over the last several years, few bison have returned to the House Rock Wildlife Area, and most now spend a majority of their time inside the park boundaries.
- Given reproduction rates and the inability to access the herd for hunting (due to the amount of time the bison spend inside the park boundaries), the estimated population has grown from about 100 head in the late 1990s to more than 300 head today.



Bison in the House Rock Valley in the early twentieth century (top and middle), and the Kaibab Plateau (bottom)



Project Area





Bison on the Kaibab Plateau

LOOKING FORWARD

- Since 2008, a tri-agency working group consisting of staff from the National Park Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the U.S. Forest Service has been addressing research needs and administrative and operational challenges of long-term cooperative bison management. The National Park Service, guided by its mission and the Department of the Interior's Bison Conservation Initiative, seeks to work with its partners to conserve and manage bison as wildlife, as appropriate based on ecological role, best available science, governing laws and policies, and long-term public interest.
- Where bison are found on NPS lands, they are managed as needed and within NPS authorities to ensure other resources and values are protected.
- In the case of Grand Canyon National Park, the current movement, distribution, and abundance of bison creates concerns for other natural and cultural resources at the park.
- The current situation also limits the U.S. Forest Service and the state from meeting their bison management goals outside the park, including the Arizona Game and Fish Department's ability to provide bison hunting opportunities.
- Building on this collaboration, the National Park Service is now beginning preparation of this plan/EIS, with the U.S. Forest Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and Bureau of Land Management as formal cooperating agencies.
- Ultimately, the action the National Park Service selects for implementation will provide the basis for Grand Canyon National Park's participation in a long-term, interagency approach to managing bison on park and Kaibab National Forest land that meets the various mandates of each agency.



Bison from the House Rock herd in Grand Canyon National Park



Purpose and Need

The **purpose** of this plan/EIS is to:

Develop a long-term, coordinated approach to manage the current and future impacts of bison on the Grand Canyon National Park’s natural and cultural resources, while supporting U.S. Forest Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department goals for management of a free-ranging bison population on the Kaibab National Forest.

Additionally, the plan is intended to:

- ensure tribal concerns related to bison management are considered,
- further the understanding of bison interactions with the ecology of the Kaibab Plateau,
- reduce the potential for visitor safety issues associated with bison in the park, and
- further the public understanding of bison management and conservation outlined in the Department of the Interior’s Bison Conservation Initiative and National Park Service Call to Action.

The plan is **needed** because the current bison abundance, distribution, and movements in and near the park limit the ability of:

- the National Park Service to conserve the natural and cultural resources on the North Rim of the park and
- Arizona Game and Fish Department and U.S. Forest Service to meet their current management goals for a huntable, free-ranging bison herd on the Kaibab National Forest.



Grand Canyon National Park seeks to protect both cultural resources, such as ancestral Puebloan structures (left), and natural resources, such as the native lupine plant (*Lupinus argenteus*) (right).



Issues

An “issue” describes the relationship between actions and environmental (i.e., natural, cultural, and socioeconomic) resources. Issues are usually problems that either the “no action” alternative or current situation has caused or that any of the proposed alternatives might cause. They may be questions, concerns, problems, or other relationships, including beneficial ones.

With respect to bison management at Grand Canyon National Park, the National Park Service and its cooperators have identified several issues related to the following resources or values that may need to be managed, including:

- springs and hydrologic resources
- cultural resources
- plants found only in seeps, springs or grassland areas
- alpine meadow plants on the plateau
- plant communities (due to loss of plant diversity and introduction of invasive plant species)
- other ungulates and wildlife
- Mexican spotted owl habitat
- wilderness quality
- visitor safety



(Top Photos) Bison use habitat that supports other wildlife, including threatened species, and unique plants. Bison are attracted to water sources, such as seeps and springs, which can be affected by soil compaction and dewatering (bottom).

What other issues, concerns, or suggestions do you think should be considered as we develop the Bison Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement?



Tools Under Consideration

The planning team, including staff from the National Park Service and its cooperators, has preliminarily identified several tools that may be successful in managing bison at Grand Canyon National Park. These tools include, but are not limited to those identified in the box below.

- Managing access to water sources that attract bison
- Tools to trigger bison movement and migration (e.g., deter bison from spending time in some areas, and encourage bison movement into desired areas) or to capture and relocate bison, such as:
 - baiting
 - soft handling/herding techniques
 - hazing
- Tools to manage bison abundance that are authorized for use on National Park Service lands, including, but not limited to direct reduction of the bison population using National Park Service, contractor, and/or skilled public volunteers

WHAT THIS PLAN/EIS WILL NOT CONSIDER

Arizona Game and Fish Department and U.S. Forest Service have authority to employ tools, such as hunting or reproductive control, to manage bison on the Kaibab National Forest. This will ultimately be done in concert with the National Park Service bison management plan to help meet mutual goals.

As a result, this plan/EIS will not consider changes to:

- jurisdiction for managing bison inside or outside Grand Canyon National Park
- U.S. Forest Service/Arizona Game and Fish Department/Bureau of Land Management agreements and planning documents that guide bison management on the Kaibab National Forest
- bison hunting regulations set by the Arizona Game and Fish Department



View of the House Rock Wildlife Area on the Kaibab National Forest (top). Bison from House Rock herd (bottom)



NEPA Process & Timeline

When a federal agency prepares a plan like this one, it triggers the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

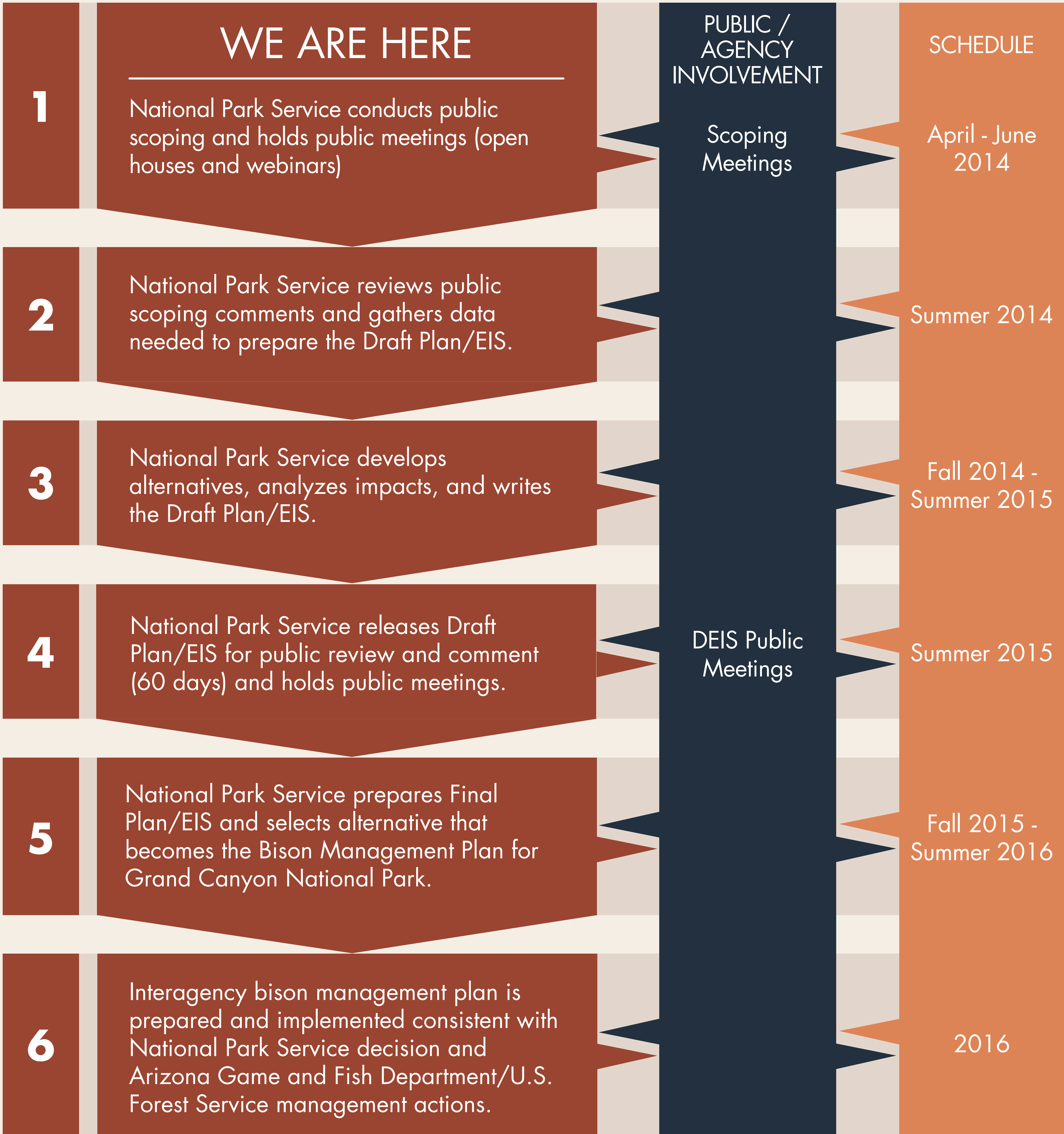
NEPA requires federal agencies to consider the environmental impacts of its proposed action, and alternatives to that proposal, before making a decision on what action to take.

In this case, the National Park Service has determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be prepared to complete the NEPA review for the bison management plan.

NEPA also requires federal agencies to involve the public when making decisions with the potential for environmental impacts.

Public involvement opportunities are provided during scoping and upon release of the Draft Plan/EIS. These meetings are part of initial scoping, which provides an early way for you to learn about and provide input into this plan and EIS process.

Steps in the plan/EIS process and the anticipated timeline are identified below.





Options for Public Comment

There are several ways to provide input:

- 1

Submit comments electronically at:
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/GRCA_bison_eis
(preferred method)
- 2

Submit comments at an in-person meeting
- 3

Submit written comments at the park’s offices in Flagstaff or by mail to:
Grand Canyon National Park Bison Management Plan/EIS
Superintendent
Grand Canyon National Park
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023

To be most useful to the planning process, please submit comments no later than
June 6, 2014.

If you would like to stay informed about this project, please include your full name and address and/or email address with the comments, so you can be added to the mailing list for future notices about this process.

You should be aware that your entire comment—including personal identifying information, such as your address, phone number, and e-mail address—may be made public at any time. While you can ask in your comment that your personal identifying information be withheld from public review, the National Park Service cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.



Bison are spending increasing amounts of time in this part of the park.