



NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®

People and Nature: Our Future Is in the Balance

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FACT SHEET

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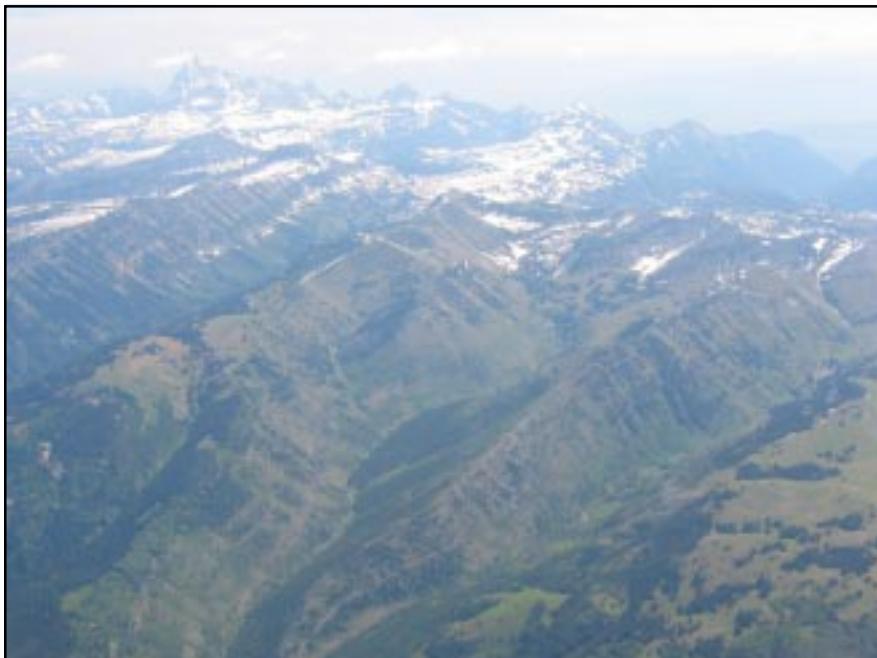
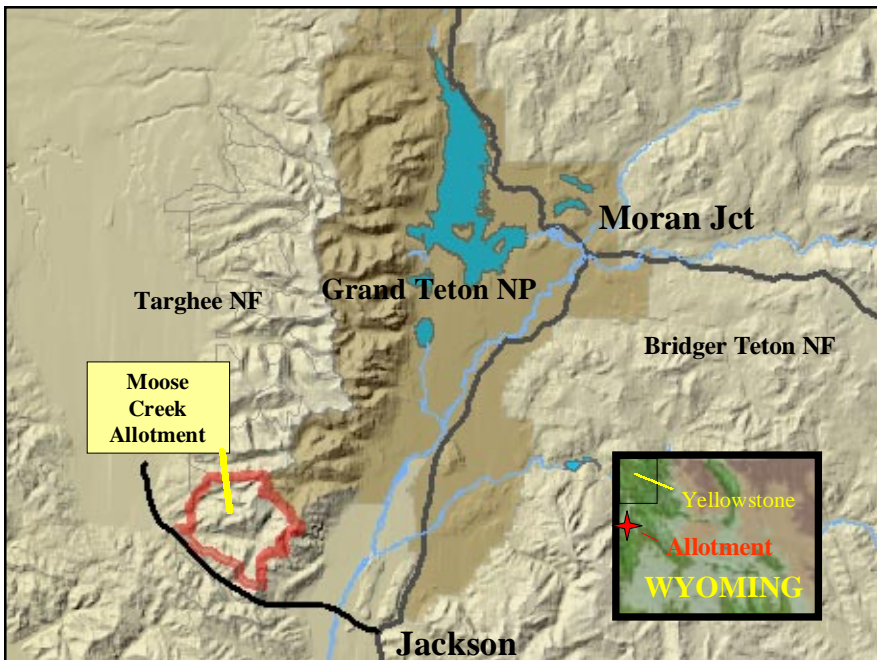
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Moose Creek Allotment



BACKGROUND

The National Wildlife Federation has initiated a new project to retire public land grazing allotments that have chronic conflicts between wildlife and livestock. This program has already significantly expanded the wildlife habitat base of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem by building partnerships with ranchers, the Forest Service, state fish and wildlife agencies, and other conservation organizations. Now, the NWF has an opportunity to retire the Moose Creek sheep allotment on the western border of Grand Teton National Park. Retiring this allotment would restore 22,500 acres of conflict-free habitat for bighorn sheep, grizzly bears, and other wildlife.

The Moose Creek sheep allotment is located on the western slope of the Grand Tetons, 15 miles west of Jackson, Wyoming, and directly east of Victor, Idaho. Moose Creek is on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and most of the allotment is within the borders of the Jedediah Smith Wilderness Area.

WILDLIFE BENEFITS

Bighorn Sheep: The Moose Creek drainage provides outstanding bighorn sheep habitat. Diseases carried by domestic sheep have long decimated wild sheep populations and continued sheep grazing on the allotment poses a significant on-going threat to resident wild sheep populations. Retirement of the Moose Creek allotment will directly benefit bighorn sheep populations throughout the entire Teton mountain range.



Key Winter Range for Mule Deer, Elk and Moose: The lower portion of Moose Creek provides important winter range for mule deer, elk, and moose, while the upper portion provides significant wintering habitat for bighorn sheep. In addition to ungulate winter range, a recent

radio-tracking study has documented high wolverine use of the Moose Creek drainage during the winter months when these solitary animals feed on winter-killed elk and deer.

Grizzly Bears: The western slope of the Tetons offers rich habitat for bears, but grizzlies have been largely absent from the area for years. Grizzly bear populations in the Tetons are now expanding from north to south. The retirement of the Moose Creek allotment will eliminate the potential for sheep depredations by grizzlies and substantially expand the amount of “conflict-free” habitat available to bears. Retiring Moose Creek is important to the on-going recovery of grizzly bears in the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Moose: As the name suggests, Moose Creek is prime moose country. According to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Moose Creek supports one of the densest moose populations in the state.

Black Bears: Because of high berry production and lush riparian areas, Moose Creek provides key habitat for the robust black bear populations that exists along the western slope of the Tetons.

Mountain Lions: The Moose Creek allotment supports increasing numbers of mountain lions. Mountain lions, like wolves and grizzlies, will benefit from the removal of domestic sheep and the elimination of sheep/predator conflicts.

Wolves: Wolves have been documented in the area and will benefit both from growing ungulate populations and from the absence of domestic sheep – a major source of conflict between wolves and leasees.

Raptors: The Moose Creek allotment provides nesting and foraging habitat for many hawk and owl species including such sensitive species as the Northern Goshawk and the Great Gray Owl. The rare Flammulated Owl has also been documented in the area. Bald and Golden eagles forage in the area in both summer and winter.

WIN-WIN SOLUTIONS

In working to retire specific allotments, the National Wildlife Federation’s goal is not removal of livestock from public lands. Rather, our focus is on specific allotments where chronic

conflicts exist between livestock and wildlife. In such situations, livestock producers may be motivated sellers, and allotment retirement can be beneficial for both parties. The payment provided for allotment retirement typically is used to secure new grazing lands that do not have wildlife conflicts.

Since beginning the program one year ago, the National Wildlife Federation has worked with different partners to close two allotments where wildlife/livestock conflicts were extraordinarily high.

- In April 2003, the National Wildlife Federation worked with the Gallatin National Forest to close the Horse Butte allotment in order to create conflict-free bison winter range adjacent to Yellowstone National Park.
- In August 2003, the National Wildlife Federation, the Bridger-Teton National Forest, and the Walton Ranch Company announced the retirement of the 88,000-acre Blackrock/Spread Creek allotment on the eastern border of Grand Teton National Park. During a five-year period from 1992 to 1997, 108 head of livestock were killed or injured by grizzly bears on the Blackrock allotment, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department incurred more than \$300,000 in compensation and management costs.

At both Horse Butte and Blackrock/Spread Creek, the National Wildlife Federation made an incentive payment to grazing permittees, who agreed to waive their grazing privileges back to the Forest Service. Once the allotments were vacant, the Forest Service closed both allotments because the agency recognized that significant livestock-wildlife conflicts were unavoidable on these landscapes.

ABOUT THE COST

As at Horse Butte and Blackrock/Spread Creek, the National Wildlife Federation and the permittee have negotiated an acceptable incentive payment based on the number of livestock being grazed. At Moose Creek, the NWF is seeking to raise \$50,000 to cover the cost of this incentive. While the permittee is receiving a payment comparable to what might be obtained if sold to another ranching operation, from a wildlife perspective, conflict-free habitat will be created at a cost of a little more than \$2/acre. ❖

