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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2004

NICK J. RAHALL II, WV
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Honorable Fran P. Mainella
Director, National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Mainella:

The Yellowstone Bison herd is engaged in a life or death struggle to survive the winter season. Yellowstone National Park is blanketed by three to four feet of snow and ice; high temperatures are in the single digits with overnight lows below zero. As these amazing creatures have done for centuries, the Yellowstone herd is scavenging for any food that might be available in these extreme conditions, while protecting its young and conserving what little energy they have left.

In a desperate race to survive until the spring thaw, some of the Yellowstone Bison are leaving the Park to seek food on adjacent land, most of which is publicly owned. However, rather than finding nourishment, these icons of American history will encounter Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) marksmen who will kill them and send them off to slaughter. MDOL has already begun construction of a bison trap on the Gallatin National Forest and we can only assume they have also begun loading their sniper rifles and sharpening their butchers' knives.

It is imperative that employees of the National Park Service refuse to participate in either the killing or butchering of these magnificent animals, the very symbol of the National Park Service. Nothing in the Interim Bison Management Plan requires NPS participation in this slaughter and in fact, such participation directly contravenes the National Park Service's fundamental conservation mandate.

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The MDOL slaughter policy is without justification and verges on hysteria. Brucellosis has never been transferred from Bison to cattle in the wild and yet the killing continues. Unfortunately, participation by federal conservation professionals in NPS uniforms shrouds this blood bath with a thin layer of legitimacy. Association with this needless slaughter degrades the Park Service's reputation and postpones the day that public outrage over this bloody policy will lead to its abandonment.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Rahall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and a long, sweeping underline.

NICK J. RAHALL, II
Ranking Democratic Member

NJR/dw