

Summary Report from Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting October 2-3, 2008

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The following summary report reflects activities at the October 2nd and 3rd meeting of the IBMP partners, carried out at the Federal Building in Bozeman and hosted by the Gallatin National Forest. This report comes from the notes and flip chart records of facilitator Scott Bischke. The report contains a *Facilitator's Draft* watermark to recognize that as presented the IBMP partners have not reviewed these notes and accepted the facilitator's recollection/interpretation of events. Attendee leads: IBMP partners Jerry Diemer (APHIS), Mary Erickson (GNF), Pat Flowers (MFWP), Suzanne Lewis (YNP), Christian Mackay (MBoL), Marty Zaluski (MDoL); ~15 staff members present from across IBMP organizations each day; ~20 members of the public each day. Note that scanned attendance and speaker sign-up sheets are available from the facilitator.

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PARTIAL LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- CM—Christian Mackay
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GNF—Gallatin National Forest
- GP—Glenn Plumb
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- JD—Jerry Diemer
- MBoL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MDoL—Montana Department of Livestock
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and parks
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- PF—Pat Flowers
- PIOs—Public Information Officers
- RC—Ryan Clarke
- RoD—Record of Decision
- SL—Suzanne Lewis
- YNP—Yellowstone National Park



Action items identified

	Who	What	Complete by
1	Scott	Multiple meeting logistics: 1) send all files presented at Oct 2,3 to Steve Merritt for posting to IBMP.info; 2) send ver2.0 draft west side AM plan to partners; 3) send revamped ver1.0 North side showing same changes as made in ver2.0 West side to partners ; 4) send draft agenda for Oct 2,3 meeting to partners; 5) send meeting summary to partners	Tuesday, Oct 7, 5 PM
2	GP (persistence)	Electronic copies of meetings for website posting	
3	YNP (GP)	Update on the EIS status for remote vaccine delivery (45 min)	For next (Oct 15, 16) meeting
4	DoL (MZ)	Contact all west and north side producers to ask about status of adult cow vaccinations and to learn their reasons/concerns for making the decision to vaccinate or not. (Note from Scott—sorry, this appears to be the same task that Ryan reported on for the Oct 2,3 meeting. Did I miss the intent of this action item?)	
5	FWP (PF)	Invite tribes (Nez Perce, Salish Kootenay) to share hunt info (#s killed, sex ratio, dates)	
6	GNF	Rewrite management activity 1.4c (was 1.4b) to inform AM not to direct AM using the verbiage of method 2	
7	All partners	Come prepared for a conceptual discussion about the opportunities and challenges of the concept of shipping bison to isolated destinations	
8	APHIS (JD)	Invite and arrange for Jack Ryan to come ready for 30 min presentation on immunocontraception as a potential future AM option (coordinate w/GP staff)	
9	All partners	Participate in phone conference focused on goals and agenda for last 2 meetings (and beyond?)	Sometime after Oct 15, 16 meeting
10	All partners	In response to public input, come prepared to describe how partners define AM and how and when it would be possible to consider amending IBMP agreement	
11	GNF (Marrion)	For the west and the north side: present briefing paper on status of all allotments	For Nov 5, 6 meeting
12	Tech Comm. (BeckyF, PJW co-chairs)	For the west and the north side: present briefing paper on carrying capacity (need to make assumptions clear)	
13	Tech Committee	Complete the draft west side AM plan ver3.0 (i.e., moving to the next step by starting with the ver2.0 document supplied by Scott on Oct 6) by filling in the methods, monitoring, and monitoring metrics, and thresholds for action (not all needed for all management actions; focus is	

on quantitative using tables as needed; also goal is to arrive at single quantitative recommendations; flag those—if applicable—that no consensus can be found) to support the goals, objectives, and management actions agreed to by partners during the Oct 2, 3 meetings. Responsible parties must be identified for all required activities.

facilitator's draft

Meeting summary notes

Due to multiple facilitator activities, the notes presented are not comprehensive but hit some highlights of partner discussions. For the most part, interested parties are asked to see the IBMP web site where briefings and other documents created at this meeting are posted (see www.ibmp.info).

BRIEFINGS

Zone 2 Inventory of Vaccination of Cattle

Ryan Clark provided a survey of the vaccination status of cattle on the north and west sides of YNP. Variations occurred for status of OCV, AV, and annual testing across the eight properties surveyed. Ryan's briefing paper is available on the website.

Bison Genetics

Rick Wallen of YNP gave a presentation titled "Conservation Genetics of Yellowstone Bison" highlighting principles of conservation genetics and new research on bison genetics since the 2000 RoD for the IBMP. Discussion centered on factors (multi-population interbreeding, overall population, etc) involved in maintaining genetic diversity. Both the state of the art and questions still open were covered. The full presentation and the briefing statement from the talk are available on the website.

Brucella Persistence

Glenn Plumb provided a talk on *brucella* persistence in the environment. Results showed that RB51 (a surrogate for field strain *brucella*) did not survive beyond June 15 regardless of when (Feb-May) it went out into the environment. The briefing paper is available on the website.

Bison Harvest Data

Montana FWP presented the limited data available on the bison hunts of 2005-7, showing breakdown of the animal sex and total known numbers harvested. Currently there is no mandatory reporting of bison harvest, limiting the data. The briefing paper is available on the website.

Split State status

Jerry Diemer gave an impromptu (no briefing paper) update on recent meetings in Denver regarding creating a Yellowstone region with a split state status for MT, ID, and WY. All discussions are deeply preliminary in nature and will be further brought to the IBMP as changes or progress occurs.

CREATING THE WEST SIDE ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN VERSION 2.0

At the 3rd meeting (Sep 8, 9) meeting, each partner provided a list of management objectives that were collected by the facilitator and projected onto the screen. As per meeting planning, the partners went into open round table discussion for the majority of the rest of the meeting, grouping objectives into the three common goal areas they had agreed to in meeting #2. The open discussions led to a strawman adaptive management plan for the west side of Yellowstone National Park, which borrowing from software vernacular we have referred to has as west side AM plan ver1.0.

The partners were requested to review west side AM plan ver1.0 and given roughly two weeks to make desired edits and return to the facilitator. The facilitator then had several days to try and blend the resulting five documents (original + FWP, YNP, GNF, DoL/APHIS) into a new document, to be known as draft west side AM plan ver2.0. This document became the focus of the majority of discussions for the Oct 2, 3 meetings.

The partners decided on the framework/outline shown in Figure 1 for the adaptive management plan to be created as a result of this work. The partners recognized that issues of quantization (e.g., how many bison would be allowed outside the park until what date) would be difficult. Instead they decided to continue their step-wise process toward an agreed upon adaptive management plan—and importantly—a 2008/9 operational plan based on the AM plan by seeking first to find agreement on the three critical management issues: Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions.



FIGURE 1. Adaptive management framework adapted by the IBMP partners.

Following long and strong discussions, the partners did achieve agreement on the Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions that will make up the IBMP adaptive management plan. These agreed upon upper management directives can be found in the west side AM plan ver 2.0, posted at www.ibmp.info.

Regarding the North Side: The partners recognized that the framework created under the west side would be largely (90%?) applicable to the North side. Thus per unanimous agreement they decided to focus on creating a framework (as just described) for the West side realizing that in effect they were working on the North side, as well. This was a change from the planned agenda to focus Oct 3 on the North side, but a minor one given the overlap. Instead now, the next meeting will have the North side as its principle focus.

Charge to the Technical Committee: The Technical Committee (chaired by Becky Frye and PJ White) has been charged with completing the next level of the West side plan-ver3.0 (i.e., starting with the ver2.0 document supplied by Scott on Oct 6). Their task will be to fill in the methods, monitoring, monitoring metrics, and threshold for action (not all needed for all management actions; focus is on quantitative using tables as needed; also goal is to arrive at single quantitative recommendations; flag those—if applicable—that no

consensus can be found) to support the goals, objectives, and management actions agreed to by partners during the Oct 2, 3 meetings. The Technical Committee must also identify responsible parties for all required activities. They will make a progress report at the Oct 15/16 meeting but their full results for both the North and West sides will be presented at the Nov 5/6 meeting.

Selected comments from public

The following highlights from public comments (three minutes per person on the first day, 4 minutes per person on the second day) come from Scott's notes and Scott's interpretation of the speaker's intent. Note that there continues to be consternation about the amount of time provided to the public to speak (the partners' request has been for 3 min per speaker, not 30 min as in the schedule regardless of the number of speakers; this has been a point of contention when we have less than 10 speakers with the public desiring to expand each speaker's time so as to fill up the 30 min time slot). Additionally, numerous members of the public (often representing NGOs) continue to state dismay at the public's lack of an "official", at-the-table role in the IBMP discussions.

OCTOBER 2ND

- Congratulations from a local cattle owner for working item by item through the many, many issues at hand
- Claim that genetic diversity of bison came from cowboys culling bison over the last 70 years
- Question—when did bison in YNP suddenly become wild if they were initially implanted to the park?
- Regarding the question of bison on Horse Butte—yes we need a fence but the fence won't keep eagles from transferring aborted fetuses elsewhere
- May 15 deadline? Point that for ranchers whose lease starts June 1 that is pretty tight
- Applause for Rick Wallen bringing forth the petition based on genetic information that came from one (or more?) environmental group
- Statement that buffalo are not just germ plasm
- Statement that many consider long distance migration—e.g., going from YNP to Grand Teton—a major positive, including as a way to maintain genetic diversity; also request for recognition that these long distance migrations are a positive trait, not a negative
- Statement of belief that the IBMP will not result in/allow long term migration of bison
- Statement that DoL and YNP answer has been to slaughter more, that essentially became the result of the petition to stop slaughtering to protect genetic diversity
- Rancher saying that if anything falls in the cracks it can result in him losing his business
- Request that we not allow adult bison outside of YNP
- Rancher says that his vet has said that there is no certainty that adult vaccination works
- Statement that some of the genetic diversity of the bison herd currently results from the small start the herd had
- Statement that a goal would be to see all bison free of brucellosis
- Statement that cattlemen are always limited by #s and a request that they be allowed the maximum number of cattle possible
- Statement that bison migrations will be a problem and that super migrating bison will simply have to be culled
- Question (repeated by at least two others)—when does AM end and changing the IBMP start? Followed by statement that we are already making some really big changes

- Reminder to DoL that protecting the livestock industry is their charge
- Question—Who is going to get all the cattle tested in Zones 1 & 2
- Applause for any increase in bison vaccination and a request that the IBMP partners proceed with this program as fast as they can
- Statement that for ranchers bison are a “sink hole” for infection and without these cleaned up ranchers are held hostage; also a statement about elk transfer of brucellosis to cattle herds through bison
- Statement of belief that ~50% of bison were vaccinated in the 60s
- Request to please keep long term goals in place per the GAO
- Statement of agreement with Suzanne Lewis regarding request for tolerance of bull bison mating cattle
- Statement that the Flats are Zone 2 and they need to keep in discussion in part because there are no cattle there
- Statement about management action 3.1b—immunocontraception—lots unknown here
- Concern stated about the possibility that a working group at APHIS+ creating a split state Yellowstone area might allow APHIS to reach into jurisdiction of wildlife, beyond its scope of responsibility—recommended that IBMP partners follow this progress very carefully and that partners have the same presentation to them as is made in late October
- Request to redo IBMP
- Thanks to APHIS for considering the split state status with request to volunteer for serving as wildlife advocate on the committee
- Thanks for Rick Wallen talk; statement that every time we delve into science we improve knowledge and dialogue
- Statement of concern that there is a lack of discussion about habitat
- Concern stated that Obj 1.4 speaks only to landowners that graze but there are also landowners who want bison and don't graze
- Statement that there has been public property damage due to hazing

OCTOBER 3RD

- Statement that we can't ignore elk any longer
- Statement of concern that it seems that DoL, BoL main concern is confining bison rather than brucellosis
- Statement that there is lots of available habitat that we are not using for bison
- Statement that bison can't breed horses etc even if we are worried about cows
- Question—Where is the line between AM and changing the IBMP? Will the public get the opportunity to comment?
- Statement that if you increase bison outside of YNP you will restrict cattle movement by other state vest; Question—how will USHA view cattle in the GYA
- Statement of confusion about the difference between long and short term; request to solidify long term goals because you need to understand those so that you know what you are working towards
- Concern that the IBMP is focusing on pushing cattle out of the GYA with recognition that some groups would like to do this but also recognition that some would like to shoot every bison that leave YNP
- Statement that we need to find a place in the middle
- Statement that stewardship of ranches is one reason that GYA is still open and beautiful
- Statement to recall that IBMP has duty to both bison and cattle
- Statement that in 1.4b get rid of “is not a barrier”

- Request that #s range be kept in Objective 2.1
- Request that “as the last option” be reinserted in 2.2a as it is important to public perception
- Statement that shipping sterilized bison will be a flash point and will require NEPA
- Statement that we already have a quarantine facility that could be used as a place to ship clean bison from

Next meeting agenda (see this meeting’s action item #9)

The meeting agenda for the Oct 15/16 meeting in Helena has been posted at www.ibmp.info. The major foci of the meeting will be 1) information gathering to better inform partner understanding and decision making, and 2) creation of the North Side plan ver2.

Facilitator recommended agendas for future meetings

POSSIBLE OUTLINE OF SEVEN MEETING SERIES

Based on the outcome of meeting three, I provide a possible outline for the remaining four meetings for partner consideration:

- *X Meeting 1*—background information gathering; GAO recommendations 3,4,5 (note that meetings 2-7 deal with GAO recommendations 1,2)
- *X Meeting 2*—Continued to look at what's changed since 2000; adoption of DOI adaptive management model; identified the three "most urgent" action areas for 2008/09; agreed that a joint surveillance & monitoring plan will be necessary
- *X Meeting 3*—information gathering (APHIS land management changes on West side, brucellosis seroprevalence status over 8 years); create draft west side AM plan ver1.0 for 2008-2009 season
- *X Meeting 4*—refine west side AM plan to create ver 2.0 including agreement on overarching goals, objectives, and management actions; create north side AM plan ver 1.0
- *Meeting 5*—refine north side AM plan to create ver 2.0 including metric and required monitoring needed to support each objective; determine trigger point for actions under each objective defined;
- *Meeting 6*—Technical Committee provides quantitative recommendations for west side and north side ver 3.0; partners work through recommendations to accept Technical Committee recommendations and call out those that require further discussion at final meeting
- << *between meeting 6 and 7 have facilitator combine the ver 3.0 North and West side documents into a single IBMP AM plan* >>
- *Meeting 7*—complete final deliberations on IBMP AM plan for 2008/09; begin operational discussions planning for 2008/09; plan public forum on plan; plan first 2009 meeting

TEMPLATE TO CONSIDER FOR ALL MEETINGS

This section is largely the same as my recommendations after meeting 1. Under hour 2, however, note that we have—at least in part—covered a few of the topics mentioned or plan to do so in meeting 4.

- *Hour 0.5*—Welcome, Introductions, meeting logistics; review of last meeting including action item list and level of completion
- *Hour 0.5-1.5*—Science and/or policy review; these discussions can be used to get the creative juices flowing, and (if placed at the beginning of the meeting) to bring people back into the shared space and challenges of IBMP planning. These talks will require guest speakers either from within or outside partner staff. Possible topics that have been mentioned by partners, staff, and public include discussions on:
 - 1) ecological impacts of large-scale biomass removal from the GYA via sending bison to slaughter,
 - 2) current state of tribal relations, historical/spiritual/cultural meaning of bison to tribes, and potential to use tribal hunts as a tool of population control
 - 3) examples from other regions of how adaptive management has been successfully applied
 - 4) brucellosis life history, pathology, understanding multiple brucellosis species and methods of transfer among mammals (esp. cattle, bison)
 - 5) habitat analysis for bison in the GYA
 - 6) brucellosis around the world—are we the only ones with this issue?

- 7) Review of status of quarantine facility including results to date and potential for expansion
- *Hour 1.5-2.5*—Partner briefing sheet on some aspect (e.g., performance, measures, constituencies, agency's driving objectives) of their work to engender better understanding between partners
 - *Hour 3.5-8.5*—discussion on adaptive management for 2008-2009 operating season
 - *Hour 8.5-9.5*—Public comment, split over two days

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Issues identified as potential topics for future meetings

The following items have been tabled but may be fruitful areas for future discussions.

	Requester	What
1	Group following PF report out on FWP hunting	<p>Suzanne—is adaptive management possible with respect to tribal hunt and their harvest goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were quotas for tribes determined—Pat: sharing goals modeled after Idaho salmon sharing agreements; FWP currently trying to have MOUs signed • Request that partners review/are informed on status and content of MOUs • Tribes consider that bison they receive from slaughter should not be part of 50/50 harvest agreement • Draft EA on tribal hunt coming out in ?? months
4	SL	Request for partners to review short and long term status of quarantine operations with APHIS/Jerry
5	MZ	Need to revisit idea of ability to test unvaccinated animals (i.e., criteria of animals eligible for vaccination)
6	SL	Consider creating series of science lectures (e.g., minimum population to maintain genetic diversity) either within partner meetings or as adjunct to the meetings
7	ME, SL	Following completion of series of 7 meetings, partners need to determine method of responding to GAO request for improved accounting (i.e., expenditure tracking that captures essence of outcomes achieved per public \$s spent)
8	public	Request for update on potential split state status based on end of Oct meetings