

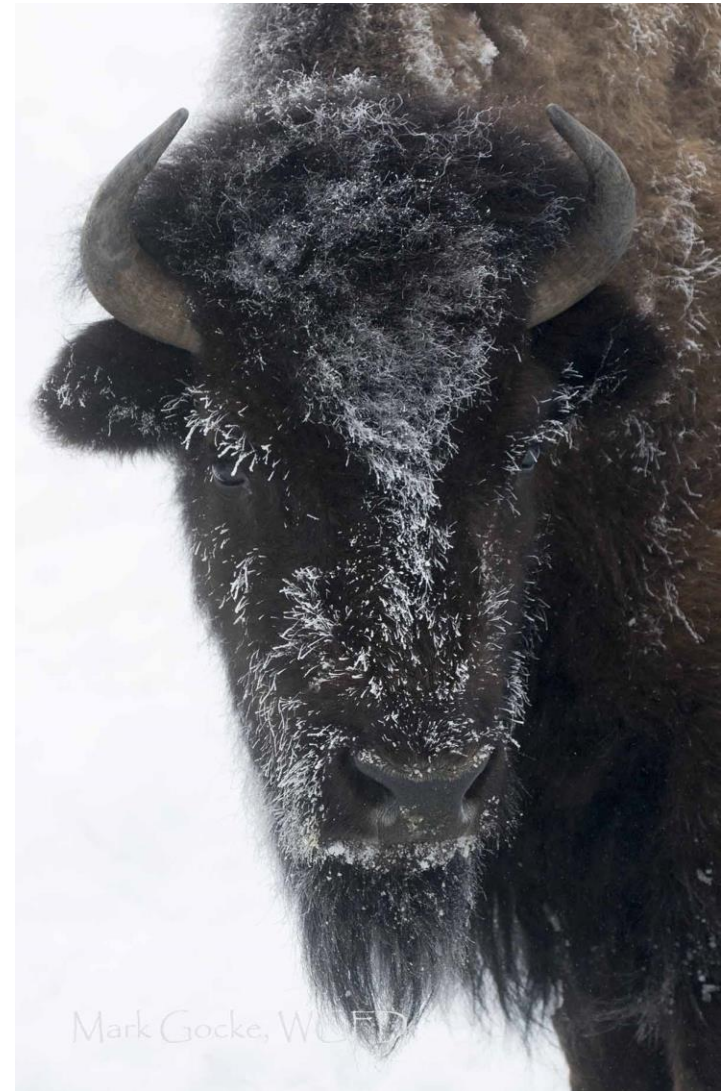
Jackson Bison Herd History, Ecology, and Management

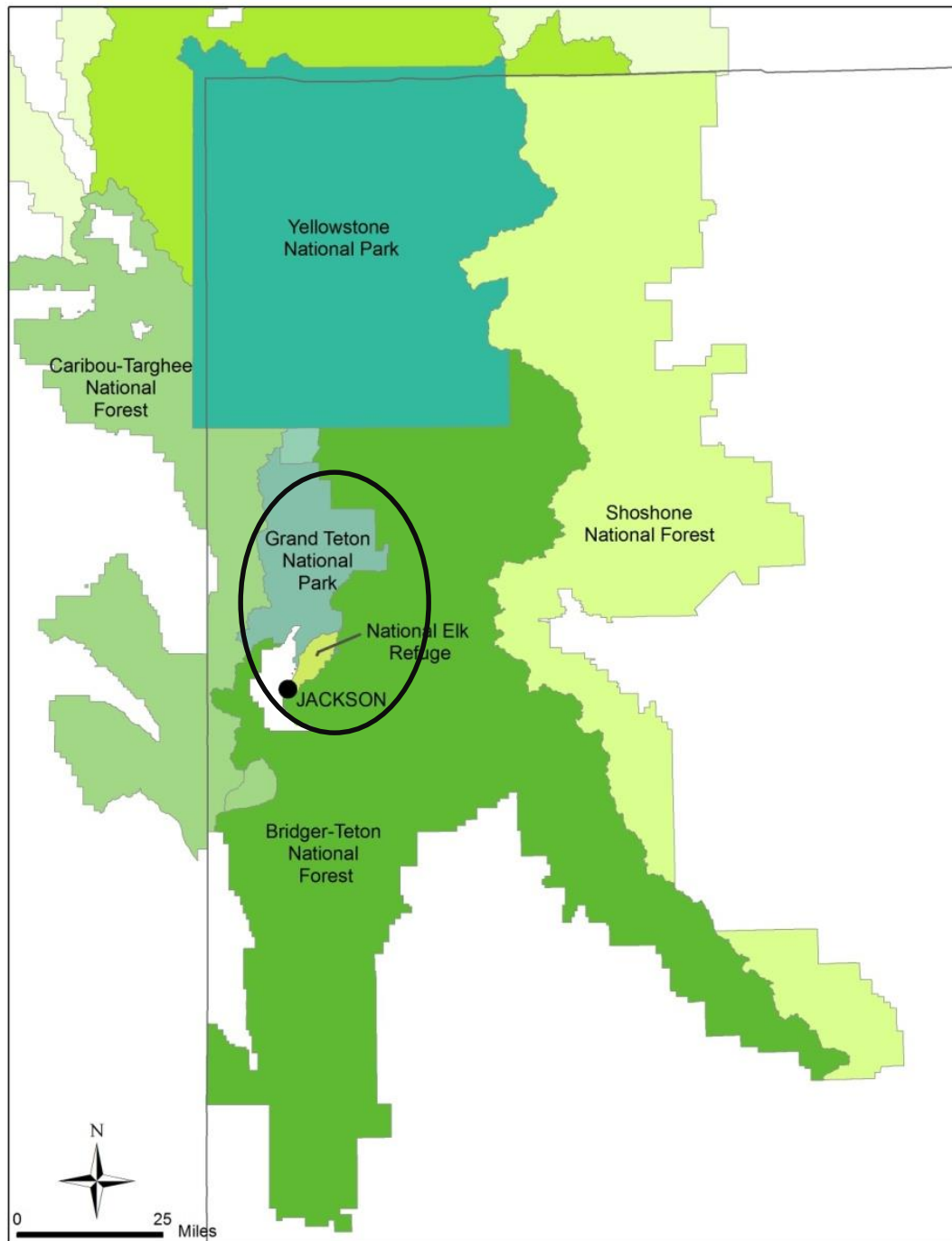


Aly Courtemanch, North Jackson Wildlife Biologist
Ben Wise, Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat Biologist

Outline

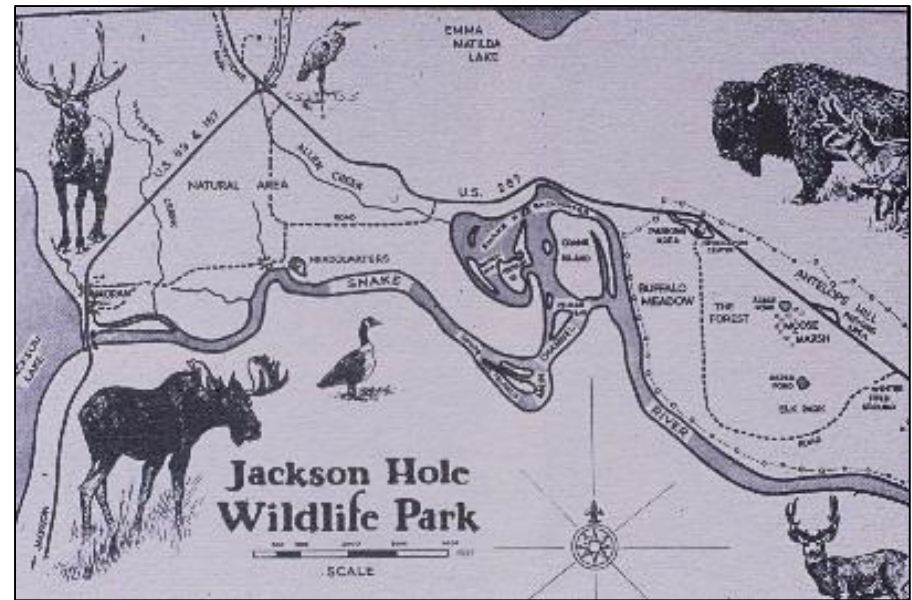
- History
- Movements, seasonal ranges, population trends
- Bison and Elk Management Plan
- Hunting seasons
- Brucellosis, managing conflicts





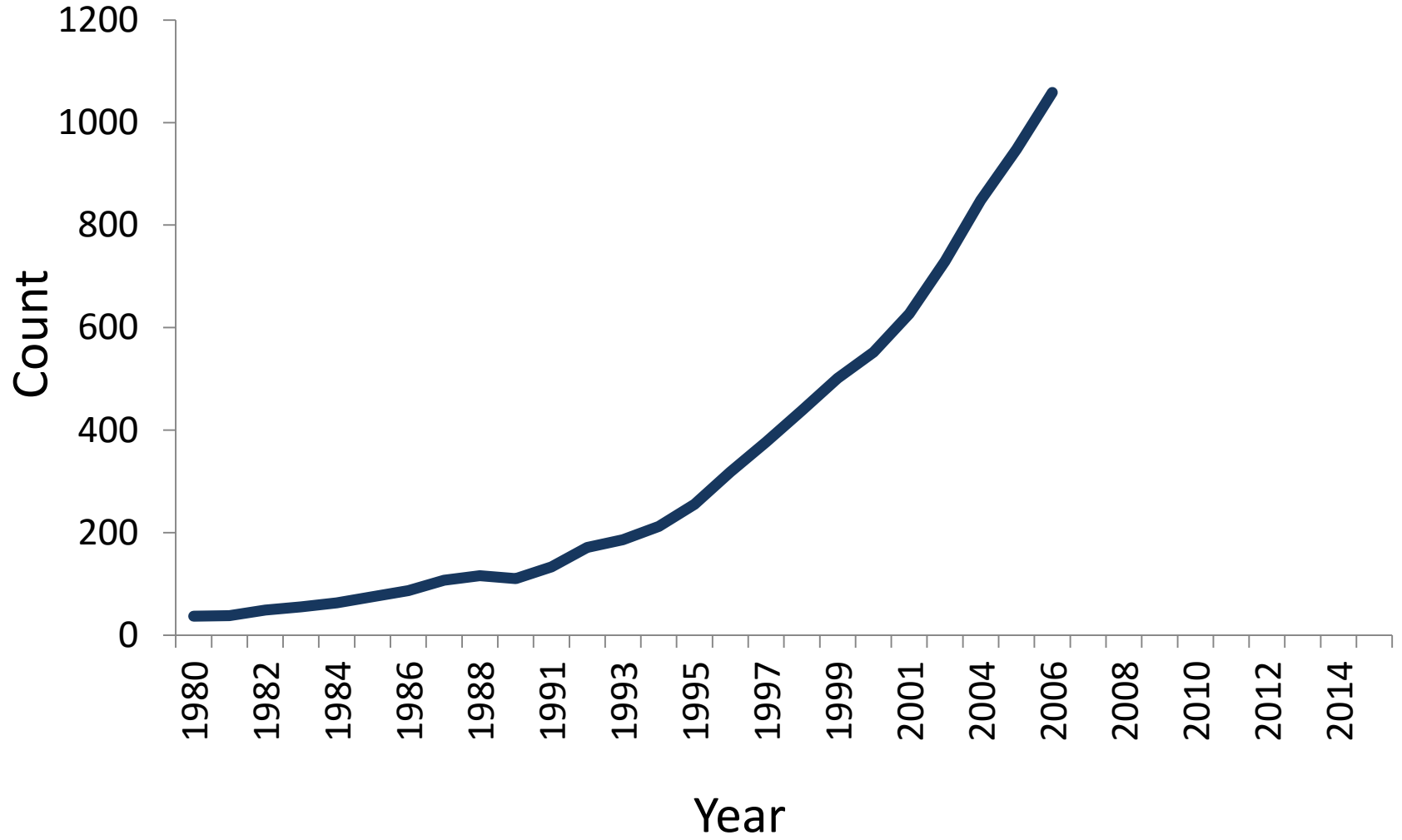
History

- In 1948, 20 bison brought to Jackson Hole Wildlife Park near Moran from YNP
- In 1950, expansion of GTNP
- In 1963, brucellosis was discovered in herd and all bison were slaughtered except 4 calves
- In 1964, 12 bison brought from Theodore Roosevelt NP
- In 1968, 11 bison escaped and were allowed to roam freely (brucellosis-negative)
- In 1980, discovered elk winter feed lines

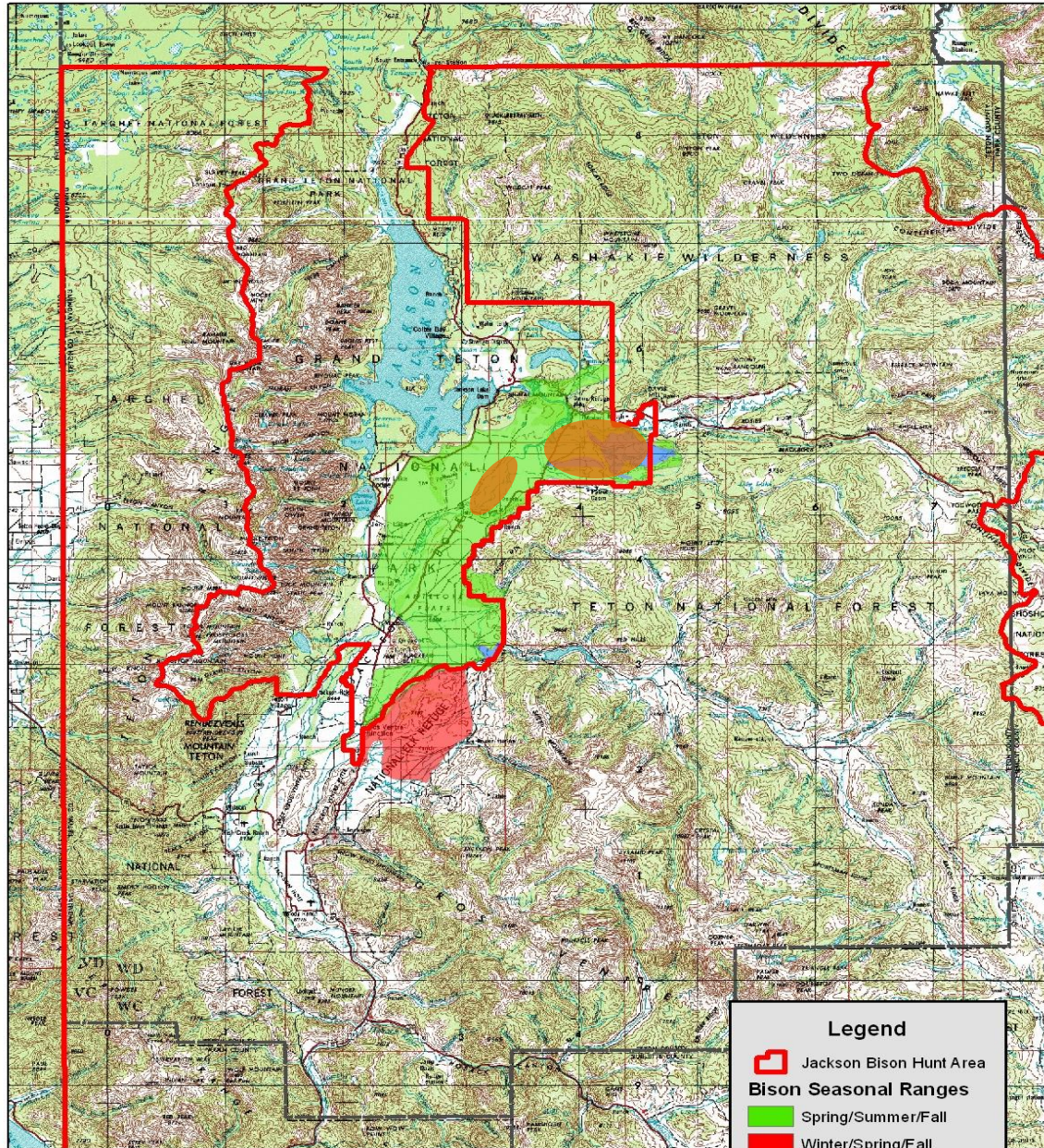




Winter Counts



Jackson Bison Herd Area- Seasonal Ranges



Legend

- Jackson Bison Hunt Area
- Bison Seasonal Ranges**
- Spring/Summer/Fall
- Winter/Spring/Fall
- Year-Long
- County Lines

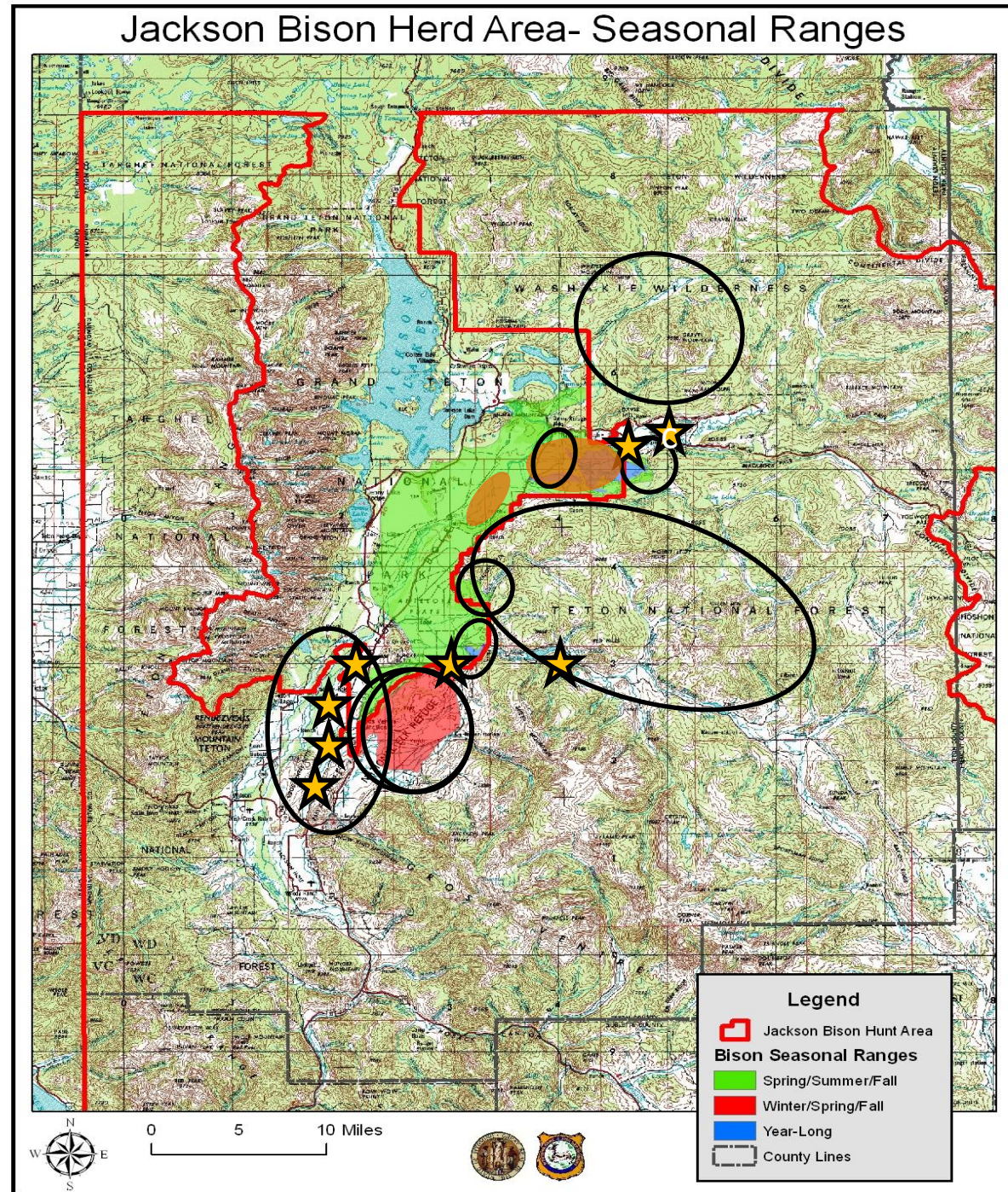


0 5 10 Miles



Growing Problem

- Very limited hunting opportunity (began in 1989)
- Potential for conflict in residential areas
- Proximity to winter livestock operations
- Summer public lands grazing allotments
- Competition with wintering elk



Interagency Cooperation



Interagency Management

1996 – Jackson Bison Long-Term Management Plan and Environmental Analysis (EA) completed

- NPS and USFWS plan
- WGFD and USFS were cooperating agencies

1998 – Fund for Animals successfully sued to prevent any “destructive management” of bison for population control until the NER’s winter feeding program was fully analyzed

2000 – Started Jackson Bison and Elk Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Jackson Bison and Elk Management Plan

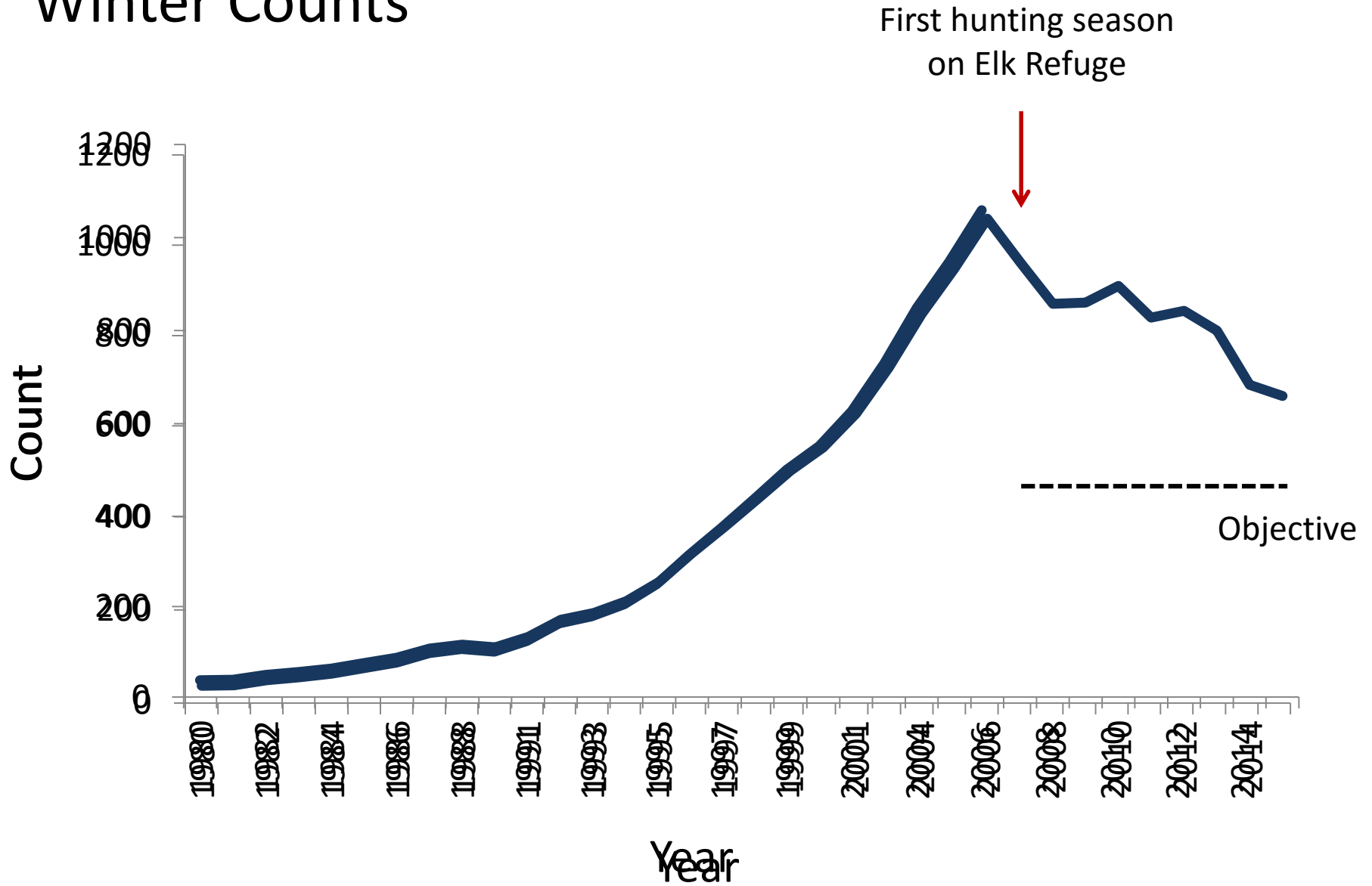
- NPS and USFWS plan with WGFD and USFS as cooperating agencies
- Developed 6 alternatives that analyzed various numbers of elk, bison, numbers wintering on the Elk Refuge, and changes to feeding program.
- Tribal participation (11 tribes contacted, Shoshone-Bannock had the most participation)
- Preferred Alternative: “The park and refuge would work with WGFD to maintain and ensure a genetically viable population of approximately 500 bison.”
- 2007 – Final Jackson Bison and Elk Management Plan released, providing 15 year direction. Hunting season on Elk Refuge begins.

Interagency Agreements

- Support state population objective of 500 bison
- Maintain a genetically viable population
- Develop framework to reduce winter feeding
- Initiate a WGFD-administered hunt on National Elk Refuge
- Agencies will work cooperatively to achieve goals



Winter Counts



2015 Hunting Season

August 15 – January 15

40 licenses for any wild bison
(draw success = 1.4%)

265 licenses for female or calf wild bison
(draw success = 25%)

Total = 305 licenses + 7 special licenses + 5 Tribal take = **317**

Average harvest
success = 75%

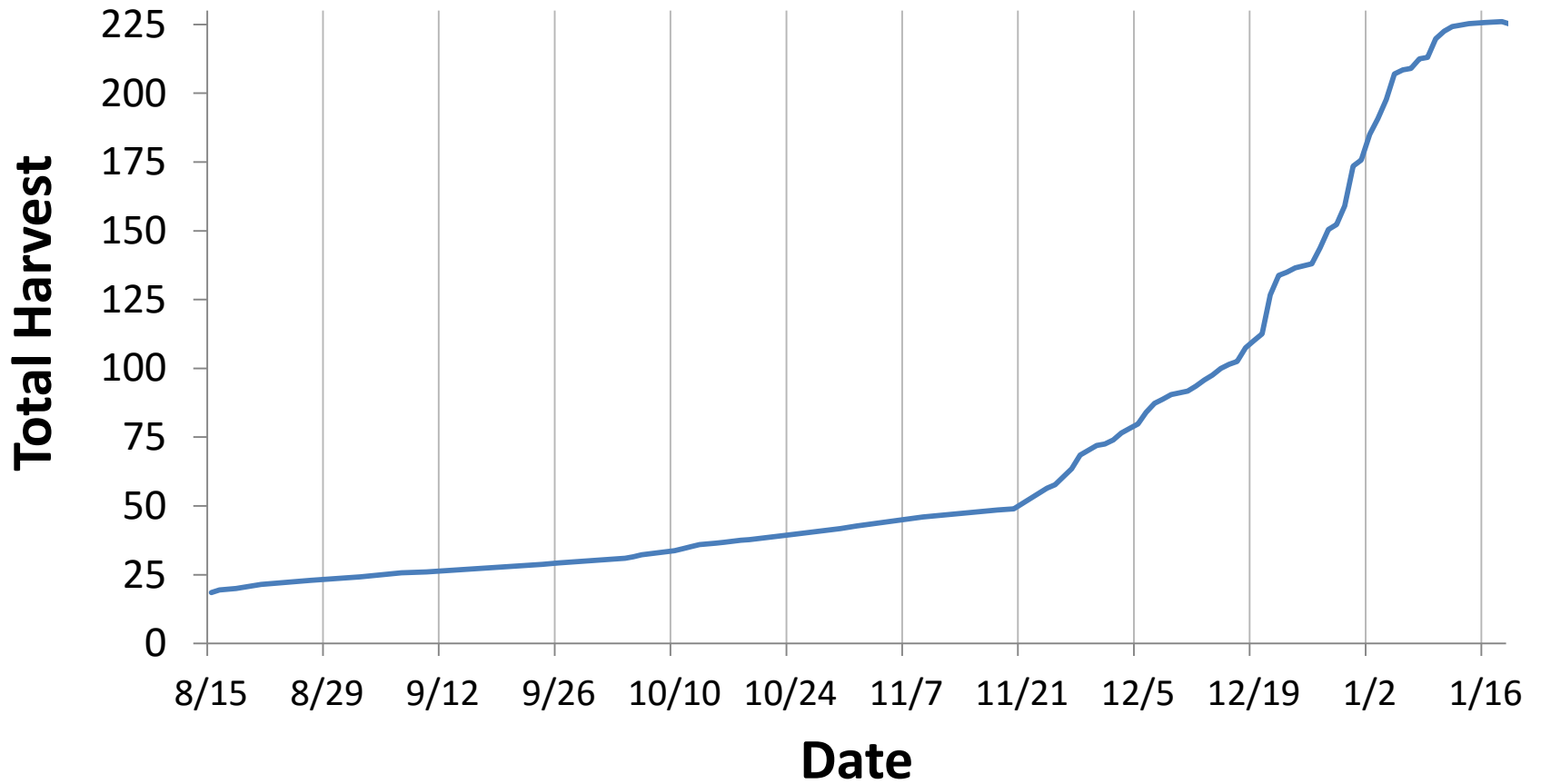


High Degree of Hunt Management

- Harvesting a bull is once-in-a-lifetime
- After harvesting a cow, hunter must wait 5 years before applying for either license type
- Required reporting within 72 hours and turn in biological samples
- Can only access Elk Refuge with valid weekly or daily permit
- Outfitters and Tag 'n' Drag



Average Total Harvest by Date 2011-2014



Brucellosis Seroprevalence in Jackson Bison (based on hunter harvest)

YEAR	Total Female Bison					Total Male Bison			
	#POS	# NEG	TOTAL	%		#POS	# NEG	TOTAL	%
1999	1	2	3	0.33		3	4	7	0.43
2000	4	1	5	0.80		2	3	5	0.40
2001	8	12	20	0.40		15	9	24	0.63
2002	10	11	21	0.48		15	6	21	0.71
2003	5	4	9	0.56		15	8	23	0.65
2004	7	2	9	0.78		13	5	18	0.72
2005	7	5	12	0.58		16	7	23	0.70
2006	19	4	23	0.83		13	9	22	0.59
2007	73	53	126	0.58		73	47	120	0.61
2008	63	33	96	0.66		68	58	126	0.54
2009	17	16	33	0.52		55	35	90	0.61
2010	62	35	97	0.64		52	27	79	0.66
2011	55	31	86	0.64		54	44	98	0.55
2013	45	21	66	0.68		52	26	78	0.66
TOTAL	376	230	606	0.62		446	288	734	0.61

Jackson Bison Herd (B101) Brucellosis Management Action Plan



Wyoming Game & Fish Department
May 20, 2008

BRUCELLOSIS MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

1. Reducing the population of the bison herd, and subsequently maintaining the herd at population objective.
2. Maintain and improve habitat.
3. Minimize risk of transmission from bison to cattle by maintaining spatial and temporal separation of bison and domestic cattle.
4. When necessary, agency personnel will either haze or lethally remove bison from commingling situations.
5. Continue to research vaccination options for bison









Why isn't the Jackson Bison Herd very controversial?

- High degree of interagency coordination
- Bison and Elk Management Plan (2007) – 15 year plan
- Few conflicts with humans, livestock, and property
 - Winter feeding prevents livestock co-mingling
- Popular hunting season
- Jackson Elk Herd draws most attention and controversy

A misty landscape with a herd of bison in the foreground and mountains in the background. The scene is hazy, with the bison appearing as dark silhouettes against the lighter, foggy ground. The mountains in the distance are also shrouded in mist.

Thank you

alyson.courtemanch@wyo.gov
benjamin.wise@wyo.gov

Jackson WGFD Office: 307-733-2321

Mark Gocke

Off-cycle births

90% of calving completed by end of July

95% completed by mid-September

Other 5% occurred throughout the year