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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3405

May 13, 2009

Daniel L. Wenk
Acting Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC, 20240

Dear Director Wenk,

I understand that you are nearing a decision on the matter of thinning the elk herd in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

As you know, I have long argued that this problem has a simple, cost-effective solution: to have qualified, volunteer North Dakota hunters thin the elk herd, and have them take away the meat from the animals that are culled.

I am concerned that the National Park Service (NPS) intends to follow the recent example of Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. At that park, the NPS allowed volunteer hunters to participate in culling the herd, but did not allow the hunters to remove the meat of the animals that they culled. Instead, the NPS set up a lottery to determine who would get the meat, and under that lottery, only one hunter was able to receive any meat.

There is a far better precedent, which is the practice that has been followed at the Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming for the last six decades. By statute, the NPS has been required to use volunteer hunters to cull the elk herd at that park, and to allow hunters to keep the meat of the elk that they cull.

This latter approach would be far more in keeping with North Dakota's long hunting tradition, which includes making use of the elk meat as part of a hunter's role. This would be a simple, inexpensive and common-sense approach.

The NPS decision-making process with respect to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park has followed a long and tortured trail, beginning with proposals for the use of federal sharpshooters and helicopters, and ending with a number of supposedly public meetings in North Dakota at which the NPS did not allow members of the public to speak.

As you near a decision, I am determined to see that the end result is one that serves the taxpayers' interest and one that makes common sense.

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If the decision of the Park Service comes up short on common sense, I intend to pursue a legislative solution that would allow North Dakota hunters to participate in thinning the elk herd and allow them to keep the meat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron L. Dorgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senator