

# Summary Report from Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting August 11, 2010

Presented 10/05/2010 by Meeting Facilitator Scott Bischke,  
MountainWorks Inc. (scott@eMountainWorks.com)

The following summary report reflects activities at the August 11, 2010 meeting of the IBMP partners, held at Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks in Bozeman and hosted by Montana Department of Livestock. 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 were not formally requested to review these notes and thus may not fully accept the facilitator's recollection/interpretation of events. Attendee deliberators included representatives from IBMP ROD signatory agencies: Mary Erickson (GNF), Pat Flowers (MFWP), Suzanne Lewis (YNP), Christian Mackay (MBoL), Brian McCluskey (APHIS), and Marty Zaluski (MDoL), plus tribal representatives Jim Stone (ITBC), Tom McDonald (CSKT), and Mike Lopez (NP). In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~20 staff members from across IBMP organizations and ~20 members of the public were present. A scanned attendance sheet is available from the facilitator.

## Contents

<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Action items identified during August 11<sup>th</sup> meeting .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Meeting summary notes .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Review of Partner Field Trip with Landowners on the West Side of YNP.....	4
2009/10 Preparation of Year-end Report .....	5
Consideration of AM Changes for 2010/11.....	6
IBMP Interactions with County Commissioners .....	7
Presentation: APHIS use of Risk Management .....	7
Partner briefings.....	7
Partners—Update on Status Citizen's Working Group (CWG).....	9
Next Meeting.....	10
<b>Selected comments from public.....</b>	<b>10</b>
August 10 <sup>th</sup> (post-West Yellowstone area field trip).....	10
August 11 <sup>th</sup> (post-IBMP meeting) .....	12
<b>Parked items for future meetings .....</b>	<b>13</b>



## Abbreviations

- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BB—Brooklyn Baptiste
- CM—Christian Mackay
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- EC—Earvin Carlson
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GNF—Gallatin National Forest
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- ITBC— InterTribal Buffalo Council
- JS—Jim Stone
- LG—Larry Greene
- MBol—Montana Board of Livestock
- MDol—Montana Department of Livestock
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and parks
- ML—Mike Lopez
- MOU—Memorandum of Understanding
- MR—Majel Russell
- MSU—Montana State University
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- NGO—Non-governmental organizations
- NP—Nez Perce
- NPS—National Park Service
- PF—Pat Flowers
- PIOs—Public Information Officers
- PJ—PJ White
- RC—Ryan Clarke
- RoD—Record of Decision
- RFP—Request for proposals
- RT—Rob Tierney
- RTR—Royal Teton Ranch
- RW—Rick Wallen
- SEIS—Supplemental EIS
- SK—Salish Kootenai
- SL—Suzanne Lewis
- SS— Sam Sheppard
- TM—Tom McDonald
- YNP—Yellowstone National Park

## Action items identified during August 11<sup>th</sup> meeting

#	Who	What	By when
1	Christian, Rob, DoL	Plan North Side field trip to occur before December meeting; set date with landowners and Partners by date shown	Planning underway by Sep 15??
2	Scott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photos to CM (via Picasa?) from field trip</li> <li>• Add tribal logos to IBMP materials</li> <li>• Send all materials to Steve M for posting at IBMP.info</li> </ul>	Aug 15
3	Ryan	Report out on analysis of data from bull bison study	Provide at next meeting
4	Christian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send thank you note to landowners on behalf of Partners</li> <li>• Send Partners addresses of landowners should they want to send thank you notes on their own</li> </ul>	Sep 1
5	Mary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine if agenda for Dec meeting will include some aspect of bison and public safety; if yes, determine if YNP &amp;/or MFWP &amp;/or an outside group will be asked to give a presentation</li> </ul>	Oct 1 to allow time for invite
6	Rick	Provide Marty and Amy hazing data analysis tied to population information of bison outside park.	Aug 13
7	Marty, Partners	Final Report: 1) MZ—Send 2009/10 final report to Partners for review and additions; 2) Partners—Send reviews and comments back to Marty regarding 2009/10 final	See to left for process due

		report (Aug 25); 3) MZ—Send “near final” 2009/10 final report to Partners for final look (Sep 1); 4) Partners—Return any comments to Marty on last look at final report to Marty (Sep 15); 5) MZ—Circulate for signature to Partners (Oct 1); 6) MZ--Post to website (Oct 15)	dates  Oct 15
8	Pat	Meet with CSKT, NP, Umatilla, Shoban, GNF regarding potential of adding winter/spring west side hunt. Core of hunt starts ~Jan 1.	Report results at next meeting
9	Partners	Send Scott desires for 1) potential AM changes, 2) changes in AM focus (i.e., implementing parts of the current AM plan that have not yet been done), and 3) entirely new AM proposals for 2010/11 season. Use the existing AM plan and numbering scheme to reference requests.	Sep 17
10	Scott	Compile and return these changes to Partners	Sep 24
11	MDOL Partners	Phone call discussion of AM requests; determination of whether Tech Comm will be taxed with review of these changes for Dec meeting. MDOL to convene as lead agency.	Oct 1??
12	Pat	RTR issues: 1) get signatures on RTR agreement from CSKT, NP, and GNF special agent; 2) follow up on legal determination of changing haze back date from Apr 15 to May 1 on RTR agreement	Report results at next meeting
13	Brian	Letter of response to Commissioner Malone’s letter (Partners noted that this is an APHIS issue, not a IBMP issue)	Report results at next meeting
14	Pat / MFWP	Meet with a contractor to look at directional fencing options. Also, potentially talk with Mike Leahy of Defenders of Wildlife who, in citizen testimony, talked of the development of a new type bison-proof, wildlife friendly fencing (action item #).	Report results at next meeting
15	Brian	When complete, send to Partners the questionnaire to states regarding creation of a State/APHIS MOU under the new brucellosis rules. Note: this questionnaire is not to be published to IBMP.info.	Aug 31
16	Matt Skoglund Potential self-led formation of a CWG	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Matt can contact Scott for past attendance sheets that will provide citizen email addresses.</li> <li>2. Matt will attempt to convene a CWG between now and next IBMP meeting.</li> <li>3. That group must represent widely diverse interest groups. If not, the invitation to speak about the makeup and the goals of the proposed CWG will be rescinded. Matt will call Mary Erickson—new lead Partner as of next meeting—before Nov 15<sup>th</sup> to provide update on the potential CWG. On behalf of the Partners Mary will decide whether the assembled group is sufficiently diverse to provide time for at the next IBMP meeting.</li> <li>4. Should Matt be successful in convening a diverse group, the group will be given a 30 min slot at the next IBMP meeting to describe how they plan to form and govern themselves. This talk will be about the group’s proposed formation and interaction with the Partners. The talk is not intended to be a forum for presentation of AM efforts, changes to the IBMP, and so on.</li> <li>5. The Partners recognize that Matt has agreed to try to help form a group, but that if such a group successfully forms, he may not be the leader.</li> </ol>	Report results at next meeting per caveats noted in the action item

## Meeting summary notes

Due to multiple facilitator activities, the notes presented are not comprehensive but capture highlights of Partner discussions. Interested parties are asked to also see the IBMP web site ([www.ibmp.info](http://www.ibmp.info)) where briefings, maps, presentation slides, and/or documents created for this meeting are posted.

## REVIEW OF PARTNER FIELD TRIP WITH LANDOWNERS ON THE WEST SIDE OF YNP

On August 10<sup>th</sup> a field trip to meet with west side land owners was held for IBMP Partners and staff. The general public was invited to attend, though ground rules were set that only the Partners and staff would be allowed to question and interact with the land owners as the land owners made their presentations at each stop. The field trip was not considered part of the regular IBMP meeting (to be held Aug 11, and as reported on in this document), thus no formal notes were taken or will be reported<sup>1</sup>.

The Partners decided to move around the table, with each describing the most important things they learned during the field trip. Later a few of the staff also provided their thoughts. Many points were made repeatedly, including (a) that the field trip was extremely worthwhile; (b) that MDOL—particularly RT and CM—deserved tremendous thanks for arranging the trip; (c) that everyone greatly appreciated the land owners' willingness to meet with the Partners (action item #4); (d) that being on-the-ground was of tremendous benefit with respect to informing Partner AM efforts; (e) that being on-the-ground provided a far better understanding of the challenges associated with managing bison/cattle conflicts; (f) that while many opportunities for AM presented themselves over the course of the day, no single silver bullet emerged to simply solve the West Side bison/cattle issue; and (g) a recognition that all Partners could benefit from a similar tour on the North Side (action item #1) and again on the West Side, though during winter/spring conditions (see Parked Items).

Many other points were made, including:

- Interacting with people face-to-face leads to far greater understanding. People treat each other and their concerns differently when talking directly rather than about someone in abstention.
- Partners recognize the frustration of the public not to be able to question the land owners as part of the tour. Partners also outwardly acknowledged the importance of having the public present and recognize that many of them were there under their own funding, in some cases taking time off from work. There was also recognition that many of the people present could potentially be participants in a citizens' working group.
- Partners gained new appreciation for the potential human safety issues for subdivisions and an RV park at the Narrows.
- It was instructive to learn some of the (recent) history of the area: e.g., changing land ownership through the last century, impacts of the 1959 earthquake, and the effort to build Ski Yellowstone.
- A recognition that land use changes over time.
- A recognition that keeping cattle on the land, rather than the land being subdivided for housing developments, is helping keep land open for all wildlife.
- A statement was made that as the Partners feel more and more comfortable with their ability to control brucellosis, that safety (especially the separation between people and bison) may become an increasingly important point management factor, particularly in an atmosphere of increasing development. Counterpoint—in adjacent YNP and border towns (e.g., Gardiner, Montana) several million people pass through yearly, mostly without incident, though there is a great deal of opportunity to see bison in close quarters. Also that YNP and MFWP have recently worked with the RTR to develop safety protocol.
- Recognition that the land owners have many issues and are attempting to be good stewards (e.g., weeds, riparian protection). See action item #5.
- Multiple statements to the belief that for the Hebgen Basin bison tolerance opportunities seem to be greater to the north than to the west.
- For one Partner an “aha” moment was the seeing all these people representing so many goals and opinions on the bison/livestock issue listening and treating each other with respect.

---

<sup>1</sup> The facilitator did attend the field trip and took some notes, albeit unofficial, during the discussions. The only part of the notes the Partners asked for publication herein was the end-of-day public comment which can be found near the end of this report.

- The “aha” moment for another Partner, after seeing conditions on-the-ground, was feeling like, “This is a manageable situation.”
- Agency personnel who regularly work in the field stated great thanks to the Partners for taking time to see and recognize conditions on-the-ground and resulting challenges to land owners and challenges that they themselves are working under.
- Valuable to hear from landowners directly rather than filtered through others. How can we continue to engage?
- From tour of S Fork of Madison area it is easy to see why bison move to private lands, partly driven by past fires and resulting vegetation. Blackened earth leads to early melt out leads to more forage available earlier.

## **2009/10 PREPARATION OF YEAREND REPORT**

MZ stated that lead Partner MDOL has all the data needed from the yearend report back from other Partners. A preliminary report has been written and will soon be circulated to the Partners for review. After compiling the changes from this review, MDOL plans to provide opportunity for a second review iteration. The full process (action item #7), is expected to culminate with the 2009/10 report being published to IBMP.info on ~October 15<sup>th</sup>.

MZ showed a slide comparing bison levels outside the Park on the West Side from 2009 and 2010 (see these slides on IBMP.info). He stated that it is clear that on the West Side an increasing number of bison are out. CM noted that the trigger points (i.e., numbers and location) for management action were met but then the bison simply blew through those trigger points before effective management actions could move them back. A question was asked regarding correlating population counts and changes with dates of hazing operations. MDOL did not have this analysis but YNP did. RW has provided this analysis to MDOL for inclusion in the report (action item #6).

CM noted that the review of data showed that there were a larger number of bison out later in the season this past year. He noted that hazing operations were successful, but the overall numbers of bison outside YNP were very high. He expressed concern that 2010/11 could be another difficult management year. Discussion ensued about the role of overall bison population in the Park w/respect to bison movement to the West Side.

PJ noted that population density is not the single causative factor for bison migration out of the Park. He said that the total Park count as of June was ~3900 animals with ~500 calves, split between the North (~2200) and Central (~1700) herds. He noted that migration of the north herd tends to be driven by snowpack (and resulting impact on forage) and population density; and that the central herd migrates depending on the same factors through February but beyond that date seems to move west regardless, possibly as a learned behavior of relatively early vegetation green-up in lower elevations. In evidence, SL noted that although snowpack was not deep the last two years, there have still been big central herd migrations west. She also noted that in the Park there have been wet conditions later in the spring, potentially impacting green up and hence compelling bison to stay outside the Park longer.

A short discussion followed on the value of the hunt. There is some thought that the hunt has to date not been applied to maximum benefit. However, the Partners recognize that just having the hunt—regardless of number of animals harvested—has played an important role in bringing hunters back into the conversation about bison management. PF noted that there is a possibility of an expanded hunt, including on the West Side during winter/spring. Both the Umatilla and Shoban have decided to exercise their treaty hunting rights and have reserved the right to hunt through the spring (TBD; see action item #8). Currently the NP and CSKT do not hunt into the spring but ML and TM said that their tribes might consider doing so given proper conditions (e.g., managing hunt to match biological limits, respect for animals, guided hunts). MDOL stated that its goal is to maintain Zone 2/3 integrity but given that constraint (and safety considerations for personnel) that it is happy to work with the Partners with and around the potentially expanded hunt. All parties agreed that the goal of an expanded hunt would not be to hunt to 0 animals outside the Park.

## CONSIDERATION OF AM CHANGES FOR 2010/11

### *Partner generated ideas*

During the review of the field trip (see above), the Partners listed potential AM opportunities that were revealed by being on-the-ground with the land owners. Those items, along with other potential AM opportunities that came to the fore over the course of the day, are presented below.

1. There is an opportunity for a movement linkage across the S Fk of the Madison across the Ed Rhieberg property.
2. There is an opportunity for bison movement north into the upper Gallatin drainage, but it is unclear the route bison in the past have taken. Could this be an area for increased tolerance, or an area to haze bison to?
3. There is an opportunity for fencing in the S Fork area, though one issue is funding. MFWP has some funds and others might be available via federal and/or private/public partnerships. A key item learned was that for the Povah ranch at least, labor is a major cost for fence replacement. Funding material and/or labor for fencing is an AM opportunity (counterpoint—still a conflict of fencing and wildlife movement).
4. There appears to be an option to haze from the north portion of the west management area into the upper Gallatin or Taylor Fork (PF read from ROD, pg 11 during this discussion).
5. The use of strategic electric fencing may provide opportunity for improving bison tolerance.
6. Partners need to revisit turn on dates to determine if there is opportunity for increased tolerance by creatively working with later turn out dates and locations.
7. Partners should review zone 1,2,3 demarcations for values being managed and protected given ever changing conditions on-the-ground.
8. A question was put forth: can we accept more risk in return for greater tolerance given that no transmission has occurred from bison to cattle since ROD developed?
9. Partners need to seek a place to move bison. YNP stated strong desire to move them to the tribes, and the tribal representatives concurred. Majel Russell (on behalf of ITBC) noted that the tribes have a strong desire to take bison (heritage, spiritual, diabetes programs, other) but also need funding to build the infrastructure they need for bison roundup, housing, and care.
10. For big snow year and large migration on north side consider hazing up to Eagle Creek. Advantage here is that bison that move up Eagle Creek can be hunted.
11. An idea was put forward that bison hazing might start later but be more intense in recognition that many of the bison hazed into the Park simply return to outside the Park only to be hazed again. The question was asked—would this be a more efficient and cost effective method of hazing?

After some discussion of these ideas, the Partners agreed to follow the process for creating the AM changes they set for themselves in August 2008 (see IBMP.info for meeting notes): focus on the yearend report for the August meeting, then use the results of that report to develop AM proposals to be discussed for implementation the following season during the December meeting. To facilitate this gathering of AM possibilities, the Partners created action item #8. There was recognition that AM changes might be of at least three kinds—actual changes to current trigger points or other operations, expression of ideas already in the AM plan but not yet being implemented, brand new AM proposals.

### *Public generated ideas*

From the full set of public comment provided (see sections at the end of this report), the facilitator has attempted to capture those comments that appeared to be solution oriented and have the potential for inclusion in AM planning, as follows:

12. The solution is to make Zone 3 the conflict zone and also to manage bison numbers by hunting.
13. Each property needs to be looked at for its own unique challenges and opportunities for what can be done under an AM scheme.

14. Heard lots of opportunities including just north of the Povahs there are landowners who want bison plus allotments that have turn on dates of July 1 or later. Perhaps fence to allow bison through to these areas.
15. There is a new type of fence being used at Ft Peck that holds bison but allows other wildlife through.
16. We should consider making the Stennet and Dumke ranches zone 2 not zone 3.
17. We should make all of USFS lands zone 1.
18. Consider collaring and following bison to see how they move into the Gallatin drainage.
19. We can provide information on a bison safe fence we are working with along with tribes at Ft Peck and Ft Belknap to fence bison.
20. The Watkins Creek allotment is coming up and could be dropped to allow for greater bison tolerance.
21. We have a living science laboratory of cattle and bison going on in GRTE—why don't we study what has happened there w/respect to brucellosis?
22. Why not change the focus to how we can control cattle instead of how we can control bison?
23. Please consider that NGOs can play a role in helping purchase allotments, as we did in purchasing one up the Taylor Fork in conjunction with another NGO.
24. Consider direct buyout of animal unit months from producers, even at beyond market value, to pay to have them keep cattle off the land. Land could then be hayed and fences removed.
25. I think that public/private partnerships are important, including cattle buyouts, damage payments, and supplying labor for fence building.

#### **IBMP INTERACTIONS WITH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

A letter from the Partners to local county commissioners is in process from last meeting and received final signatures at this meeting. MDOL will send the letter out following this meeting.

Park County Commissioner Malone faxed a letter to PF (8/11) describing concerns resulting from an APHIS study on bull bison in the Gardner area. While the fax came to the Partners, all Partners agreed that it was an APHIS issue. BM stated that APHIS had already addressed the issue but said that he would do so again, on behalf of APHIS not the IBMP Partners.

#### **PRESENTATION: APHIS USE OF RISK MANAGEMENT**

Brian McCluskey provided a talk on how APHIS uses risk assessment to inform management decisions. In the talk Brian described two types of models in use. He strongly emphasized that APHIS does not rely on the models for decision making, instead they are one input to the decision making process. A major advantage of using the models is that they can greatly decrease the level of testing (with commensurate cost savings) needed to be done and/or the need to depopulate an entire herd.

Brian described that for disease control decision making, as practiced at APHIS, includes three steps:

1. Consider disease transmission locally
2. Consider the affect on the "national" herd
3. Consider the economic impacts from producer, state, and agency perspective

The cost/benefit analysis is a key factor in APHIS decision making. To date, quantifying the financial aspects of social impacts and wildlife has proven difficult to model. Some discussion of this latter point ensued with the Partners, including the idea that a model that includes these two factors would be of great value to the Partners. PF noted that economic impacts of disease on the livestock industry can be quickly tabulated, but that those on wildlife are rarely in the cost/benefit analysis (but that studies do exist).

Brian noted that with disease issues you can essentially never arrive at a place of 0 risk, thus a key part of the management decision is deciding how much risk we are willing to assume. His talk can be found at [www.ibmp.info](http://www.ibmp.info) under the section for this meeting.

#### **PARTNER BRIEFINGS**

Following are notes from short reports provided by the Partners on a number of topics.

##### ***Christian Mackay—RSS Feed for Automatic updates on changes to IBMP.info***

Christian noted that the RSS feed for IBMP.info has been up and operational since sometime in June.

**Ryan Clark—Update on bull bison semen study**

Ryan said the study started in late March and ended 5 weeks later. Reports for the study are posted on the website IBMP.info. These reports provide data from the study, though APHIS has not yet completed its analysis and final report. The Partners requested that Ryan provide a report at the next IBMP meeting (action item #3).

**Pat Flowers—Signing of RTR Operations Checklist**

Not all signatures were gathered (as erroneously reported in the April 2010 meeting notes) for the RTR agreement. Outstanding signatures are still required from the CSKT, NP, and GNF (special agent). Also, PF has not yet met with the RTR to correct the target date for return to Yellowstone should say May 1, not April 15. PF took both of these issues on (action item #12) and will report back at the next meeting. For the latter issue, at the April 2010 meeting the Partners stated willingness to sign the document as presented assuming the change would be made.

**Christian Mackay—Status of MT Stockgrowers Lawsuit**

A partial judgment has been rendered regarding the Stockgrowers lawsuit against MDOL regarding May 15<sup>th</sup> turn back date from Horse Butte. The motion to compel the state agencies to complete all bison management by May 15<sup>th</sup> was denied.

**Mary Erickson, Suzanne Lewis—Status of Lawsuit from Environmental Organizations and Others to Stop Federal Agencies from Killing Bison**

A hearing on this lawsuit has been set for September 22<sup>nd</sup> in Helena. The most recent action was a filing for summary judgment by both the plaintiffs and the federal agencies.

**Brian McCluskey—Update on Potential Creation of Yellowstone Brucellosis Zone**

Much of this report is similar to last meeting. Brian noted that a concept paper on changing brucellosis regulations was published by APHIS ~18 months ago and that ~12 months ago that paper was placed in the Federal Register for comment. That the comment period is over and comments have been received and compiled.

The paper includes interim rules for some changes in brucellosis management, largely driven by the very low prevalence of brucellosis across the USA. The new rule would remove state status in lieu of national status. Brucellosis issues will then deal with individual herds not full states based on one herd testing positive for *Brucella* (there will still be some requirements at the state level, but not so onerous as under current rules). Infected herds will have a designated management zone created around them. MT, WY, and ID will be treated uniquely with designated surveillance zones (likely one per state) having on-going testing.

Of particular interest to this group is the proposal to allow for the establishment of designated survival zones where brucellosis might be allowed to exist (e.g., WY, MT, ID). This allowance would require state application to go into effect. The interim rule is still in progress and needs designation by OMB; Brian cannot predict when that will happen. However, APHIS is beginning to operate towards the guidelines shown in the Interim Rule. For full adaption, three conditions must be met in sequence: (1) the final rule must be adapted (~Nov 2010); (2) a questionnaire will be sent to the states to help develop the MOU (see action item #15); (3) APHIS will sign an MOU with each state regarding operating under the new rule (key here will be dollar flow associated with cooperative agreements)

PF asked when the Partners could consider the rule change as part of discussions under AM. Brian said they are free to talk about it at any time, but that actual implementation will be driven by the three steps above being completed.

**Update on Quarantined Bison Status**

PF provided the following data on the quarantined bison: 87 were transferred to the Green Ranch. There have been three confirmed deaths, none associated with brucellosis.

PF said that no hearing date has been scheduled for the pending litigation about the transfer of bison to the Turner Ranch. However, the lawsuit has undermined movement on the next cohort (39 animals + 16 calves). JS asked if there was a way for the tribes to take the bison, perhaps passing them through YNP. SL responded that the park could not take animals back that are certified brucellosis free into a population



that has brucellosis. PF suggested that JS contact Joe Maurier of MFWP for discussion of movement of the bison to tribal entities.

#### **Update on Fencing Potential for the West Side**

PF reported that he had not yet met with the fencing contractor, deciding it was worthwhile to wait until after the field trip of August 10<sup>th</sup>. Some discussion ensued that the fence discussed near the airport (with a goal of driving bison toward Horse Butte and away from the S Fk of the Madison) still seemed viable, even after the field trip. GNF noted that the original discussions for this fence were for temporary, emergency sighting but that a permanent structure would require an EIS. PF offered to meet with a contractor to look at directional fencing and potentially talk with Mike Leahy of Defender of Wildlife who, in citizen testimony, talked of the development of a new type bison-proof, wildlife friendly fencing (action item #14 ).

#### **PJ White—Status of Draft EIS for Remote Brucellosis Vaccination**

PJ stated that the comment period on the Draft EIS was extended until September 24<sup>th</sup> and that over 1000 comments had already been received. His best guess was that it will take ~3 months to analyze the comments, ~3+ months to draft the final EIS, then 60 days for comment, leading to a final decision in likely the fall of 2011 or winter of 2012.

#### **PARTNERS—UPDATE ON STATUS CITIZEN'S WORKING GROUP (CWG)**

The Partners' reaffirmed their desire to see some type of an open citizens' process to be started. The Partners discussed that there has been much work to date to try to get a CWG off the ground, but that to date those efforts have not borne fruit. PF noted that real progress needs to emerge from a CWG or else the politics would simply overwhelm the process. He noted again that a perfect time to implement the CWG might be at the same time the Park releases its draft EIS on remote vaccination (the link being that this EIS creates the opportunity for more bison outside YNP as noted under the ROD).

The group rehashed past discussions about requirements under FACA and advantages of having a state, tribal, or citizen-initiated CWG (see past meeting notes). For today forward, four possibilities were discussed:

1. *Have a tribal entity convene and lead the CWG.*—Both ML and TM stated strong tribal support of the idea of a CWG but said that the NP and CSKT, respectively, were not inclined to want to take on the duty of organizing and running such a group. One Partner noted that having a Partner (i.e., tribal entity) run the CWG might not be appropriate.
2. *Have the County Commissioners convene and lead CWG.*—The current outstanding letter (see earlier item) to the County Commissioners asks them if they would be willing to take on this task.
3. *Return to Governor Schweitzer's office with the request for the state to convene the CWG.*—PF noted that if #1 and #2 don't happen, that he is willing to return to the Governor's office to make the request that the state convene the group again.
4. *Self-organized, citizen convened CWG.*—The Partners recognized that citizens could self-form, with no direction from the Partners, and come up with a CWG plan themselves.

<< Note that PF had to leave the meeting at this point in the discussion. >>

The Partners recognized citizen frustration that the CWG had long been discussed but that to date none had been formed. Several Partners noted that they would be open to, and highly motivated to listen to, input from a diverse, citizen-formed working group that included strong representation from livestock and bison conservation interests. The Partners noted their own frustration that a CWG had not yet started and the discussion led to a statement that the Partners would be willing to entertain a citizen proposal for a self formed group at the next meeting. They asked if any member of the public might be willing to take on the role of organizing such a group. The facilitator asked that the question be held until the Partners were certain about the request as it was a large step. There were no dissenters.

In response to the question, then, Becky Weed stated concern that such a group should not be formed since it had no guarantee of power to influence decisions. Matt Skoglund offered to make the effort

to form the group. The Partners agreed to allow Matt to make an effort to form a CWG and report back to them at the next meeting (action item #16). The Partners placed several stipulations and guidelines to the offer:

1. Matt can contact Scott for past attendance sheets that will provide citizen email addresses.
2. Matt will attempt to convene a CWG between now and next IBMP meeting.
3. That group must represent widely diverse interest groups. If not, the invitation to speak about the makeup and the goals of the proposed CWG will be rescinded. Matt will call Mary Erickson—new lead Partner as of next meeting—before Nov 15<sup>th</sup> to provide update on the potential CWG. Mary, on behalf of the Partners, will decide whether the assembled group is sufficiently diverse to provide time for at the next IBMP meeting.
4. Should Matt be successful in convening a diverse group, the group will be given a 30 min slot at the next IBMP meeting to describe how they plan to form and govern themselves. This talk will be about the group's proposed formation and interaction with the Partners. The talk is not intended to be a forum for presentation of AM efforts, changes to the IBMP, and so on.
5. The Partners recognize that Matt has agreed to try to help form a group, but that if such a group successfully forms, he may not be the leader.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the IBMP will occur December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The location is to be determined, with potential for being held at Chico Hot Springs or Gardner. The choice of location is driven by the desire to have a field trip covering North End Operations. Tentatively, the expectation is that the field trip will occur on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The regular meeting of the Partners would then occur on the 8<sup>th</sup> from 830 AM to 5 PM.

For the December meeting GNF will have taken over as the lead agency. A meeting host was not declared.

### **Selected comments from public**

---

The notes on public comment to the IBMP Partners are not intended to be complete, but rather reflect the facilitator's best effort to capture key statements. While no official record was kept during the field trip tour of August 10<sup>th</sup>, the Partners requested a record be kept, as presented below, of the public comment after the field trip.

Names associated with comments are available from the facilitator. However, they are not included here to facilitate focus on the comment rather than the speaker. Line breaks in the numbering indicate a new speaker. (Please note that the spelling of landowners mentioned may not be correct.)

The facilitator has attempted to capture those comments from the public that appeared to be solution oriented and have the potential for inclusion in AM planning. These items are called out with a "\*\*\*" in the listings that follow and also can be found in an earlier section on AM.

### **AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup> (POST-WEST YELLOWSTONE AREA FIELD TRIP)**

1. In 16 years of observing bison, the only bison I have seen going through a fence was being hazed or otherwise handled, like after vaccination or medication or being put to sleep. They can be crazed upon waking up.
2. It is wrong to deny the public the ability to ask the landowners questions.
3. 75 bison went through the lake Jan 12, 2005 because they were being hazed.
4. Would like to see an IBMP meeting in W Yellowstone.
5. There are only 2 places in N America where wild, free, genetically pure bison roam. That is at W Yellowstone and Gardner where we have less cows and cowboys than anywhere in MT.
6. Last week went on a visit to ranchers in Gardner.

7. The nation is looking for us to do something positive. Gov. Schweitzer realized this when he went back east to raise money for 2008 re-election and heard from folks that they were really upset about the 1600 animals slaughtered.
8. We can see cows anywhere in the nation but not bison.
9. The refusal to allow public participation and questioning is wrong and the 3 min comment period borders on criminal.
10. If private owners don't want bison then IBMP should make that happen for them.
11. \*\* The solution is to make Zone 3 the conflict zone and also to manage bison numbers by hunting.
12. BoL should not be managing wildlife.
13. There are 22000 plains bison in the US of which 20000 are in private herds and being domesticated, plus becoming genetically impure due to inter-breeding with cattle. We have only 4 herds >1000 animals. We need >1000 animals to retain genetic purity. Of those 4 herds YELL is the only one that is really wild but now we are messing with them, as well. It is critical to take care of these bison or risk that the Endangered Species Act will be invoked.
14. My grandfather bought our ranch in 1943.
15. Appreciate the opportunity to talk.
16. Statement of disagreement with, and thoughts about possible trespassing by, a neighbor who was hazing bison. Statement about the potential that this situation might be construed as a taking of private property rights.
17. I do not see any danger of brucellosis transmission in July.
18. Thanks for the field trip.
19. We need to recognize that elk are the elephant in the room. If you have lost your brucellosis status based on transmission from elk, why is there such a focus on bison?
20. Similarly, why is DOL in charge of bison rather than FWP?
21. Other private property owners should be able to operate their property as they want, as should we.
22. \*\* Each property needs to be looked at for its own unique challenges and opportunities for what can be done under an AM scheme.
23. Bringing a helicopter on to my land is trespassing but it is not my choice to consider legal pursuit of such an issue. I want to work together instead.
24. Appreciate the gathering. Very optimistic; much good happening and possible here.
25. \*\* Heard lots of opportunities including just north of the Povah's there are landowners who want bison plus allotments that have turn on dates of July 1 or later. Perhaps fence to allow bison through to these areas.
26. \*\* There is a new type of fence being used at Ft Peck that holds bison but allows other wildlife through.
27. As Keith Aune mentioned at the last meeting, 0 risk is not an option, thus consider that we learned a lot of owners have late turn on date.
28. The RV park should not be a stop for bison movement. Don't manage for the outliers—there won't be that many bison crossing at Narrows. Just deal with those issues as they come up.
29. Plan to file complaint with our Senators' offices regarding lack of public input.
30. Still, though, appreciate the field trip, dialogue, and getting 3 minutes to comment.
31. We need a legislative solution; our group is trying to present one.
32. There are some serious private property rights issues: we need to protect those that don't want bison, but also help those who want bison.
33. \*\* We should consider making the Stennet and Dumke ranches zone 2 not zone 3.

34. \*\* We should make all of USFS lands zone 1.
35. \*\* Consider collaring and following bison to see how they move into the Gallatin drainage.
36. DoL should not haze on private property when owners don't want them to do so.
37. There is a similar bison issue in Saskatchewan, with bison leaving a national park and entering private lands. Some owners happy about it; some are not. This group created a non-profit entity (a bison co-op) that hazes bison for owners that don't want them. Perhaps we could get someone from that group to come visit.
38. There are other models out there that the Partners could consider.
39. \*\* We can provide information on a bison safe fence we are working with along with tribes at Ft Peck and Ft Belknap to fence bison.
40. Appreciate folks coming out.
41. This is an important, key basin.
42. My group does not support the plan but believes that some AM is possible.
43. \*\* The Watkins Creek allotment is coming up and could be dropped to allow for greater bison tolerance.
44. No USFS land should be Zone 3.
45. My group can provide multiple migration routes for bison into the upper Gallatin drainage.
46. Why don't we worry about elk? That's how MT lost its brucellosis free status.
47. \*\* We have a living science laboratory of cattle and bison going on in GRTE—why don't we study what has happened there w/respect to brucellosis?
48. It is horrible what the ecosystem goes through to protect cattle. We have destroyed the ecosystem for cows.
49. \*\* Why not change the focus to how we can control cattle instead of how we can control bison?
50. Safety precautions should be built around cattle, not bison.
51. Why not look at cows as part of the ecosystem?

#### **AUGUST 11<sup>TH</sup> (POST-IBMP MEETING)**

1. \*\* Please consider that NGOs can play a role in helping purchase allotments, as our group did in purchasing one up the Taylor Fork in conjunction with another NGO.
2. Under the purchase, we found another allotment for the lease in another location.
3. Appreciate that SL noted that the Park does not want to be part of any large scale slaughter.
4. Remember that with the change in administration, we have all new players directing politics from Washington DC—this change should allow the Partners greater freedom of choice.
5. Tribes have great vision. Use the tribes as an outlet for bison; don't convert wild bison to domestic bison.
6. Zone boundaries make no sense. Why is USFS land ever Zone 3? If bison go to public land with no conflict, why haze?
7. \*\* Consider direct buyout of animal unit months from producers, even at beyond market value, to pay to have them keep cattle off the land. Land could then be hayed and fences removed.
8. My group was formed in 1990 with objective of managing wildlife on public lands. Only two spots to do that for bison on public lands—W Yellowstone and Gardner. We had interest in the Big Open in 1986 but the stock growers killed that idea. Now we are supporting the Prairie Foundation.
9. Plenty of land for bison in WMAs etc near W Yellowstone. We need to acquire some land north of Gardner.

10. I started counting bison kills in 1988. To date I think that we are >5000 animals killed. Think of the wealth we have given up through those lost animals.
11. We don't have to haze to let the bison go into the upper Gallatin and also Red Rock Canyon.
12. The original question to Brian dealt with risk in commercial livestock. All issues of the agenda today deal with the relative values that we place on bison and livestock.
13. I like Pat's model for creating a transparent model vs an ad hoc political process.
14. This issue is not unique to mammals in the N Rockies. We have a dead zone in the Mississippi Delta and GMOs.
15. It is hard to watch Partners with their hands tied. We need to get their respective Secretaries to talk to each other.
16. \*\* I think that public/private partnerships are important, including cattle buyouts, damage payments, and supplying labor for fence building.
17. Perhaps there were no silver bullets from the field trip but I did have an "aha" moment in that the problem does seem manageable.
18. If there is a silver bullet it is Horse Butte because there are no conflicts there.
19. I believe we can have greater tolerance in that area, and that the issue of swimming bison can be handled.
20. Appreciate the meeting.
21. I have worked with bison producers and those seeking to conserve bison.
22. We need a place for wild bison to live on the landscape where they fit. The more I learn about it, the more I respect this animal. Thus there must be an alternative to herd culling.
23. We must complete the quarantine study.
24. \*\* We need some demonstration projects (e.g., on the CMR Wildlife Refuge) where bison co-exist with cattle.
25. This needs to be a complete, holistic program.
26. We need to deal with the issue of elk brucellosis and feedlots.
27. A thanks on behalf of our group to all. A thanks to the tribes.
28. An extension of invitation to the tribes to meet and learn from each other.
29. An acknowledgement of the ITBC and their role in helping bring bison back to Indian Country.

### **Parked items for future meetings**

---

- CM, RT—Plan winter West Side field trip to occur in Winter of 2011; set date with landowners and Partners by date shown
- JS—request to convene Tech Committee to sit down with Landowners and identify AM opportunities based on their constraints