

Land  
&  
Water

Conservation Fund

FY 2007

# Wind Cave National Park

South Dakota

## FY 2007 Project

5,675 acres

\$5 million



Endangered black-footed ferret

The black-footed ferret is missing from the Park's ecosystem. Expanding the Park's habitat through land acquisition would greatly enhance the likelihood of a successful ferret reintroduction program .



Pronghorn

The park's mixed-grass prairie is one of the few remaining and is home to native wildlife such as bison, elk, pronghorn, mule deer, coyotes, and prairie dogs.



## Importance

Wind Cave National Park is located in southwestern South Dakota in a transitional zone between the grasslands of the Great Plains and the ponderosa pine forests of the Black Hills and eastern Rocky Mountains. The park itself is recognized as an exemplary site because of the quality and diversity of plant communities found here and the natural way they are managed.

The Park provides suitable habitat for several federally or state listed species, such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, mountain lion, and black-footed ferret. Prior to the Park's establishment, native animals had been driven off by uncontrolled hunting and the land was plowed for farming and grazed by cattle. The Park's mission to protect and reestablish native wildlife within its boundaries began as early as 1913, when 14 bison were donated by the Bronx Zoo. Now numbering around 350, this bison herd is one of only three herds in the U.S. free of cattle genes, making it essential for maintaining the bison genome into the future. But 350 is too small a number to maintain all of this herd's important genetic diversity; additional habitat is needed to allow Wind Cave's bison herd to number greater than 500.



Black-tailed prairie dogs

One of the keystone species in the Park is the prairie dog. Managing their population is important in maintaining a balance of systems within the park. They are preyed upon by eagles, hawks, owls, coyotes, bobcats, badgers, and the endangered black-footed ferret.



Coyote

Established in 1903, the Park was the first to protect a cave. Wind cave is one of the longest, most complex caves in the world, with an estimated 95% still unexplored.

### ***Defenders of Wildlife***

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Bison jump, dating back to 1030AD

### **Threat**

Unfortunately, there is limited rangeland to support the growing bison, deer, and elk populations within the Park. The proposed lands will increase much-needed acreage for the Park’s herds. The land acquisition will also provide winter rangeland for the herds that is not currently available within the Park’s boundaries. In addition, a large cave that may serve as an important roosting site for bats and several cultural resources are located on the proposed lands.

The requested funds for this land purchase will successfully complete Phase I of a very important land acquisition project. If not sold to the National Park Service, the land will be turned over for residential development. The subdivision and modification of the property will destroy important plant communities and habitat for the Park’s diverse animal populations, and will affect the hydrologic features that sustain the icon of the Park, Wind Cave.

