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Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2016 4:51 PM
Subject: Commission, U.S. Sens. McCain, Flake: Grand Canyon bison management plan should include state's hunters



ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
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Feb. 25, 2016

PHOENIX — The National Park Service released a plan Tuesday that calls for managing overpopulated bison herds within the Grand Canyon National Park through capture/removal, the use of sharpshooters and localized fencing around sensitive park resources.

Noticeably absent from the Park Service plan was the cost-effective solution that would utilize the state's sportsmen and women as a bison management option, which is supported by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, U.S. Sens. John McCain and Jeff Flake, and U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar.

"While we find the timing of the National Park Service's change in position peculiar, we welcome any progress to reduce damage being caused by bison in the Grand Canyon," said Arizona Game and Fish Commission Chairman Kurt Davis. "Their management proposal comes at the continued burden to taxpayers just as the National Park Service is already burdened with more than \$11.9 billion in deferred maintenance. Any solution should embrace the most cost-effective and heritage-driven option of using citizen hunters to help manage the growing bison herd."

The proposal comes as Congressional lawmakers consider a pair of bi-partisan bills that strive to protect the Grand Canyon's critical habitat, cultural and archaeological sites from further bison damage by requiring the U.S. Department of Interior and the Arizona Game and Fish Commission to coordinate on a plan that allows sportsmen with valid state-issued hunting licenses to assist in managing the bison population.

G & F news on McCain & Flake recommending hunters be included in GC Bison management – 2-25-2016

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“The National Park Service has been studying various bison management strategies for nearly two years; meanwhile, the bison population inside the Grand Canyon grows out of control,” said Sen. McCain, who co-sponsored the Bison Management Act in the Senate with Sen. Flake. “Any plan produced by the Park Service should offer bison hunting opportunities inside the park in coordination with state wildlife officials. With a herd of nearly 600 and thousands of square miles to cover, the cost of relying on contractor sharpshooters and fencing at the taxpayer’s expense is senseless compared to the option of allowing state-licensed hunters who will remove bison free-of-charge to the park.”

Because hunting is not allowed within park boundaries, it has since become a safe haven for the exploding bison population, which has led to overgrazing and damage to the Grand Canyon’s natural resources.

Rep. Gosar stated he was “outraged that the Park Service would offer a last minute, short-sighted, vague and costly proposal. Congress should not be distracted by the Park Service’s Hail Mary and should ensure the Grand Canyon Bison Management Act is signed into law. We can’t afford to allow more devastation to be caused to the park while the Park Service twiddles their thumbs trying to come up with an expensive plan. We have a plan and it puts Arizona hunters to work doing what they love, accomplishing this important task for free.”

The identical version of the Senate bill is sponsored in the House by Rep. Gosar is co-sponsored by U.S. Reps. Ann Kirkpatrick, Kyrsten Sinema, Matt Salmon, David Schweikert and Trent Franks.

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