

Animal Wellness Action Calls on Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to Cancel Bison Hunt in Grand Canyon National Park

Opening Up Hunting in a Jewel of the National Park System Would Be Harmful Precedent

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES, May 6, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Animal Wellness Action and partner organizations called on Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to halt plans for the National Park Service (NPS) to open up a hunting season in the coming months for bison in the northern part of Grand Canyon National Park. The NPS this week conducted a lottery to select hunters to win the opportunity to shoot the bison in the fall and leave with the carcasses and trophies of the animals. In a letter to Haaland sent yesterday, AWA president Wayne Pacelle asked Secretary Haaland to “terminate a thinly disguised public trophy hunting program within Grand Canyon National Park.”

“The National Park Service may euphemistically call this action ‘a cull,’ but the agency has conducted a lottery to select participants, will allow the lottery winners to enter the park with firearms, and authorize them to gun down bison and leave with the carcass and trophy,” added Pacelle. “If it has all the features of a bison hunt, then it is a bison hunt.”

The United States, with very few exceptions, has long forbidden trophy hunting of animals in national parks and national monuments. Not even in Yellowstone National Park, where the treatment of bison by multiple state and federal agencies has come under intense scrutiny, is the NPS allowing hunters to kill bison within the boundaries of the park.

There is no hunting of elk, deer, and other wild animals in Grand Canyon. There are already vast areas of northern Arizona managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the state of Arizona that allow sport hunting. Even when the NPS in the 1970s and 1980s viewed populations of burros at Grand Canyon as a management problem and as non-native animals, it eventually allowed animal protection groups to conduct a large-scale capture and translocation program.

“If the Park Service opens up Grand Canyon to hunting, it will set a precedent the NRA and other groups that have long aspired to secure hunting access within parks and monuments will exploit,” added Pacelle. “When NPS seeks to manage animal populations, its methods must be aligned with the broader values of the agency.”

Reducing the small population of 400 – 600 bison can be achieved humanely, including with fertility control. The NPS has long used Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP), an immunocontraceptive vaccine, for management of free-roaming equids and deer. In fact, that strategy has proven effective for an island population of bison at Catalina Island National Park.

“Shooting bison accustomed to seeing hundreds of thousands of people who stare at them is not a hunt, but an execution,” warned Pacelle. “It’s about as sporting as shooting a parked car.”

Bison species have, since the Pleistocene, ranged from Yukon and Alaska to the Valley of Mexico. The bison occupies an outsized place within the annals of the National Park Service as well, and it is prominently featured on the logo of the agency.

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