

NPS Wildlife Health Management

In general, natural processes are relied upon to maintain native animal species and to influence natural fluctuations in populations of these species. The key principles that the NPS employs to determine if a disease is managed or if it is allowed to self-regulate in wild animals include:

- Is the disease native or exotic? If the host population has evolved in concert with the disease organism and the pathogen is native to the area, the disease and its host will generally be left unmanaged. If, however, the disease was introduced as a result of human influence then it may be managed; management options may include disease eradication.
- Is management of the disease prudent and feasible? If so then the disease may be managed if:
 1. The disease is a threat to human health.
 2. The disease poses a risk to threatened or endangered species.
 3. The disease threatens areas outside of the park.
 4. The native disease is acting under unnatural conditions which would change the biology and epidemiology of the disease, and is therefore a threat to ecosystem health.

After considering these questions, the appropriate management action may be clear. In other cases the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is used as a decision making tool to evaluate potential alternatives and to garner public input.