IN REPLY REFER TO:
N1427

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
Yellowstone Park, Wyoming

October 28, 1959

Mr. Click Relander
1212 North 32nd Avenue
Yakima, Washington

Dear Mr. Relander:

In answer to the request for information concerning elk contained in your letter of October 21, 1959, we are enclosing the following material:

1 - Information for Applicants in Making Requests for Surplus Bears and Elk

2 - Management Plan for Northern Elk Herd, Yellowstone National Park

3 - Two photos showing elk in Yellowstone habitat

Our records show that between 1912 and 1930, 412 elk were shipped to the State of Washington, as follows:

Year shipped	Number shipped	Receiving Agency:
1912	60	Snohomish County
1912	46	Skagit County
1912	80	Kings County
1913	50	Yakima County
1913	40	Garfield County
1913	6	City of Spokane
1913	25	State of Washington (Walla Walla)
1914	25	Stevens County
1916	50	Kittitas County
1930	30	Izaak Walton League, Dayton

Hamilton Stores, Inc., and Haynes Studios, Inc., of Yellowstone Park, Wyoming, handle photographs and souvenirs such as small plaques and plaster of paris casts of elk. These are the

only purchasable items available in the Park. A number of stores in adjacent towns also have items of which we are not familiar.

We hope this information will help you.

Sincerely yours,

Frank E. Sylvester

Frank E. Sylvester
Acting Chief Park Ranger

Enclosures

[Enclosure. 28 Oct 59]

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS IN MAKING REQUESTS FOR SURPLUS BEARS AND ELK

GENERAL

The National Park Service occasionally disposes of a limited number of surplus elk to municipal zoos and other public institutions or to organizations and individuals who desire the animals for restocking or breeding purposes and who can give assurance that they have suitable facilities for proper care. Shipment of bears (both black and grizzly) is limited to public agencies or institutions. No animals, other than elk and bears, are available for shipment.

When elk are requested and it is intended that they shall be liberated on either private, State or Federally-owned land, or in the vicinity of lands under the jurisdiction of any bureau of the Federal Government, requests will be granted only on the condition that the State Conservation or Game Department concerned, and any or all bureaus of the Federal Government having jurisdiction over land in the vicinity of the location where the animals are to be released, give written concurrence to the transplanting program.

When elk are to be released on open range, a representative of the State or Federal agency concerned will be required to receive the animals at the loading point in the park and sign a receipt indicating the destination of the shipment.

Fencing suitable for elk should be at least seven feet high and constructed of number nine gauge woven wire with posts at intervals of ten to sixteen feet.

COSTS TO APPLICANT:

A handling charge of $5.00 per animal, payable in the form of a postal money order or certified check made to the Treasurer of the United States and mailed to the Park Superintendent, is required. In addition the applicant must bear directly the following expenses:

(1) Cost of rail or truck transportation from the holding corrals or point of capture to destination.

(2) Cost of veterinarian services for testing and / or inoculating animals for communicable diseases or issuing health certificates when requested by State officials.

(3) Cost of crates when required for individual transportation of animals.

REQUIREMENT OF APPLICANTS BEFORE ANY ALLOTMENT OF SURPLUS ANIMALS WILL BE APPROVED OR SHIPMENT MADE

(1) Written application or request must be made to the Park Superintendent stating the (a) number of animals and (b) sex desired.

(2) Application must specifically state the use or purpose for which the animals are requested. In any doubtful cases the stated purpose may be investigated.

(3) Application should specifically describe facilities for holding and care of the animals, if other than a regularly established publicly-owned zoo or park.

(4) Where animals are desired for a privately-owned ranch or preserve, application must be accompanied by written approval of the State Conservation or Game Department and all bureaus of the Federal Government having jurisdiction of adjacent land in the locality where animals are to be released or transplanted.

(5) If application is approved, the applicant will be so notified by the Park Superintendent.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

When individual shipping crate is necessary, as is the case for all bears, and for elk when obtained in less than truckload or carload lots, the receiver is required to furnish the crate, containing water pan or bucket, which must be constructed in accordance with certain specifications. These specifications may be obtained from the Park Superintendent upon request when shipments have been approved. Assistance in furnishing names of local individuals or business concerns who will manufacture the crates for the applicant will be furnished upon request.

Organizations or individuals interested in obtaining surplus animals should investigate express or trucking charges from the park to the destination and carefully consider all of the costs involved before making application to the Park Superintendent.

Bear requests will be filled only when it becomes necessary to dispose of a troublesome animal; however, requests for live bear should be submitted early the same spring delivery is desired. Grizzly bears rarely are available. It is not possible to meet specific requests for bears of any given age or sex. Shipments are made as bears are captured during the months of June through September.

Elk requests are filled only during the winter, usually in January or February; therefore, all requests for live elk should be made early in the fall for winter delivery. Elk may be shipped by express carload lots or hauled in a covered stock truck without being crated individually.

Trucks should be equipped with a movable division gate so that calves may be separated from the older animals. The floor of the truck should have a layer of sand covered with a six-inch layer of clean straw in order to provide adequate footing for the elk while being transported. Sides of the truck should be boarded solid to a height of about five feet to prevent the animals from getting their legs through openings. Where shipments involve considerable distance and travel time, a special watering trough which will not injure the animals should be included in the truck and means of hay feeding should be provided. Feed for elk hauled by truck must be provided by the receiver; that for express shipments is provided by the express company. An express car will accommodate approximately 30 elk.

Average live weights of available animals are approximately as follows:

	Live Weight	Live Weight Crated
Elk	300-500 lbs.	700-900 lbs.
Bear	100-500 lbs.	400-900 lbs.

Further information, if desired, may be obtained by writing to the:

Park Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park, Yellowstone Park, Wyoming.

Revised: August 5, 1959

[Enclosure. 28 Oct 59]

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
Yellowstone Park, Wyoming

November 21, 1958

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR NORTHERN ELK HERD

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

With protection afforded since the Park was established, elk wintering in the Yellowstone River drainage increased from a few hundred in 1872 to a high estimated in the scores of thousands. Reported winter losses of perhaps as high as 5,000 animals in a year before 1900 indicate that winter forage was grossly inadequate for the elk herd over 50 years ago.

For some 75 years man has occupied and used for agricultural purposes the extensive winter and summer range lands north of Yellowstone Park once used by elk and other wildlife. Man's utilization of the natural range lands of the elk restricted the area available for wildlife foraging. In turn the elk's tendency to migrate to these lower valley lands was slowly changed; this has been a contributing factor to the establishment of a semi-sedentary Northern Yellowstone elk herd. The elk have adjusted to new environmental conditions; they have remained in Yellowstone, increased in numbers and consequently depleted the vegetative cover and created a situation which requires correction.

The cumulative effects of grazing and trampling by excessive numbers of elk for many decades are obvious today. Meadows once covered by lush thickets of willows now have a grass-

type aspect; likewise former groves of aspen now have only a few trees which cannot be replaced while elk consume reproduction. Sagebrush has disappeared from ridges and other places where snow lies shallow, and even bunchgrass, which comprises the bulk of the elk's diet, is in poor condition on that range where grazing animals must feed in later winter.

As the choice bunchgrass thins out, less productive and less palatable grasses replace it and on marginal sites even these have succumbed to grazing, trampling and poor soil conditions. Retrogression of plant cover invites rapid runoff of water and damaging erosion of precious soil, an irreplaceable resource. This depleted condition of the vegetation and soil from decades of abuse is being further aggravated by too many elk for the range now.

Damaging effects of this abuse are manifold. Animals, whether they be the elk or bighorn which graze, the beaver which feeds on aspen and willow, small songbirds which demand food and protection offered by vegetation, ducks which suffer from fluctuating water levels, or fish which find a shortened food supply as silt fills stream beds, all suffer from this damaging chain reaction started by the elk. Probably the whitetailed deer is not the only animal whose vanishing from Yellowstone can be traced to overabundance of elk. Scenic values in the northern area have been seriously impaired. The multitude of upsets in Nature's pattern due to the elk clearly indicate that reduction of the elk herd is long overdue.

The act which established the National Park Service in 1916 specifies that the fundamental purpose of parks is ". . to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." It empowers the Director of the National Park Service to ". . provide in his discretion for the destruction of such animals and of such plant life as may be detrimental to the use of any of said parks, monuments, or reservations."

While elk are definitely a part of the wildlife picture we want all other animals also, such as bighorn, antelope, moose, bison and mule deer.

Estimated Number in Park

Bighorn - - - - 200

Antelope - - - 330

Bison - - - - - 600

Moose - - - - - 400

Mule deer - - - 650

Total, 2180

To have more than four times as many elk as the total of the other five species of grazing animals is completely out of proportion.

In controlling the number of elk utilizing Yellowstone's northern winter range lands the ultimate objective is to continue and to increase the opportunity for the park visitor to see and enjoy wildlife. Relief of these depleted range lands from

excessive grazing and browsing pressure will enable a variety of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants to increase their vigor and re-establish themselves. The buildup of the plant cover will increase watershed protection and provide food and cover for an increased variety of birds, small mammals, hoofed animals and other animal life forms. And, the improved habitat will ultimately enhance the opportunity for visitors to see elk, moose, bighorn, bison, deer and antelope. With a continued water supply and the development of willows and deciduous trees, principally aspen and cottonwood, beaver may again colonize some of the drainage courses. The anticipated increase in the variety of animals and their potential proximity to areas of intensive visitor use will, in the long run, greatly enhance the visitor's opportunity to benefit from and enjoy the Yellowstone wildlife resource.

The northern Yellowstone elk problem has been recognized for decades but corrective action has lagged. National fear that the elk was in danger of extermination prevailed well into the twentieth century. Now it is obvious that lack of control, rather than excessive control, could, through self destruction of habitat, doom the elk and many other kinds of animals which live in the same environment. In 1953 the National Park Service crystallized its objective in management of this problem elk herd in the attached statement of the long range plan.

The history of attempts to bring the herd down to a level which would permit range recovery and rebuilding of the complex faunal picture has guided formulation of the present program for control of the herd. A hunter harvest of elk which

migrate into Montana has been the chief means for herd reduction through the years. However, the number of elk that can be taken by hunters depends on severe weather to force the animals to lower elevations outside the Park, and only during occasional severe winters have significant numbers been harvested this way. Hazing of elk to get them to leave the Park has proven unsatisfactory. Live trapping of elk for shipment from the Park is also dependent on weather, and at best offers a chance of removing only a small part of the annual increase. When all of the above means fail, then shooting of elk by rangers in the Park, where the bulk of the herd usually spends the winter, is the only means found which assures positive control, regardless of weather. Animals killed for this purpose are then utilized according to Federal laws.

In the fall of 1949, following an extremely poor growing season, the National Park Service established a trial program for reduction of the elk herd to 5,000 animals since preliminary studies indicated that a herd of such size might permit range recovery. Despite efforts to reduce the herd, it increased from about 11,000 elk in the fall of 1949 to at least 13,500 by the fall of 1955. Weather conditions in the winter of 1955-56 were severe, with a resultant hunter harvest of 3,900 elk north of the Park and a removal of 645 by live trapping in the Park. Rangers shot 1,974 elk in the Park and observations indicate that this increased migration and improved hunting outside of the Park. Various minor losses which occurred left a herd of at least 7,000 elk by late March of 1956 (6,963 elk were counted from helicopters).

The herd was estimated to contain 8,300 elk in the fall of 1956. Removal by hunters north of the Park, live trapping and direct reduction in the Park, and natural losses amounted to about 1,500 head. Herd increase brought the total number of elk to about 8,200 in the fall of 1957. Hunters were able to harvest only about 50 elk north of the Park, rangers shot 536 elk in the Park and trapping was unsuccessful. The winter of 1957-58 was extremely mild with very light losses. Total removal of about 800 elk from the herd was considerably less than the previous calf crop of about 1,400 elk.

While progress has been made since 1955, a continued positive management program is required for this northern Yellowstone herd which, with its natural increase, is estimated to contain 9,000 elk in the fall of 1958. Hunting and trapping will accomplish a material reduction only if weather is severe; consequently, the National Park Service has included removal of elk by shooting by park rangers in its program to effect the reduction to 5,000 elk as soon as possible. Such shooting will be on a supplementary basis, that is, as a necessary last resort only when other more desirable methods are inadequate.

An important feature of the long-range plan is the provision that shooting within the Park will be used to hold the herd at the 5,000 level only when hunting in Montana and live trapping in the Park during the previous year fail to achieve the removal needed.

The liberal hunting season for 1958-59 anticipated by the Montana Fish and Game Commission may provide opportunity for a big hunter harvest if the weather is such that elk will cross the boundary in large numbers. If the live trapping program is successful and all requests for stocking ranges, zoos and game farms are filled the surplus of trapped elk will be released to Montana or other states which may want to release them to augment huntable herds.

By law, elk carcasses from reduction programs in the Park must be transferred to Federal agencies if the Park Service is to be reimbursed for reduction costs. Requests for such carcasses from Indian agencies and tribes are now being received.

Present plans call for the direct reduction in the Park to begin in December on interior herds which by that late date show no signs of moving into hunting territory or within range of live traps. It is hoped that weather this winter will be so severe that hunters will be able to accomplish the major part of the herd reduction in Montana, thus relieving the National Park Service of the need for a large direct control program.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
Yellowstone Park, Wyoming

LONG-RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE ELK HERD

Objective

"The elk population in Yellowstone National Park should be reduced to and maintained at a point compatible with a rejuvenation of the vegetative cover on the northern range, so that there will be a restoration of many decimated plant forms, especially deciduous shrubs and trees. The degree of restoration of plant cover is to be based on the available evidence of the fauna and flora that prevailed on the winter range prior to the adverse influence of too many elk utilizing the vegetation."

The objective as stated is designed to attain an optimum relationship between plants and animals for the mutual benefit of both so that a maximum variety can exist without detriment to the whole complex community of plants and animals. This optimum situation will provide the Park visitor with a varied opportunity to see and enjoy the Yellowstone wildlife resource under conditions which will reflect healthy animals in an appealing environmental setting.

Program

I. Reduce northern Yellowstone elk herd to 5,000 head as soon as possible; hold at this level for a period sufficient to determine the response of vegetation and animals to reduced number of elk (about five years).

II. Evaluate response of plants and animals to determine the allowable future size of elk herd.

III. Continue to recognize hunter harvest north of Park as most desirable means of controlling elk numbers, with trapping for removal of elk from Park as next best but with full realization that large scale shooting by rangers in the Park will be done if necessary to expedite initial reduction of the herd to trial size.

IV. Control of the herd after its reduction to 5,000 animals by further large scale shooting in the Park

Program (cont'd.)

IV. will be required only when removal by hunting in Montana in the previous year has failed. Removal by shooting of small bands of elk which display no interest in moving out of the Park and which habitually damage vegetation in key areas may be required, even when the herd numbers approximately 5,000 animals.

V. Manipulate control methods applied in Park where possible to encourage migratory habits of elk consistent with the programs of U. S. Forest Service and Montana Fish and Game Commission, considering interests of landowners in upper Yellowstone valley.

VI. Work with Federal and State agencies and private groups to develop best program to preserve all resources of the northern Yellowstone range.

VII. Hold antelope and bison herds on the northern Yellowstone range each at about 100 to 125 head to enhance opportunity for range recovery.

VIII. Carry on active program to inform public of need for elk control.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
Yellowstone Park, Wyoming

1958-59 REDUCTION PLAN FOR NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE ELK HERD

Objective: To effect as much reduction as is possible toward goal of a herd of only 5,000 elk.

Present Situation

I. Herd is estimated to contain 9,000 elk.

II. Studies indicate a continuing downward trend of grass and other forage plants on range available in late winter and of quaking aspen and willow throughout the northern Yellowstone winter range.

III. Montana hunting regulations for area near north boundary of Park provide for hunting during 1958-59 from October 19 through November 23, and a later hunting season is anticipated if elk migrate from Park.

IV. Requests are on hand for 438 live elk delivered at traps in the Park.

V. Requests have been received from Federal agencies for 800 elk carcasses. Additional requests are anticipated which may more than double the present requests.

Program

I. Continue to work with Montana Fish and Game Commission to accomplish greatest possible reduction by hunters and to transplant elk caught in traps.

II. Develop and fill all possible outlets for live elk trapped in the Park in the following order:

a - Range stocking for Federal and State agencies.

b - Exhibition purposes at public zoos.

c - Stocking private farms and zoos.

d - Release in areas for public hunting.

III. Remove by shooting on the open range the number of animals required to reach goal of 5,000 animals. Early shooting to be confined to the high range to avoid interference with and to encourage migration outside the Park where animals would be available to hunters. Carcasses to be disposed of on a reimbursement of cost basis as follows:

a - Indian agencies and tribes.

b - Other Federal agencies.