



NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®

*People and Nature: Our Future Is in the Balance*

Northern Rockies Natural Resource Center ♦ 240 North Higgins, # 2 ♦ Missoula, MT 59802  
406-721-6705 ♦ 406-721-6714 [fax] ♦ [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)

## FACT SHEET

December 2003

### Contact:

Hank Fischer .... 406-549-0761 [O] - [fischer49@aol.com](mailto:fischer49@aol.com)

Tom France ..... 406-721-6705 [O] - [france@nwf.org](mailto:france@nwf.org)

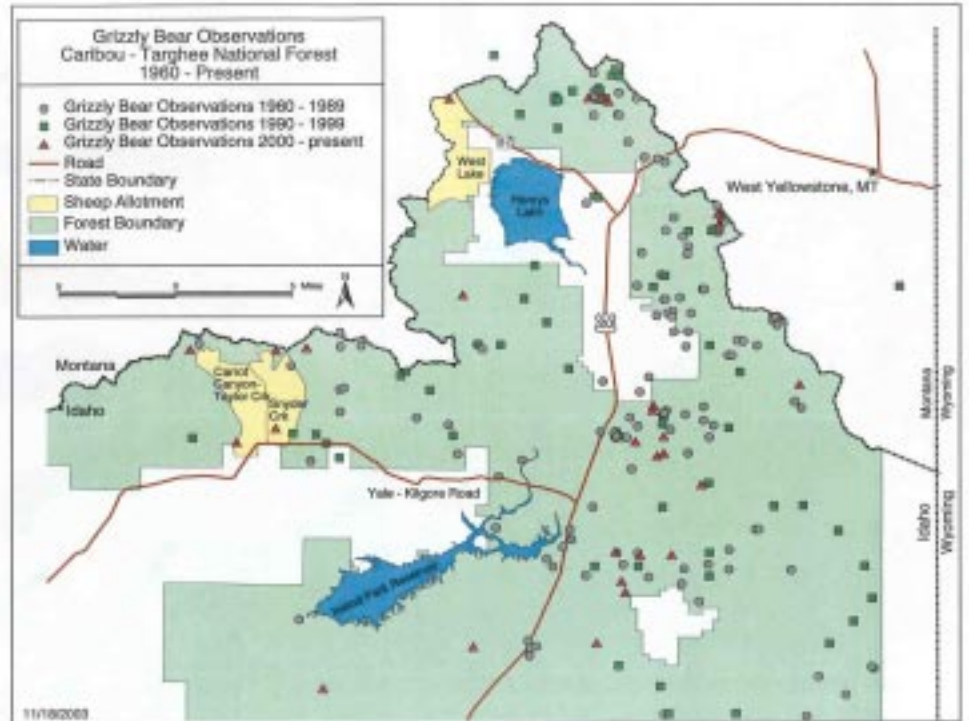
# Island Park Allotments

## Background

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) now has been working for almost two years on a project to retire public land grazing allotments that experience chronic conflicts between wildlife and livestock. Our first step was to consult scientists and land managers to prioritize where the conflicts are most severe. Next, we began contacting those leaseholders, and where we found interested parties, we have begun negotiations. Finally, we have been working closely with the US Forest Service (USFS) to permanently close allotments once permittees agree to give them up.

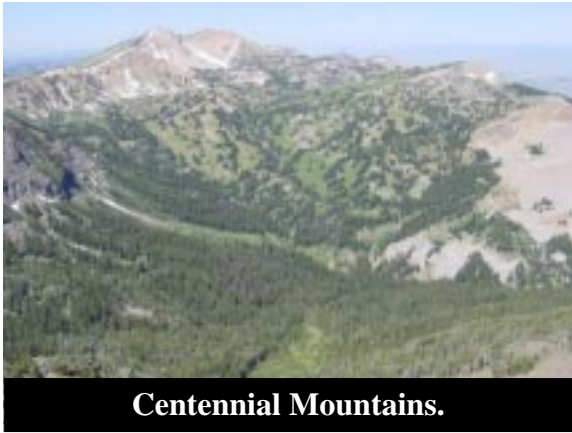
To this point, the NWF has closed three allotments in the Yellowstone ecosystem encompassing more than 115,000 acres.

The total cost of these retirements has been slightly more than \$400,000. The money has been raised through partnerships with other conservation organizations (including the Wyoming Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, the Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation), from foundations, and from private donors. While these three allotment retirements have been targeted toward bears, wolves, and bison, virtually every other species of wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone has also benefited.



## A New Opportunity

We currently have an opportunity to retire three sheep allotments on the southern slope of the Centennial Mountains on the Montana-Idaho border, about 15 miles west of Yellowstone National Park. These allotments have a history of grizzly bear-



**Centennial Mountains.**

sheep conflicts. Retiring these allotments will not only end these conflicts, but also promote connectivity in a critical wildlife corridor between Yellowstone, the Centennial Mountains, and the large central Idaho wilderness areas to the west.

The Carrot Canyon/Taylor Creek, Snyder Creek, and West Lake grazing allotments total 12,500 acres and are grazed by a single permittee. The allotments are north and west of Henry's Lake on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest.

Although the Centennial Mountains offer rich habitat for bears, sheep conflicts have precluded substantial occupancy by grizzlies. Nevertheless, grizzly bear expansion into the Centennials has been occurring recently because of the gradual increase of bear populations in the Yellowstone Ecosystem. The retirement of the Carrot Canyon/Taylor Creek, Snyder Creek, and West Lake allotments will eliminate the potential for sheep depredations by grizzlies and substantially expand the amount "conflict-free" habitat available to bears. Retiring these allotments is critically important to the ongoing recovery of grizzly bears in the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

In addition to grizzly bears, many other wildlife species will benefit from the closure of these allotments. The Centennials provide important habitat for elk, mule deer, black bear, and wolves, as well as being the headwaters for rivers and streams draining into both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Carrot Creek, Taylor Creek, and Snyder Creek provide clean, clear flows for the legendary trout waters of the Henry's Fork of the Snake River.

## Win-Win Solutions

The National Wildlife Federation's goal is not to remove all livestock from public lands. Rather, we seek to retire specific allotments where conflicts are prolonged and irresolvable. In such situations, livestock producers may be as motivated as conservationists to find a realistic solution, and allotment retirement can be beneficial for both parties. Most ranchers use the payments we provide for allotment retirement to secure new grazing lands that do not have wildlife conflicts. We believe grazing retirements provide an equitable and effective means of realigning where grazing occurs on public lands.

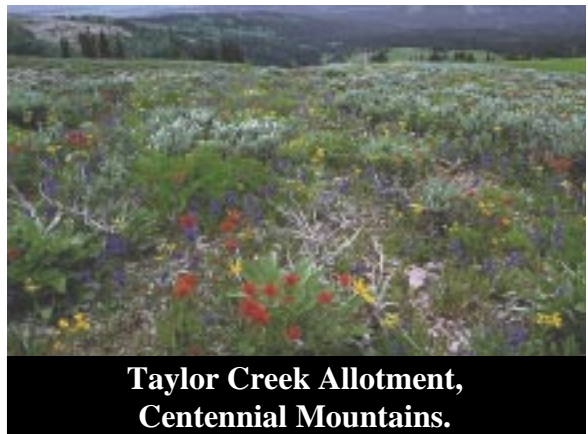
Since inception of the program, the NWF has retired three allotments:

1. In April 2003, the National Wildlife Federation worked with the Gallatin National Forest to close the Horse Butte allotment in order to create critical, conflict-free, bison winter range adjacent to Yellowstone National Park, which has been the centerpiece of a ten-year controversy.
2. 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.
3. In September 2003, the National Wildlife Federation, in partnership with the Wyoming Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, secured the retirement of the 22,500-acre Moose Creek allotment on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. This sheep allotment, which encompasses the Jedediah Smith Wilderness Area on the western border of Grand Teton Park, provides outstanding habitat for bighorn sheep and is critically important for grizzly bears on the west side of the Tetons.

On each of these allotments, the NWF made an incentive payment to grazing permittees, who agreed to waive their grazing privileges back to the USFS. Once the allotments were vacant, the USFS, in conformance with existing forest plans, made decisions to retire the allotments, based on findings that significant livestock-wildlife conflicts were unavoidable on these landscapes.

## About The Cost

We negotiate a price to retire an allotment based largely on the number of livestock grazed on the allotment (ranchers routinely sell these allotments to each other so a market has been established). For Carrot Canyon/Taylor Creek, Snyder Creek, and West Lake, the NWF seeks to raise \$36,000 to cover the retirement cost of this allotment. While the permittee will receive 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 \$3/acre. ❖



**Taylor Creek Allotment,  
Centennial Mountains.**