

**INTERAGENCY
BISON
MANAGEMENT
PLAN**

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



**USDA ANIMAL AND
PLANT HEALTH
INSPECTION SERVICE**



USDA FOREST SERVICE



**MONTANA DEPARTMENT
OF LIVESTOCK**



**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE
& PARKS**



**INTERTRIBAL BUFFALO
COUNCIL**



**CONFEDERATED SALISH &
KOOTENAI TRIBES**



NEZ PERCE TRIBE



Interagency Bison Management Partners

June 22, 2010

Gallatin County Commissioner Joe Skinner
Gallatin County Commissioner Steve White
Gallatin County Commissioner Bill Murdock

311 West Main, Room 306
Bozeman, MT 59715

Commissioners:

In 2000, the federal government and the state of Montana agreed to an Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) that established guidelines for cooperatively managing the risk of bovine brucellosis transmission from Yellowstone bison to cattle, while preserving a wild and free-ranging bison population. The Records of Decision for the IBMP recognized that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Montana Department of Livestock, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service have a statutory basis for the joint management of Yellowstone bison, while preserving their respective jurisdictions.

During 2009 and 2010, the IBMP agencies invited the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation, Nez Perce Tribe, and the InterTribal Buffalo Council (a federally chartered organization representing 57 American Indian Tribes) to participate as a partner with the IBMP agencies in implementation of the IBMP. The State of Montana and the Federal Government have recognized historic treaty rights by certain tribes to harvest wild bison on unclaimed federal lands adjacent to Yellowstone National Park. This tribal hunting, along with state hunting, will be one of the primary tools to manage bison abundance and distribution in Montana. This activity, along with other IBMP goals to work specifically with tribes on bison management and distribution, is required to successfully implement the IBMP.

Park County Commissioner Marty Malone attended recent IBMP meetings and requested that County government representation be added to the IBMP partners group. This request resulted in a lengthy discussion among the IBMP partners regarding the statutory basis for County Commissioners or other requesting entities to join as full partners with IBMP agencies in ongoing IBMP implementation and adaptation discussions. At these meetings, we also discussed other means of addressing concerns that the Counties have with communication and consultation on IBMP agency actions.

If the Counties are still requesting a direct role as a partner with the IBMP agencies, we would need to better understand the role that County representatives would serve, as well as the legal basis for this request. We would ask that if you wish to pursue this role further, you provide a written response clarifying the request.

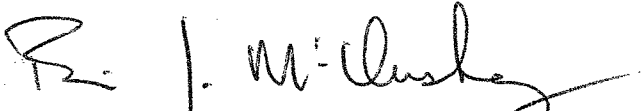
The IBMP partners appreciate the Commissioners' interest in this issue. We would hope that most of the concerns that the Counties have can be resolved by better

direct communications between Commissioners and IBMP partners. We are extending the offer to meet with you on a periodic basis at your request to hear your thoughts and address concerns more directly. We would also like to discuss the potential for the Commissioners to sponsor a Citizens Working Group tasked with developing ideas and realistic, attainable solutions for adaptive management of bison in Montana, with particular focus on available habitat for bison on lands addressed by the IBMP beyond the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park. The Montana Department of Livestock is currently the lead agency for the IBMP partners. Thus, we request that you contact Christian Mackay at the address or phone number below with possible dates for a joint meeting. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Lewis, Yellowstone National Park



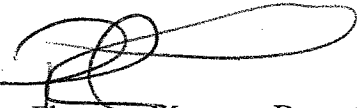
Dr. Brian McCluskey, USDA-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service



Mary C. Erickson, Gallatin National Forest



Christian Mackay, Montana Department of Livestock



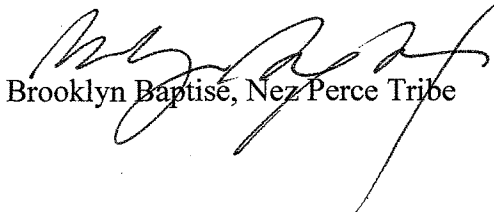
Pat Flowers, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 3



Ervin Carlson, Intertribal Buffalo Council



Tom McDonald, Confederated Salish and Kooteni Tribes



Brooklyn Baptise, Nez Perce Tribe