

## Memo To File

### A. Project Information

**Park Name:** Wind Cave National Park

**PEPC Project Number:** 67590

**Project Title:** 2016 Elk Management Plan Implementation

**Project Location:**

**County, State:** Custer, South Dakota

**Project Leader:** Greg Schroeder

### B. Description of the Current Action (Project Description)

Wind Cave National Park (WICA) is continuing to manage elk in accordance with the 2009 Elk Management Plan EIS. The preferred alternative (B) has been implemented beginning in 2010. Unfortunately, WICA has not been able to reduce its elk population to within management targets (232 - 475 elk) during this period. The EMP/EIS stated that if population goals were not achieved within two years of implementation of the preferred alternative, WICA needed to implement other alternatives. As such, we will begin implementing Alternative D in Fall/Winter 2016-2017.

Since finalization of this EMP/EIS, new information and techniques are now available for handling elk meat from CWD known areas. As such, we are able to use adaptive management strategies for disposition of elk parts and distribution of elk meat. WICA is now able to test the elk for CWD and distribute elk meat (that tested negative for CWD) to individuals that have received information that this elk meat came from an area known to have CWD, but that CWD was not detected in this elk. Meat from elk which do not test positive for CWD will be distributed to the public following informed consent.

In Alternative D, it was not believed that elk meat could be removed from the field in a clean state. WICA has made several modifications to a newly acquired building to eliminate this risk. WICA has installed an elk processing station within this building where all elk meat can be washed clean before it is stored in a refrigerated truck. This approach has been proven successful at THRO where over 900 elk were removed from the field and distributed to the public.

WICA will utilize ATV/UTVs to help remove the elk meat from the field. An ATV/UTV will be utilized to greatest extent possible following NEPA/NHPA approved best management practices in Wind Cave. Best management practices include: a) ATV/UTV use will be allowed when the ground is dry or frozen only. b) ATV/UTVs will not be driven in streams or their associated riparian areas, or in wetlands (e.g. seeps, springs). c) Efforts will be made to conceal or lessen visibility of OHV tracks from the road/visiting public and communicate that tracks are not open for public use. This could include the use of temporary barricades and signs. It also includes planning ATV use/deployment so that tracks run parallel rather than perpendicular to nearby roads so visibility from roads is reduced. d) All known archeological sites will be avoided by ATV/UTV users. In areas when archeological surveys have been conducted, only one pass over the area is allowed without a survey conducted. If an area is to be driven over at least twice, this would constitute a "trail" and then must have an archeological survey before this "trail" can be utilized. e) Efforts will be made to limit ATV/UTV use to those "trails" that have already been surveyed and cleared

Each impact topic previously reviewed under the 2009 Elk Management Plan will be reevaluated to determine if either alternative implementation technique (distribution of meat to public and carcasses retrieval utilizing ATV/UTVs) are no more damaging/less damaging than what was originally considered (incinerate all carcasses and carcasses retrieval utilizing helicopters, respectively).

See attached document for analysis.

There will be no difference between the impacts as described in the 2009 Final EIS and the alternate implementation techniques under Alternative D

### C. Description of Previous Compliance Documentation

**Decision Document Name:** Wind Cave Elk Management Plan  
**Decision Document PEPC ID:** 10628  
**Decision Document Approval Date:** Dec 3, 2009

### D. Notes

### E. Conclusion

I certify that the existing NPS NEPA document has been reviewed and there are no substantive differences between the current proposal and its associated environmental impacts and the proposal and impacts as described in the existing NEPA document and associated decision document.

**Superintendent**

:

Vidal Davila

Vidal Davila

**Date:**

10/14/16