

Summary Report from Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Meeting May 17/18, 2011

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The following summary report reflects activities at the May 17th and 18th, 2011 meeting of the IBMP Partners, held at the C'Mon Inn in Bozeman, MT 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 while these notes were available for IBMP Partner review and modification before publication, no formal signoff procedure was undertaken; thus some Partners may not fully accept the facilitator's recollection/interpretation of events. The nine Partner attendees were Mary Erickson (GNF), Pat Flowers (MFWP), Mike Lopez (NP), Christian Mackay (MBOL), Brian McCluskey (APHIS), Tom McDonald (CSKT), and Jim Stone (ITBC), Dan Wenk (YNP), and Marty Zaluski (MDOL). 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.

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Abbreviations

- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BB—Brooklyn Baptiste
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- CM—Christian Mackay
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- CWG—Citizens' Working Group
- DW—Dan Wenk
- EC—Earvin Carlson
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GNF—Gallatin National Forest
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- ITBC—InterTribal Buffalo Council
- JS—Jim Stone
- KL—Keith Lawrence
- MBOL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MD—Marna Daley
- MDOL—Montana Department of Livestock
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- MK—Michael Keator
- 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
- Park—Yellowstone National Park
- 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
- SS—Sam Sheppard
- TM—Tom McDonald
- YELL—Yellowstone National Park
- YNP—Yellowstone National Park

Action items identified

#	Who	What	By when
1	PJ	Provide the Partners with the 14 AM changes that they agreed to in principle, as well as the NEPA/MEPA sufficiency analysis from counsel.	Within 2 weeks
2	AM Subcommittee Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a prioritized list of AM opportunities with those that can be done now; subcommittees are empowered to engage Partners before Aug meeting for AM opportunities they feel could be implemented before August• description of overlap points of subcommittees• complete duties as assigned in Feb 7 telecon and follow up notes on the telecon <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and update current <i>Field</i> Operating Procedures• Create draft version of <i>Partner</i> Operating Procedures	Before, as appropriate, and for the next IBMP meeting
3	Mike L, Tom M, Jim S, Pat F, Brian M	Notes and directions for this effort can be found in this report under section titled "Process, Procedure, and Next Steps for Adaptive Management". Also, (a) note that a review of IBMP notes since 2008 that pulls out past discussions of Partner process and decision making is complete and available from the facilitator, and (b) note that one member of the public during public comment	For next IBMP meeting

		period called out several questions relative to meeting process—see May 17 public comments #s 18-24.	
4	Brian M	Provide set of quarantine procedures describing methods of safe quarantine and release of bison (this item also placed in Parked Items list).	By end of 2011
5	Julie C	AM subcommittee working on bison restoration to other locations in the country to include as part of its tasks (a) process flow details and (b) suggestion on obtaining funding (e.g., grants, NGO funding) for creation of the operational quarantine facilities.	For next IBMP meeting
6	PJ, Jim S	Provide Partners with the YNP/ITBC document(s) laying out a possible method of transfer of bison to tribes. The document includes issues of operations, funding, social, and political concerns. Present this information at the August IBMP meeting. To include in the discussion is social issues associated with quarantine, transfer, and receiving of bison. One possibility is to look back at record of public tribal meetings on potentially receiving quarantined bison (e.g., Wind Rivers).	For next IBMP meeting
7	Mary E	Collect all AM changes from 2005 to present and create a process for the yearly collection hereafter of AM changes made in that year. The collection will include NEPA and MEPA sufficiency reviews.	For next IBMP meeting
8	Rick W Mary E	RW to make minor requested changes in the 14 AM changes as presented and forward to GNF. GNF to begin process of formal signoff on the 14 AM changes by all Partners.	For next IBMP meeting
9	Mary E; CWG (Matt S, Ariel O)	CWG to provide the Partners CWG meeting notes. GNF will provide Virginia Tribe with the current Partner mailing list. <i>The request is for meeting minutes only</i> , not the full suite of mailings going out to CWG members.	Beginning now
10	CWG (Matt S, Ariel O)	CWG begin to make inquiries about funding for future facilitation through grants or NGOs, and report back on progress at the August meeting.	For next IBMP meeting
11	CWG (Matt S, Ariel O)	CWG to provide lead Partner GNF a final verification of the CWG schedule and number of meetings planned.	June 15
12	Mary E All partners	GNF will lead the Partner effort to develop funding for the CWG through the September meeting. Upon completion of the task, GNF will provide the CWG verification of the existence of funding for their meetings through the Sep2011 meeting. All Partners to consider ability to help fund Citizen Working Group through Jan 2012. Initial \$10k funded through May 2011. Meetings cost ~\$2k per meeting. YNP committed to funding the June CWG meeting. Thus meetings in Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan are still unfunded, requiring \$14,000 more.	July 1
13	Mary E	ME suggested and took on an action item to follow up with Park County Commissioner Malone regarding past Partner responses to his questions. In public testimony Commissioner Malone had stated that he did not believe questions of his from past IBMP meetings had been properly addressed by the Partners.	Before next IBMP meeting

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) where briefings, maps, presentation slides, and/or documents created for this meeting are posted.

2011 OPERATING SEASON

Hunting update—State Hunt, Tribal Hunt (FWP/Tribes)

The 2010/11 hunt was carried out by hunters from four treaty tribes (Confederated Salish & Kootenai, Nez Perce, Umatilla, and Shoshone-Bannock), and State of Montana hunters. Hunting season is set by MFWP for state hunters; they have no mandatory reporting requirement. Each Tribe sets its own season and reporting requirements (none present require mandatory reporting).

With no mandatory harvest reporting to MFWP, no official tally exists for the number of bison harvested during the 2010/11 season. However, MF reported that MT hunters, hunting from November 15th to February 15th, had taken approximately 21 animals out of 44 permits issued. Members of Buffalo Field Campaign track the harvest closely; a spokesperson from BFC stated that a total of 211 animals were killed by all hunters.

TM of CSKT reported that Salish-Kootenai hunters go through mandatory orientation (geography, safety training, and so on) before beginning their hunts. He reported that for the CSKT hunters, hunting from September through January, the total harvest was 81 animals, composed of mostly males on the North Side and females on the West Side of YELL. TM noted some issues of private land encroachment occurred that will be improved next year via improved education of hunters as to the property ownership boundaries. CSKT game wardens conducted various random and weekend patrols during our season. Tom also noted that the CSKT tribal council approved a later hunt for bull bison, but then decided not to exercise this option so as not to conflict with IBMP adaptive management efforts (described elsewhere in this report).

ML reported that the Nez Perce Tribe hunted December–March. Like the CSKT, the NP hunters attend a mandatory orientation before the hunt commences. Additionally, the NP have Conservation Officers in the field during the hunt to insure compliance with Tribal regulations and improve safety, including coordination with other IBMP Partners. The NP hunters took approximately 78 animals (the Tribe is in the process of compiling the final harvest estimate). ML noted that there were two infractions of Tribal Code during the hunt; both have been referred to Tribal Court.

Partners agreed that the goal and challenge of the bison hunt is to provide a safe, quality, fair chase experience for the hunters, while using the harvest as a tool to manage bison. PF reported that permit numbers will be set by MFWP in June so that he could not make any definitive comment on how many permits to expect for the 2011/12 season. He did note that there existed the *possibility* on the North Side for cow/calf permits and/or a late season bull-only hunt.

Operations Overview: North Side (YNP, DOL, FWP)

Rick Wallen provided the North Side overview as follows:

- ~1400 bison migrated into the Gardner Basin this winter
- ~70 animals were captured in early January in an effort to find sero-positive animals for study
- As of this meeting there were ~300 animals in holding at the Stephen's Creek facility.
- Capture operations began in early February and that 875 animals were caught; of those:
 - 272 of 600 tested sero-positive
 - 111 hazing operations were initiated from outside of the park
 - ~30 hazing operations were conducted solely inside of the park
 - 149 calves and yearlings were vaccinated

In 2008 slightly more bison moved into the Gardner Basin. RW noted that the bison entered the Gardner Basin due to large and late snowpack (Snotel sites up to 150% of normal). RW noted that as has been seen before, the biggest drivers of bison movement out of the park are population abundance and snow cover/depth.

CM relayed that in December hazing of bison occurred in Cutler Meadows. Bison were allowed to Cutler Meadows as part of the Partners' adaptive management strategy. The experiment did not work per design—the bison would not stay in Cutler Meadows—hence the hazing effort.

MDOL also noted that some intermingling of cattle and bison did occur on the North Side, all in the same location, likely a dozen times. Intermingling documentation can be found in the open ops reports.

Partner discussion came forward to reiterate Rick's summary that the large outmigration of bison into the Gardner Basin was a result of snow cover, increasing population, as well as no slaughter operations. Some expressed concern that many in the public thought that the large out migration somehow resulted from the mid-March expansion of allowable acreage for bison to inhabit.

Operations Overview: West Side (YNP, DOL, FWP)

Michael Keator described the 2010/11 winter as a tough one on the West Side of YNP. On May 2nd last year a Snotel site near West Yellowstone recorded 0" snow; this year on the same date it measured 33". MK stated that peak melt off and green up were likely two to three weeks behind normal due to the high levels of snow. Similarly, he noted that as of this meeting the Madison River near West Yellowstone was ~250 CFS above average flows and increasing. He expected that the Madison could be flooding in 2-3 weeks making the meadows in the Madison Valley unavailable to bison for foraging.

The number of bison out on the West Side ranged from 50-300 at a time this past winter. YNP assisted MDOL in hazing the bison.

RT noted that some Zone 3 incursions occurred in the Red Canyon area and in the South Fork of the Madison. CM noted that we are already 2 days past the AM plan date to fully haze bison back into the Park but that due to the lingering late season snow, haze back would not be likely to start for at least a week.

All Partners recognized the on-the-ground teams for their hard efforts and good teamwork through the winter of 2010/11.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT CHANGES SINCE DECEMBER 2010 & CURRENT STATUS

Potential areas of state land for moving quarantined bison (FWP)

PF noted that the MFWP is working on an environmental assessment (EA) for the short term placement of quarantined bison to several state wildlife management areas (WMAs), including the Beartooth WMA south of Great Falls, the Marias River WMA near Shelby, and the Spotted Dog WMA near Avon. He emphasized that this is for the "soft release" phase of the quarantine program (i.e., essentially bison roam in large areas but are still subject to yearly testing for five more years). PF noted that the EA covers all bison that have been part of the quarantine program, including those that have been moved to Turner. Also, when available the EA will be posted on-line at the MFWP website.

Tribal interest remains high in the potential to bring the brucellosis-free quarantine bison to tribal lands.

Shipment to slaughter injunction (FWP/DoL)

CM noted that Governor Schweitzer's 90-day executive order to forbid shipment of bison to slaughter using Montana roads expired on Sunday just passed. MDOL is not contemplating capture and shipment to slaughter during the remainder of the 2010/11 season.

Review of Dec2010 Adaptive Management Changes (Rick Wallen/Partners)

May 17 discussion

RW initially described the process undertaken in the fall of 2010 to develop adaptive management (AM) changes. He presented the AM changes agreed upon from the December 2010 and those still in contention, including progress and steps made since December 2010. RW included a briefing statement that is presented essentially in full below (in *italics*), and thus is not reproduced on IBMP.info.

The Partner's discussed the briefing statement shortly, then decided to review the statement overnight and return in the morning to agree in principle to the items in Rick's briefing statement.

****Action item #1** was given to PJ to provide the Partners with the 14 AM changes that were agreed to in principle by the Partners, as well as the NEPA/MEPA sufficiency analysis from counsel (within 2 weeks).

Steps taken since December 2010

- 1) Eliminated 3 adjustments based on request from Montana Department of Livestock [i.e., the consensus on 17 AM actions as described in the notes of the December 2010 IBMP meeting is now down to 14 AM actions].
- 2) Drafted NEPA sufficiency documentation and had it reviewed by DOI and USDA solicitors.
- 3) Solicitors office returned comments on 16 May. Updated version to be distributed soon.

Proposed Adaptive Management Adjustments (14)

Tolerance for Bison on Horse Butte

- 1) Add management action 1.1a, management response 5 as "Allow bison to remain on Horse Butte, where there are no cattle, until the agreed-upon haze-back date and plot the movement patterns and migration routes (without hazing) of bison with GPS collars."

Landowner and Livestock Operator Compensation

- 2) Add management action 1.3b, management response 3 as "Consider developing a new funding source to assist land owners with fencing damage from bison."
- 3) Add management action 1.3d as "Consider a voluntary compensation program to allow for adjusting the dates livestock are released on private land beyond May 15.
 - o Monitoring metric 1: Annually document the number of acres and days made available to bison through the voluntary program (Leads = MDOL and MFWP)."

Public and Treaty Hunting

- 4) Add "Objective 1.4: Recognize tribal treaty rights for hunting bison.
 - o Management action 1.4 a: Allow bison to occupy National Forest System lands within Zone 2 and other areas determined suitable and maximize timing and geographical extents to increase tribal hunt opportunities.
 1. Monitoring metrics:
 - a. Annually document the number of acres and number of days available for tribal hunting. (Leads = USFS and MFWP).
 - b. Annually document the number of bison (by age and sex) harvested by tribal hunters. (Leads = Tribes and MFWP).
 - o Management action 1.4 b: Coordinate management activities that could potentially impact opportunities for tribal members to exercise their treaty rights.
 2. Monitoring metric:
 - a. Annually document the number of hazing opportunities while tribal hunts are occurring. (Leads = MDOL and Tribes).
 3. Management responses:
 - a. Tribal leadership involvement in and signatories to annual Operations Plan.
 - b. Complete evaluation of opportunities for tribal hunting outside of the hunt period for licensed Montana hunters when bison are typically available in greater number (i.e., late winter or spring)."
- 5) Add management action 2.2b, monitoring metric 2 as "Complete an assessment of suitable bison habitat in the Hebgen and Gardiner basin watersheds and explore appropriate new areas with increased tolerance for bison that could accommodate additional hunting opportunities (Leads = MFWP, USFS, and Tribes)."
- 6) Add management action 2.2b, management response 2 as "Adjust conservation zones and allow for increased tolerance in some areas to increase state and treaty hunting opportunities in habitat outside YNP. For example, the Eagle Creek area could be expanded to include Maiden Basin, located north of Little Trail Creek and adjacent to Bison Hunting District 385."

Genetics

- 7) Replace management action 2.1b, monitoring metric 1 with "IBMP managers will consider the findings of genetic analyses that evaluate effective population size, allelic diversity, and effects of various management actions on the genetic diversity of Yellowstone bison and document findings as necessary (Lead = NPS)."

Monitoring and Documentation

- 8) Revise management action 1.1a, monitoring metric 2 as "Annually document the number of bison in the west boundary management area and the number and type of management activities needed to manage bison distribution (Leads = MDOL and NPS)."
- 9) Revise management action 1.1b, monitoring metric 2 as "Annually document the numbers and dates that bison attempt to move north of Yankee Jim Canyon into Tom Miner basin or the Paradise Valley (Leads = MDOL and MFWP)."
- 10) Revise management action 1.1b, monitoring metric 3 "Annually document the number of bison in the north boundary management area and the number and type of management activities needed to manage bison distribution (Leads = MDOL, MFWP, and NPS)."
- 11) Revise management Action 1.1b, Monitoring metric 4 as "Annually collect data to update the relationships between bison herd and/or population size, snow pack, and the number of bison moving near or beyond the boundary of YNP. Consider the findings of analyses evaluating these relationships (Lead = NPS)."
- 12) Revise management action 1.2b, monitoring metric 3 as "Annually document the numbers and dates that bull bison attempt to move north of Yankee Jim Canyon into Tom Miner basin or the Paradise Valley (Leads = MDOL and MFWP)."
- 13) Management Action 3.1c, Monitoring metric 1 "By June 15, determine and document the vaccination status of all "at-risk" cattle in or coming into the Hebgen and Gardiner basins (Leads = MDOL and APHIS)."
- 14) Management Action 3.2a, Monitoring metric 3 "Annually document the amount of strategic fencing erected to minimize bison/cattle interaction (Leads = MDOL, MFWP, and USFS)."

Proposed adjustments eliminated from this compilation (3)

- 15) Goal #1: Increase tolerance for bison outside the north and west boundaries of Yellowstone National Park (YNP) with no unacceptable consequences (e.g. transmission of brucellosis from bison to cattle, unacceptable impacts on public safety and private property).
- 16) Management Action 1.1a, Management responses 5: Allow bison to remain on Horse Butte, where there are no cattle, until calving is essentially completed in early June and plot the movement patterns and migration routes (without hazing) of bison with GPS collars. (Lead=MDOL/NPS)
- 17) Management Action 1.1c, Management responses 1: Managers should consider allowing bison to occupy public lands outside the Park where cattle are never present (e.g. Horse Butte peninsula) until most bison calving is completed (late May or early June) to reduce stress on pregnant females and their newborn calves, while still minimizing the risk of brucellosis transmission to cattle

May 18 discussion

The Partners considered the document from RW (see section directly above) and considered it overnight. At the outset of the meeting on May 18th, they returned briefly to state consensus agreement to the document in principle. Several small changes were requested of RW (mainly associated with responsible party for each action). Tribal partners noted that they will require Tribal Council approval and thus could not sign off on the changes at the table.

RW was tasked with making the requested changes and forwarding the document to the GNF to begin the process for signing off on the 14 AM changes (**Action item 8).

Increased tolerance area on North side of Park (Partners)

The Partners announced an area of increased tolerance for bison in mid-March. The area is largely on lands of the Gallatin National Forest in the north end of the Gardner Basin. Partners reported that there are two lawsuits pending regarding the proposed increased area for tolerance on the North Side of YNP—one lawsuit from Park County, one from the Park County Stockgrowers. Different parties are identified as defendants in each lawsuit. Due to the on-going litigation, Partners were not at liberty to discuss the particulars of the cases. Thus they decided to continue on through the agenda without further discussion of this topic.

Impact of May11 restraining orders against increased tolerance (Partners)

A restraining order was placed against the area of increased tolerance. Again, due to the pending lawsuits the Partners could not undertake substantive discussion of this topic. It was noted that for the time being the restraining order would not have much on-the-ground impact since the bison are largely headed back into the Park to summer ranges.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Review of sideboards for, and timeline of completion for Adaptive Management (Partners)

The Partners reviewed and restated their guidance to the subcommittees for deliverables. That guidance came as the result of a 7 Feb 2011 Partner teleconference. The guidance and deliverables schedule for all subcommittees follows.

Adaptive management committee deliverables and timing—guidance for all committees

- The genesis of these committees came from the Dec2010 IBMP Partner meeting. The four committee areas reflect a lumping of the adaptive management changes that the Partners could not successfully agree on.
- These are not standing committees. Partners' expectation is that the final recommendations from these committees will be complete within one year.
- At the Dec2010 IBMP Partner meeting the Partners completed an exercise to identify concerns, issues, and opportunities within each of the four committee areas. The committees should review the notes from that meeting as a basis for the start of their deliberations (see www.ibmp.info).
- The committees must work within the bounds of the ROD. If a committee chooses to make suggestions outside those bounds they must clearly identify those suggestions as such and define a process for moving beyond the ROD to accomplish their recommendation.
- Given the close inter-relationship of the four committees, committee leads should coordinate work via the leads talking to each other and exchanging email progress reports on their committee's efforts.
- The approach for each committee will be similar to that the Technical Committee has used in the past: reach consensus on where they can, then lay out and seek to understand where and why there are differences.

Deliverables for all four committees

Overview	Deliverable	Timeframe									
Background assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the background of each issue, filling in this matrix: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">social</td> <td style="text-align: center;">political</td> <td style="text-align: center;">biological</td> </tr> <tr> <td>key issues, conflicts, and/or barriers to progress</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>progress to date since the signing of the ROD in this area</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee to propose their objectives, deliverables, and timeframes to Partners for the following 9 months 	social	political	biological	key issues, conflicts, and/or barriers to progress			progress to date since the signing of the ROD in this area			Part of scheduled presentation at the May 2011 IBMP Partner meeting
social	political	biological									
key issues, conflicts, and/or barriers to progress											
progress to date since the signing of the ROD in this area											
Opportunities assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the opportunities for each issue, filling in this matrix: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">social</td> <td style="text-align: center;">political</td> <td style="text-align: center;">biological</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Opportunities (broadly scoped) for adaptive change and likely outcomes if these opportunities are exercised</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>For each of these opportunities, define the potential impact on or risk to the twin IBMP goals</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	social	political	biological	Opportunities (broadly scoped) for adaptive change and likely outcomes if these opportunities are exercised			For each of these opportunities, define the potential impact on or risk to the twin IBMP goals			Part of scheduled presentation at the Aug 2011 IBMP Partner meeting
social	political	biological									
Opportunities (broadly scoped) for adaptive change and likely outcomes if these opportunities are exercised											
For each of these opportunities, define the potential impact on or risk to the twin IBMP goals											
Recommendation and Implementation	A defined listing of adaptive management actions (with responsible party and completion date assigned) that are agreeable to all parties for implementation during the 2011/12 season.	Dec 2011 IBMP Partner meeting									

Reports out by subcommittee chairs (10 min each)

Subcommittee chairs reported on the progress each had made since the December meeting. Three of the four subcommittee chairs provided a briefing statement to the facilitator. These briefing statements are presented below (*in italics*) and will not be posted separately at IBMP.info.

Bison restoration to other locations in the country (Julie Cunningham)

Subcommittee Meeting 5/10/11. Attended by: Karen Loveless, Julie Cunningham, Marty Zaluski, Arnie Dood, Rick Wallen, Jack Rhyan, Jim Stone.

Existing resources identified:

- IUCN report at http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/american_bison_report.pdf
- State of MT draft background document regarding bison, completed but not yet available
- Eric Sanderson paper in Conservation Biology facilitated by IUCN
- Other states' bison management (UT, AZ, AK) and other models in Canada and Mexico

Issues identified:

- **Legal standing** of bison as livestock or wildlife was agreed upon as one of the most major issues causing complication with restoration. Bison may be classified as extinct, domestic, or not classified at all. This definition may change with political will. Notably, ALL tribes surveyed (60-70% so far) have identified bison as wildlife on their reservations.
- **Public perception** of bison tends to be muddled: people do not always think of bison as wildlife
- **Disease** is an obvious consideration
- **Cattle gene introgression** is an issue for many herds, although not from Yellowstone source. Notably, tribes can be on all sides of this issue.
- **Confusion within groups:** who is planning what?
- **Multiple jurisdictions** of land ownerships will be needed for sustainable bison populations.

Opportunities:

- There are YNP **bison available** for transplant through the quarantine process
- **Places exist** for reintroduction potential, but a lot of ground work needs to be done before they are ready.
- **Public process** should continue: both public outreach and even information sharing with state legislature. Recent legislative session was active in considering bison-related bills.
- **Embryo-transfer, contraception, and sterilization** are **tools available** to prevent spread of disease and prevent spread of cattle genes when considering bison movement generally.
- **Disease management** occurs with sheep and **other species** – there could be lessons learned therein.

Tribal management summary:

- There are tribes in 19 states with 52 herds of bison (about 12,000 animals) and 1 million acres of land. Jim gets requests to move bulls and cows for genetic concerns, and they move ~500 animals out of the national parks each year, but get requests for 2 times that many.
- Majority are sourced from Wind Cave and Teddy Roosevelt National Park
- Fort Peck has agreed to host a herd of YNP animals and would disperse out to tribes wanting this genetic lineage, and there is broad-scale interest in this.

Quarantined bison summary:

- Corwin Springs: 61 bison, 7 are calving (so 68 by end of June). They will be testing 6 months after last calf is born, so by December 2011, all should be ready for movement if negative.
- Turner Ranch: between 98-101 bison (before 2011 calves born). Still need to verify how many, when they will be ready, and how many Turner will keep?

Subcommittee future:

- Review background documents, discuss principles and lessons learned.
- Quantify the continuum of “domestic to wild” on which bison occur, and situations where bison exist under each.
- Expand understanding of how many quarantined bison exist where, under what terms, and when they will be ready for movement.

Recommendations for continued conversation with the managers:

- Continue finding opportunities for expansion around Yellowstone National Park
- Determine IBMP role in disposition of currently held animals (quarantined bison at Turner's and Corwin Springs) and identification of how many do we have, when they will be available, and where they are.
- Discuss what role quarantine of YNP bison will play into the future. Should we keep it going to create an on-going stream of animals to support restoration efforts in the future?
- How else can IBMP support efforts underway across MT and other locations?

Increasing habitat (Jodie Canfield)

Meeting notes from Helena, 4-11-11

Present: J. Canfield, R. Wallen, T. McDonald, M. Zaluski, J. Cunningham, K. Loveless

IBMP manager sideboards for subcommittees (verbatim):

- The group should return to work that Rick W, Lisa S, Tom L had done in the past. Some mapping efforts are already available.
- The group should look at issues of habitat and they reconcile with current zone definitions. Recommendations associated with changing zone boundaries are acceptable.
- The geography under discussion is considered limited. For example, do not consider ID, Paradise Valley, and Madison Valley. Looking at the Taylor Fork is ok.
- Consider restoration of existing habitat that is already available but of poor quality as one route to increasing habitat.
- Consider for discussion the relationship between wildfire and bison; for example how wildfire impacts travel corridors and habitat quality.

Background Assessment:

In the 2008 adaptive management measures developed by the IBMP partners, increasing habitat for bison is identified (for example: management action 2.2b to "Complete an assessment of suitable bison habitat in the Hebgen and Gardiner Basin watersheds and explore appropriate new areas with increased tolerance for bison that could accommodate additional hunting opportunities"). Specific assessments for the north and west sides of YNP, respectively, were completed by FWP (Craig Jourdonnais, Jan06 and Tom Lemke, Feb06). In addition, Rick Wallen used radio-telemetry data from a subset of bison in YNP and developed a model of preferred bison habitat (yearlong) based on Grizzly bear CEM cover types. He then looked at potential habitat based on those cover types and found that female groups of bison used only about 1/3 of the potential habitat in YNP. Some of the potential habitat may be used by male bison. Fire may be one way to open up some of this habitat to be colonized by bison.

This model was also applied to the Gardiner Basin (USFS) landscape assessment watersheds, and to Hebgen Basin, as well as the Cabin Creek/Lee Metcalf areas and the Taylor Fork drainage. The committee used all of this information in identifying issues, conflicts, barriers, and progress areas.

We noted two general items that apply to both the North and West areas discussed below:

- Capture facilities can have the effect of bison going back into the park to avoid harassment
- Need to consider a conflict resolution program (and appropriate tools) similar to other species managed by FWP (damage hunts, game damage compensation).

NORTH SIDE DISCUSSION

Focus on recent adaptive management change to seasonally allow bison south of Yankee Jim Canyon.

Progress: agreement on expansion of zone 2 boundary in Gardiner Basin; identification and construction of bison guard on hwy; identification of fencing and additional bison guard needs on NFS lands, either side of the Yellowstone River.

Observed bison habitat use (Rick Wallen) is that bison flip flop to either side of the river to hit patches of productive habitat.

Issues:

- 1) Potential breaches of the zone boundary by bison and implications relative to Dome Mountain Game Range (competition for forage with a declining elk population) and Private lands where bison are tolerated; difficulty in hazing bison back etc. Potential contingencies:
 - Construct barrier across the river

- *Install cameras along fences as well as additional monitoring of bison in the area (work out specific agreements among the partners for who, what, where, when).*
 - *Develop MOU with adjacent landowners*
 - *Use FWP contract to haze bison off private lands in Dome Mountain area*
 - *Discuss the idea of becoming more tolerant of male bison that colonize areas outside of the zone boundary that might become yearlong residents and increase hunting opportunity on public lands (Marty does not agree with this).*
 - *Improve or create additional habitat on NFS lands near Cutler Meadow (understand tradeoffs to other wildlife from such practices as Rx burning sagebrush)*
 - *“Push” bison to suitable habitats (e.g., lake area above Cutler Meadow)*
 - *Explore agreements with landowners to leave 2nd cutting crops*
- 2) *Bison impacts on private lands (landscaped areas, gardens, etc.) in the expanded area. Potential contingencies:*
- *Educational efforts about fencing for bison*
 - *Provide funding for fencing on private lands (role for conservation groups?)*
- 3) *Increase risk of disease transmission (female bison near livestock Feb-May)*
Potential contingencies:
- *Appropriate infrastructure (fencing)*
 - *Conservation easement agreements; land exchanges*
 - *Encourage running of livestock classes that are not at risk*
- 4) *Public safety along highway (road cuts will be attractive to bison due to plant phenology and salt, moisture). Potential contingencies:*
- *Signing; reduce speed limits*
 - *Education efforts*
- 5) *Social intolerance for increasing #'s of bison outside of YNP. Potential contingencies:*
- *Develop trigger points for removal action outside the zone based on sex and number of bison; tighter monitoring requirement for females*

WEST SIDE DISCUSSION

Summary:

- *Bison use of the west side peaks in April-May and seems to be less related to overall population levels (relative to the north side of the Park).*
- *Habitat Model may be under-estimating suitable habitat in the Taylor Fork*
- *There is suitable bison habitat in the Taylor Fork but no real plausible way for bison to find it since bison typically find new habitat by moving through valley bottoms*
- *Potential conflict with guest ranch livestock (e.g. horse grazing)*
- *USFS grazing allotments in Taylor Fork are vacant and targeted for formal closure*
- *Suitable habitat is found south of West Yellowstone along park and Idaho boundaries; looks like a good area to take a closer look at relative to habitat quality, natural or existing barriers, cattle and recreational use, etc.*
- *Not much gain in looking at the area west on 87 (toward Quake Lake) since there isn't much habitat, it would be hard to haze bison back from a breach, and we don't want bison getting to the Madison Valley.*
- *Limited habitat in Cabin Creek and Lee Metcalf; could be there in the summer, but not sure where they might go to winter.*

- *Current bison use on Horse Butte has been problematic in recent years. Horse Butte is only a part of a bigger habitat-use system for bison. Recommend that we take a closer look at changes in “temporal tolerance” (earlier or later), “management changes” (such as changes in hazing intensity and the use of capture facilities to deter bison movements, population caps), and “changes in boundaries”.*

NEXT STEPS

Looking at areas that have potential for increased bison tolerance, for example the Taylor Fork and south of YNP.

Population modulation & resources vs. population (PJ White)

This subcommittee has not yet met so will report to the Partners at their next meeting. PJ mentioned that the group will be using models from Tom Hobbs.

The charge to the subcommittee from the Partners from the December 2010 meeting is repeated below:

Issues and concerns

- Biggest issue is how to avoid large trap and slaughter events?
- What methods can we use to control population? How can we best understand when we are approaching need for population control and “get ahead of the curve” so as to avoid major ship and slaughter events?
- Concurrence that limits to population of bison in the Park are legitimate but that they are part of the first two topics on “Marty’s list” (i.e., items 1) and 2) directly above in this section).
- Who decides and what are the decision criteria for when to start and stop ship and slaughter operations?
- Recognize that all of these issues are linked and also that we must move on all fronts at once if we are to meet the twin mandates of the IBMP.
- For hunting we must look at available habitat, landowner tolerance, and risk of disease transmission.

Opportunities

Need to continue modeling efforts to better understand movement as a function of bison population, snow pack, and other drivers.

Urgency

Expand hazing and hunting opportunities this winter. Hunting could be expanded from 44 to 144 animals. Tribes could consider hunt on the west side of the Yellowstone.

Prevalence reduction (Rick Wallen)

While the subcommittee had not met, Rick provided a review of the Partner-requested materials, as follows.

Issues

- Persistence of brucellosis infection in wild bison is driven by females becoming infected and subsequently shedding bacteria during parturition events or through infecting their offspring while nursing young calves (Cheville et al. 1998)*
- Not all seropositive females are transmission vectors (Roffe et al. 1999). Some seropositive females contribute to herd immunity.*
- Increasing herd immunity is an important feature of preventing brucellosis transmission among bison.*

4. Delivering vaccine to a high proportion of vaccine eligible wild bison will be challenging and ongoing efforts will be needed to improve methods.
5. There are competing opinions on the value of preserving non-infectious seropositive bison in the population.
6. There is no quick and easy way to reduce brucellosis prevalence and at the same time preserve a wild population of bison. Slow and steady progress may prove beneficial results.

Barriers

1. Agencies all have different levels of motivation to reduce disease prevalence
2. Hunting occurs when vaccination implementation could be most effective.
3. Not consistently vaccinating bison that migrate to boundary areas. West side vaccinates 5; North side vaccinates 284
4. The agencies do not work collaboratively to reduce prevalence in the bison population
5. A decision to implement a vaccination program on a larger scale is tied to progress in the other workgroups.

Opportunities

1. We have capture facilities at both boundaries and annual opportunities to hand vaccinate bison. (Albeit the proportion of the population changes from year to year due to the influence of weather in driving bison to boundary ranges)
2. We have opportunities to learn about how bison react to remote delivery vaccination outside the park as an initial test of the feasibility in implementing remote delivery. This was identified as a way to gain knowledge of impacts caused by remote vaccination and to phase in remote vaccination (described in the FEIS p 191)

Progress to Date

1. Some evidence exists to show brucellosis vaccines can better resist infection and subsequent shedding of bacteria than non-vaccinates when exposed to an infectious event. Numerous studies conducted by ARS (Steve Olsen)
2. An EIS for an in park remote vaccination program has been drafted and vetted in public review. Content of public comment has been completed and an FEIS could be available for internal agency review later this year.
3. Encapsulation of vaccine in to a delivery vessel has been initially tested (Christie et al. 2006, Olsen et al. 2006), a replication of this method has been attempted in 2008 (Olsen pers. comm.) and a production protocol has been drafted to resolve early problems encountered by Olsen (Grainger 2011). The protocol is ready for additional testing.

Goals

1. Develop a summary of uncertain parameters and competing hypotheses that must be evaluated and/or resolved
2. Develop alternatives to consider for reducing disease prevalence

* * * * *

At the completion of the subcommittee reviews, the Partners provided guidance to the subcommittee chairs. They recognized that some subcommittee recommendations for AM changes may have to be put on hold pending the outcome of current lawsuits. The Partners gave the subcommittees three charges to be completed for the August 2011 IBMP meeting, which serve as ****Action item 2:**

- prioritized list of AM opportunities with those that can be done now; subcommittees are empowered to engage Partners before Aug meeting for AM opportunities they feel could be implemented before August
- description of overlap points of subcommittees
- complete duties as assigned in Feb 7 telecon and follow up notes on the telecon

PROCESS, PROCEDURE, AND NEXT STEPS FOR ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The Partners set a goal for themselves to better scope their process for developing and documenting adaptive management changes. While the effort to manage bison adaptively has been underway for many years—and strengthened greatly with the publication of an adaptive management document in December 2008—there has not been single, clear adaptive management process . The following discussion was slated at helping create that process.

Better clarification of roles, responsibilities of tribal entities (Tribal Partners)

Tribal Partners ML, TM, and JS noted that each Tribal Partner comes to the table with unique roles and responsibilities, both to their tribe and to the Partners. While each Partner operates under a common ROD and set of agreed upon AM actions, they retain their own independent goals and responsibilities. It was noted that while concurrence between the Partners allows for common action, non-concurrence does not relieve individual Partners from the necessity of completing their own roles and responsibilities (these thoughts agreed to by all Partners at the table).

An important point for the tribal entities is that unlike many of the agency Partners in the IBMP, the tribal entities do not have lines on a map to define their jurisdictions of interest and control.

The question becomes: How do the Partners embody those roles and responsibilities into a formal process? Protocol often seems to be missing, for example in notice period for meetings, procedures for Partner phone calls, and methods for making and documenting decisions.

The tribal Partners would like to be proactive in setting these processes to better help guide IBMP progress, to eliminate misunderstanding, and to help the public understand how decisions have been made.

A suggestion was made that the best place to capture such protocol would be in the context of an operating procedures document. Some discussion centered on whether this protocol guidance should be captured in the existing *Field Operating Procedure*, or in a newly created *Partner Operating Procedure*.

An action to create a first draft operating principles (**action item 3, to be complete for the August meeting) was given to PF, BM, ML, TM, and JS. As described by the Partners, the outcome of this effort will be:

- Review and update *Field Operating Procedures*
- Create draft version of *Partner Operating Procedures*

The idea of whether these two documents should be in left as individual documents or be turned into a single document was left to the team working on this issue to propose.

A short brainstorming session led to the following issues to be covered under the *Partner Operating Procedures*:

- 1) Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the three Tribal Partners as contrasted with the ROD signatory agencies (ML, TM, JS agreed to draft this section). Describe a set of principles about how the Tribes and agencies interact.
- 2) How is business accomplished between IBMP meetings?
- 3) What is the decision making process? What does consensus mean?
- 4) How are communications between the Partners accomplished?
- 5) Roles and responsibilities of Partners
- 6) Methods for capture of AM changes
- 7) Methods for implementation of AM changes
- 8) Meeting and phone call procedures

Transfer of bison to tribes (Tribal Partners)

Tribal Partners described that their overall goal is to preserve and expand the bison genome, and to provide an outlet for wild bison. They have concern that Tribal entities are setting up lands to accept YELL bison for transfer but no bison are forthcoming. It was noted that the Ute Indian Tribe does have bison living in effectively wild conditions.

An open discussion was then held regarding improving the process of transfer of bison to Tribes, with the following key points made:

- The process needs to have less red tape.
- The process needs to be defined as a step-by-step procedure resulting in the transfer of bison once all steps have been successfully completed. It was noted that ITBC has such a procedure that could be shared with the Partners.
- The process needs to be set up to minimize potential for obstructionism by those opposed to bison transfer away from YNP (i.e., the process should seek to address all issues).
- Partners need to recognize that transfer of bison to Tribes is a positive step in helping the Partners meet their twin goals.
- It would be useful to have a set of quarantine procedures written up by APHIS describing methods of safe quarantine and release of bison. BM agreed to provide this document based on APHIS quarantine studies (by the end of 2011; ****Action item 4**, also placed in Parked Items list).

PF noted that MFWP is looking at four locations to fulfill the original plan to transfer quarantined bison. The first cohort was transferred the Turner; the second cohort has the *potential* to be transferred to numerous State of MT Wildlife Management areas and/or Tribal entities.

A discussion ensued regarding the question of who has the responsibility for operational quarantine. (Operational quarantine occurs after the release of bison from the quarantine process. Operational quarantine, under current APHIS protocol, requires bison to be tested yearly for 5 years after being declared brucellosis free from the quarantine process. Bison can roam essentially freely during operational quarantine. After successfully passing the five years of annual testing, the bison are allowed to roam free with no further human intervention, at least with respect to brucellosis testing). The process flow for bison transfer away from YNP was described as

bison from YNP → quarantine → operational quarantine → final bison placement location

The locations and responsibilities for each of these activities is not currently clear and as such the nuts-and-bolts process for transfer of bison within Montana—much less to other states, tribes, or countries—is unknown. Much Partner discussion ensued on the potential process. PF provided several assumptions that might serve as the basis for a future transfer process:

- In Montana, MDOL's jurisdiction ends when bison are declared disease-free; from that point on MFWP, as the state's wildlife manager, is solely responsible for the bison.
- The MFWP Commission will want to have a role in determining the transfer of bison within MT (to tribes, WMAs, or other locations) and to locations outside MT

Based on the discussions, the facilitator provides the following matrix as one *possible* process flow for bison transfer away from YNP.

Possible responsibility matrix for the transfer of brucellosis-free bison away from YNP

		Bison Transfer Process Step				
		Bison from YNP	Quarantine		Operational quarantine	Final bison placement location
Current Scenario	<i>Animal location</i>	YNP (or just departed from there)	Gardner Basin quarantine facilities	<i>Bison considered to be disease free after leaving quarantine</i>	Same as final placement location for bison	State of MT WMA's and/or Tribal lands
	<i>Jurisdiction decision for moving bison to next location</i>	YNP and APHIS	APHIS and MFWP		MFWP	Jurisdictional control of bison in the wild depends on final placement location
Potential Future Scenario (i.e., with APHIS quarantine process complete)	<i>Animal location</i>	YNP (or just departed from there)	?	<i>Bison considered to be disease free after leaving quarantine</i>	? (likely State lands across the USA and/or Tribal lands and/or other)	NA
	<i>Jurisdiction decision for moving bison to next location</i>	YNP	? (likely release by MT State Veterinarian and acceptance by receiving State or Tribal Veterinarian and wildlife agency)		? (likely State or Tribal Veterinarian and wildlife agencies)	Jurisdictional control of bison in the wild depends on final placement location

The Partners recognized that the key next step following the current MFWP environmental assessment for the transfer of the quarantine bison is determining a location (and associated facilities) for operational quarantine. They asked the AM subcommittee working on bison restoration to other locations in the country (chair Julie Cunningham) to include as part of its tasks (a) process flow details and (b) suggestion on obtaining funding (e.g., grants, NGOs funding) for creation of the operational quarantine facilities (**Action item 5). Both MZ and BM, when asked directly, stated their support for seeking funding for operational quarantine facilities.

PJ noted that YNP and ITBC have a documented process laying out a possible method of transfer to tribes. The document includes issues of operations, funding, social, and political concerns. The Partners requested that PJ and JS provide the document for the next IBMP meeting, plus make a presentation on the document at the August IBMP meeting (**Action item 6). Partners requested that PJ and JS include in the discussion social issues associated with quarantine, transfer, and receiving of bison (one possibility mentioned was to look back at record of public tribal meetings on potentially receiving quarantined bison [e.g., Wind Rivers]).

A suggestion was made that the Partners need a public relation campaign to explain the benefits of the transfer of bison away from YNP as an integral part of achieving the twin goals of the IBMP. This item was added to the parked item list.

Two concluding thoughts were presented by the Partners as this discussion ended: (1) it will continue to be a YELL bison issue even after the bison are declared disease free and transferred to their final

placement location; and (2) the bison issue is of such importance to Tribes that some tribal elections have hinged on the candidates' positions on this issue.

Process for Adaptive Management Changes (Partners)

The Partners recognize that the process for documenting AM changes has been problematic to follow, both for the Partners and for the public. The agenda for this section of the Partner meeting called out a number of questions and needs: (1) How AM changes are accomplished (Partners); (2) Documentation of changes—creation of a master AM document; (3) Public notification; (4) Need for NEPA &/or MEPA sufficiency testing; and (5) Concurrence requirements / process. The discussion was compressed to cover these items as one, and with recognition that a group had already been assigned the task of creating a Partner Operating Procedures (see Action item 3).

The Partners would like (a) to get to one repository for documentation of AM changes, and (b) determine a process for creating the changes (including how the process occurs when AM changes are made between IBMP meetings). A statement was made that the documentation needs to go back in time before the AM document published in Dec2008 (this as a partial response to the Mar2008 GAO report). Another statement was made that a set of AM changes carried out in 2006 are already reflected in the Dec2008 document.

GNF agreed to take on the effort to collect all AM changes from 2005 to present and to create a process for the yearly collection hereafter of AM changes made during that year (**Action item 7). The collection will include NEPA and MEPA sufficiency reviews.

In considering the process for collecting AM changes, the Partners provided these goals:

1. Update the AM plan annually and publish along with the IBMP Annual Report;
2. Between annual report cycles, the lead IBMP Partner is responsible to capture and document all AM changes made;
3. Included in the capture will be an increased effort to capture AM changes in the notes of IBMP meetings and telecons.

CITIZENS' WORKING GROUP REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Overview

Ariel Overstreet (Montana Stockgrowers) and Matt Skoglund (Natural Resources Defense Council) provided an update on the formation and deliberations of the Citizens Working Group (CWG). In the discussion that follows, comments came from Ariel and Matt, as well as through open discussion with CWG members in the audience.

Matt and Ariel reported that the group is diverse and well represented. The group has met monthly since January, following an exploratory meeting regarding CWG formation in Nov2010. They provided strong praise for facilitator Virginia Tribe and her interest-based approach.

As part of the report out, the CWG was requested to respond to two action items from the Dec2011 meeting: (1) CWG to come back to the next IBMP meeting with a recommendation on Partner role at CWG meeting; (2) CWG to provide an estimate for the number of meetings and facilitation funds CWG expects to require.

Partner Role and Communication

Matt and Ariel stated the CWG's appreciation that Pat Flowers has been attending CWG meetings as the Partner representative. They stated interest in having other Partners attend. Many of the Partners stated their desire to stay "at arms' length" from the CWG to allow the CWG to proceed without bias from Partner oversight. That said, MZ, CM, ME explicitly stated their willingness to attend a CWG meeting if the group deemed their presence helpful (other Partners seconded this idea). MZ repeated an earlier statement that he will look extremely seriously at any consensus agreement resulting from CWG efforts. Partners continued to state their belief that they should not all be at CWG meetings as they desire not to bias or stifle citizen creativity.

In the interest of bettering communication, the Partners requested that the CWG provide its meeting notes to Partners; GNF will provide Virginia Tribe with the current Partner mailing list (**Action item 9). The request is for meeting minutes only, not the full suite of mailings going out to CWG members. Some discussion centered on the potential of a CWG website, Facebook group, and/or mailing list. The Partners gave negative feedback on hosting the CWG website on the existing IBMP.info site. The Park County website was also mentioned as a possible host.

As Partner representative to the CWG, PF noted that there has been some confusion from within the CWG with respect to AM changes. Some within the group have wondered how the Partners could proceed with AM changes without CWG input. Pat and the Partners stated clearly that Partner work is continuing concurrent with CWG meetings—the fact that there is a CWG does not change the Partners' individual or collective charters to make decisions and carry out their responsibilities. Still, Partner actions should not limit the CWG process. Similarly, all parties should recognize that the Partner actions might be ahead of CWG deliberations in preparation for making a recommendation to the Partners.

Becky Weed stated that the CWG did not think that the Partners had taken action without CWG consent, nor that the CWG thought that consent was needed. She did protest, however, that Partner actions since the Dec2010 meeting had not been transparent (in a similar light, Stephany Seay requested that a web cam be made available at the Stephens Creek facility). She also stated no concern about whether the Partners or CWG were ahead, but ideally hoped the two groups were walking in tandem.

Members of the CWG stated concern that they needed access and information to develop the best options. Some within the CWG expressed disappointment that they were not allowed to visit the Stephens Creek facility during a recent tour of the Gardner Basin. DW responded that the Park believed the timing was bad and felt it unclear what the CWG would gain from such a visit. There was general recognition that the CWG did not speak as one voice in the request for the tour; Matt stated that the CWG would attempt to better coordinate its requests of the Partners, and make them with more advance notice, in the future.

Some members of the public but not in the CWG expressed concern that the CWG was becoming closed door and not taking input from those "outside the circle". Matt and Ariel stated that not to be the case, but did set forward the CWG's agreed upon guidelines that attendees must try to be present as often as possible, and that they cannot enter the process and reset it (i.e., they must accept where the group has arrived at from its past deliberations and be willing to go forward from there). They said that the goal of the CWG is to be as inclusive as possible. Still, the CWG discussed some difficulty in the determining how to best take comment from the public at its meetings (currently being done via written comment cards). Patricia Dowd noted that she had great information exchange with non-CWG public simply by going into the audience and talking with them (similar statement from Becky Weed).

While the CWG represents a large and diverse group of interests, Becky Weed noted that a big missing entity in the group is representation from the Park County Stockgrowers.

CWG Funding and Timeline

A good deal of discussion centered on funding for the CWG (facilitation is the principle cost). Partners requested that the CWG provide a timeline for their activities. The CWG currently is planning to meet monthly for one year (i.e., through Jan2012) and then present their recommendations, either at the following regularly scheduled IBMP meeting or at a specially requested IBMP/CWG meeting (to be determined). As the goal of the Jan2011 facilitated meeting was to determine if there was sufficient interest to form a CWG, real work beginning in Feb2011. Thus 13 facilitated CWG meetings are scoped.

The Partners expressed some angst regarding funding beyond their initial commitment (equivalent of five meetings, or those CWG meetings to be held Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, and May 2011). State agencies stated strong support of the process but currently have no budget to commit more funds to the CWG effort. Several Partners asked if the Tribes would be willing to provide funding. Tribal representatives stated the need to return to Tribal Council or leadership before making any commitment of funds. Dan Wenk of YNP committed to funding another of the meetings, taking CWG funding through the Jun2011 meeting. Thus funding for an additional seven meetings is needed (i.e., Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec 2011, and Jan 2012).

- Many ideas were provided for dealing with CWG funding, including:
- Drop facilitation completely or in lieu of that have each Partner provide a facilitator from within their own ranks at each meeting. This idea met with strong opposition due to (a) the strength of Virginia Tribe's skills and (b) the need for continuity and direction across the full span of CWG meetings.
 - The Partners requested that the CWG begin to make inquiries about funding for future facilitation through grants or NGOs, and report back at the August meeting (**Action item 10).
 - Continued and full payment by Partners for facilitation as a way to show endorsement of the CWG process.
 - Possible facilitator payment by a single NGO. This idea was largely dismissed due to a concern put forth by Whitney Leonard that the payment might be seen as the slanting of the CWG recommendations to only the interest group paying. MZ noted that NGO funding could work if the funding body was not associated with any interests in the ongoing discussions.
 - Spreading out the existing funding across many months, i.e., meet every two or three months instead of monthly. This idea received little endorsement as most felt that with so much work to be done and ground to be covered, monthly meetings made sense.

Members of the CWG noted that prior to the current discussion they had not known that there was a funding issue associated with the CWG's work. They expressed willingness to work on the issue now that it had been brought to their attention.

In closing the discussion, ME proposed that the Partners fund the CWG facilitation through the end of the fiscal year (i.e., through the CWG Sep2011 meeting), in part to assure CWG work would continue through the next IBMP meeting (Aug2011). MZ stated agreement with one more round of funding and Partners provided consensus agreement to Mary's proposal, given funding constraints already put forth. This consensus then resulted in two action items:

- ****Action item 11**—By June 15, the CWG is to provide lead Partner GNF a final verification of the CWG schedule and number of meetings planned.
- ****Action item 12**—GNF will lead the Partner effort to develop funding for the CWG through the September meeting. Task to be completed by July 1 with verification provided to the CWG of the existence of funding for their meetings through the Sep2011 meeting. Also all Partners to consider ability to help fund the Citizen Working Group through Jan 2012. Initial \$10k funded through June 2011. Meetings cost ~\$2k per meeting. YNP committed to funding Jun2011 meeting. Thus meetings in Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec, and Jan are still unfunded, requiring \$14,000 more.

Future Plans

In response to a question about its future plans, CWG members stated that they expected their focus over the next 6 months to be on three areas: population control, sero-prevalence, and increasing habitat. The CWG did not see itself as participating in the Partner AM Subcommittees but did request that it be able to interchange reports and other information with those subcommittees. The CWG hopes to have a future meeting in West Yellowstone. A suggestion was made that the Partners piggyback a meeting of their own (whether formal IBMP meeting or open house was not discussed) with the CWG meeting. This idea was added to the Parked Item list for future consideration.

With respect to final recommendations, ME asked that the CWG give the longest advance notice possible for when they would like to present their final recommendations to the Partners.

PARTNER BRIEFINGS

Before the start of this section on Partner Briefings of multiple topics, ME suggested and took on an action item (**Action item 13) to follow up with Park County Commissioner Malone regarding past Partner response to his questions. In public testimony Commissioner Malone had stated that he did not believe questions of his from past IBMP meetings had been properly addressed by the Partners.

Christian—Any response back from letter sent out to County Commissioners on IBMP Partner willingness to attend public meetings held by the counties?

No response from the County Commissioners has been received regarding this offer.

Brian—Update on the expected publication of final APHIS rule to revise the current brucellosis program to operate under designated surveillance zones

APHIS is already operating under the Interim Rule for designated surveillance zones. The comment period for the final rule closed 11 Mar 2011. A working group will develop the final rule. Principles from APHIS, states, and Tribes are working holding discussions on both brucellosis and tuberculosis. Four listening sessions around the country will be held for public input, including June 1 in Bozeman.

Public comment will be taken into account during the writing of the final rule. APHIS currently expects little or no change to the final rule from the interim rule. The final rule will be put out for comment late in 2012. In the meantime, operations will continue under the interim rule.

Pat—Status of signatures on RTR agreement from NP and GNF special agent

The Nez Perce Tribe has signed and now it will go on to the GNF.

Mary, PJ—status of lawsuit from environmental organizations & others to stop federal agencies from killing bison

An appeal has been filed with the 9th Circuit Court. The court asked for mediation; the mediation proposal was just received and is currently under review.

Separate from this topic, ME noted that the Alliance for the Wild Rockies has filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue regarding the hazing of bison.

Pat—Status of transfer of quarantine animals to Turner and pending lawsuit

The first cohort remains on Turner property. A lawsuit is pending meaning MFWP is not at liberty to engage in further discussion on this matter.

Separately another Partner noted that the second half of the second cohort is currently calving. They will be tested in 6 months and if sero-negative they could be transferred under APHIS rules.

A question was posed regarding whether the Turner agreement had a provision for annual reporting. MZ said that yes there is.

PJ (RW)—Status of draft EIS for remote brucellosis vaccination

Still in process. The DEIS has three alternatives: (1) vaccinate at capture facilities (no change); (2) do #1 plus remotely vaccinate calves and yearlings; (3) do #2 plus remotely vaccinate adult females if in first two trimesters. The public comment period ended 24 Sep 2010 and comments have been compiled and analyzed. Final report is expected by Christmas. NPS expects to have the ROD published by the end of 2012.

Pat—Update on Montana legislature bills

PF noted that there were many bills dealing with bison during the recently finished Montana legislative session. Pat tried to give accounting all of them. Given the complexity of the topic, his effort was much appreciated by the Partners and public. Following is a compilation of Pat's summary.

Bill	Quick summary	Status
SB 144	Revised laws for the transfer of bison. Prohibited free roaming bison in state of MT.	Died in committee
SB 148	Mandated MDOL notification to private landowners.	Missed deadline
SB 174	Prohibited funding of the potential transfer of quarantined bison to Spotted Dog WMA.	Passed, vetoed by governor
SB 184	Allows archery as a method of hunting for bison.	Passed
SB 211	Clarify MFWP authority to manage bison. Requires MFWP to develop a plan for moving bison throughout the state.	Passed
SB 207	Provides definition of what are domestic versus wild bison. Establishes the requirement for a transportation permit for moving bison.	Passed
HB 187 (this # was somewhat in question)	Bill from Mike Phillips to manage bison as wildlife with MFWP being the only management agency with jurisdiction.	Did not pass
HB 214	Manage bison as livestock.	Died in committee
HB 318	Provided for county oversight.	Passed, vetoed by governor

2011 MEETING SCHEDULE

The Partners discussed the meeting schedule for the remainder of 2011. Some thoughts were put forth about needing another IBMP meeting, open house, or some other fall presence in the Gardner Basin. The discussion led to a short debate about transferring the planned August meeting from Polson to Chico or Gardner. However, the Partners instead recognized that having the meeting in Polson as planned had great benefits, as well. Those benefits include, as described by TM, the opportunities to meet with CSKT elders, to visit the National Bison Refuge, to learn from the CSKT about their methods of fencing and handling bison, to compare and contrast elk and bison fencing, to review how the CKST handle bison safety and movement (particularly highway crossings), and more.

Following this discussion the Partners decided to retain the meeting schedule agreed upon earlier, but add a fall field trip to the Gardner Basin, as shown in the following table.

Date	Time (expected)	Location	Host	Notes
Aug 4-5	9 AM 8/4 to 5 PM 8/5	Polson, MT	CSKT	Expect Aug 4 to be full day tour of National Bison Range and related CSKT programs. Aug 5 to be 830 AM to 5 PM regular IBMP meeting. The public is invited to attend both the tour and, as always, the regularly scheduled IBMP meeting.
Sep 21 (back up date of Oct 25)	Time TBD	Gardner Basin	GNF	Based on the large interest shown during the Partners' Open House held in Gardner in mid-May, the Partners decided to have a field trip in the Gardner Basin in the fall. Details forthcoming.
Nov 30-Dec 1	Noon to noon	Chico Hot Springs, MT	MFWP	MFWP expected to take over as lead IBMP Partner Nov 1, 2011

Parked items for future meetings

The following parked items list is to be considered as a possible source of agenda items for future meetings. The list is carried forward to, and refreshed after, each IBMP meeting.

- (1) MFWP to sit down with landowners and identify AM opportunities based on their constraints
- (2) Plan winter West Side field trip to occur in winter of 2012.
- (3) NPS to share experience in managing bison interactions with traffic along roadways. Partners to engage with Montana Department of Transportation to initiate a discussion regarding traffic safety in the bison conservation area. A request was also made to include the CWG and/or Buffalo Field Campaign in the presentation with a topic area of "living with bison". Some discussion that this item should be led by MFWP.
- (4) A request was made by MFWP that the Partners begin talking about conservation easement funding. A statement was also made that the CWG could be helpful in this realm.
- (5) Brian M to provide a set of quarantine procedures describing methods of safe quarantine and release of bison.
- (6) The Partners need a public relation campaign to explain the benefits of transferring bison away from YNP as an integral part of achieving the twin goals of the IBMP.
- (7) A suggestion was made that the Partners piggyback a meeting of their own (whether formal IBMP meeting or open house was not discussed) with the CWG meeting.

Selected comments from public

The following 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. The facilitator has especially 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.

Names associated with comments are available from the facilitator. They are not included here, however, to facilitate focus on the comment rather than the speaker. Line breaks in the numbering indicate a new speaker.

MAY 17TH PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Speaker claimed high credentials and involvement in bison issue up to 2000. In returning to the discussion today, now seeing that what used to be controlled by the public is today all agency controlled.
2. Statement that the base problem is that the US Dept of Defense wants a ready pool of brucellosis (a reference made to Louisiana state) for the purpose of weapon-izing rats by infecting them with brucellosis. Rats could then be dropped into problem areas such as Iraq. The bison provide a simple repository as the *brucella* virus is not as easy to store in a laboratory as anthrax.
3. Statement that government means "God over men".
4. Statement that politicians want to rule other people.
5. Request that meetings be recorded to provide record of what was said for later reference.
6. Open question: Who is paying for all this?

7. Statement of appreciation of the complexity of the problem.
8. Statement of hope that the quarantined bison can move to operational quarantine and then be moved to locations outside the Park.
9. Statement that it is entirely possible to have a vibrant agricultural community and a wild bison population.
10. **Statement that one of the best places for transfer of bison is along the Missouri River from Fort Benton to Fort Belknap.

11. Statement of concern that all the paperwork and procedures discussed at the IBMP meetings do not connect to the reality of animals living on and walking through the landscape.
12. Statement that it is totally possible to have bison on the landscape as long as we give them adequate migration corridors.
13. Statement that emotions run the range of anger to happiness.
14. Statement of thanks to Supt. Wenk for not hazing to date [North side]. Also thanks for the release of all bison in traps. They should never have been captured but instead have been allowed to roam free like elk.
15. Statement of great sadness that two weeks ago a bison calf was hazed to death [West Side?].
16. **Statement that no hazing should be allowed.
17. Request that the Partners begin to think like bison.

18. Statement that there is a continuous refusal by the Partners to allow local government to sit at the deliberative table with the IBMP.
19. Statement that the County Commissioners are still waiting for a letter from the Partners regarding why the Commissioners can't be on the IBMP.
20. Statement that there are no handouts for the Public and little transparency forthcoming from the Partners, including insufficient data on the website.
21. Statement on meeting process: why can Partner staff provide input into the meeting instead of just supplying information to the Partner at the table?
22. Statement that the Partners are continually making decisions without public comment or input.
23. Statement that the Partners have spent a lot of money on fencing and other items in Park County that did not work at all.
24. Statement of concern that if you have an agenda you should stick to it explicitly so that the public knows when to arrive, or you should not provide times but instead only the order of topics to be covered.

25. Statement that we can produce disease free bison from Turner, or from Canada and thus it is fiscally irresponsible to start herds from brucellosis (quarantine proven) YELL bison.
26. Statement that the benchmark of wild bison is natural selection. There are probably animals in the Stephens Creek facility that either survived or died that would not have fared that way under natural selection.
27. Statement of concern that hunting and culling of bison has reduced the age structure which truncates the sex and age ratios, both of which disturb the natural selection process. This is a big concern just like it is with commercial herds.
28. **Statement that the IBMP Partners need to undertake more discussion regarding what is "wild" in the goals of the IBMP, and also how do the actions of the IBMP impact the wildness of bison.
29. Statement that YNP should be the benchmark for wildness.

30. Statement of approval: it was a good experiment this year to let the bison roam north of the Park. No one was trampled to death—it just doesn't happen.
31. **Request to the Partners that we need an education program to help reduce fear in the public about bison.
32. Statement that YNP should quit working on remote vaccination.
33. Statement that we can and do live with brucellosis.
34. Statement that the USFWS should be at the table as part of the IBMP Partner group.
35. Statement of thanks to Dan Wenk for being here. Statement of belief that we will see positive change for bison, and that we began to see it this winter.

36. Statement of thanks to Pat Flowers for helping the CWG, and an invite to all Partners to attend CWG meetings.

37. Statement of concern about the quarantine discussions. Request that bison at Turner be made available for inspection by the public.
38. **Statement that the State of MT needs a statewide vaccination plan.
39. Statement that the State of MT must lead; we cannot wait for other states.
40. **Statement that we also need a statewide brucellosis management plan and that it should include bison, elk, and other critters.
41. **Request that a public process be started about increasing habitat in the upper Gallatin Basin. There are no livestock there. We should be allowing, even putting, sero-negative bison in the upper Gallatin Basin, beginning with areas inside YNP.
42. **Statement that we should only have Zones 1 and 3 and eliminate Zone 2.
43. **Statement of encouragement for Partners to treat bison as they treat elk.

MAY 18TH PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Statement that over 50% of the subcommittee groups did not meet and that the subcommittees provided condescending efforts.
2. Statement that it is better to have Partner briefings on the first day before most of the public disappears.
3. **Statement that taxpayers paid \$6-7,000,000 for the upper Yellowstone task force efforts yet only one recommendation from that group was acted upon. There might be some good information in that report for this group—see Jackie Nelson, coordinator for Park County environmental issues. In particular, the Partners should look at the socio-economic results from the task force—it shows that everything everyone thinks they know is not true.
4. Statement that Partners have the chance to put wild bison on the landscape if they don't blow it because of the attitudes you present.
5. Statement that recent research by the speaker showed that YELL bison went through a bottleneck where we had ~100 animals, leading to the question: What population size do we need to maintain genetic viability? The answer is that we don't know and therefore we should err on the safe side.
6. Statement of full support for any AM changes that increase population size.
7. Statement that with the MT legislature complete, the door is open for two more years to move bison to other locations in the state of Montana.
8. **Statement that the CMR Wildlife Refuge is biologically ideal for introducing bison and thereby helping preserve their genetics.
9. Statement that when you buy a ranch you have someone come in and study the range. Statement that the IBMP Partners never check the range.
10. Question: how can you do something that you don't have the range for? Bison go north of the Park and there is no food for them.
11. Statement of concern that the Partners are spending citizen money on useless efforts. We need the GAO or similar to come straighten this program out.

<< Note that a document was provided to all Partners by the next speaker. The facilitator took the document, which was an editorial posted on-line at <http://www.thewildlifenews.com/2011/02/17/bison-abuse-merits-harsh-criticism/>, and forwarded the link to the Partner mailing list. >>

12. Statement that several of the AM items that were eliminated were wrong. Bison should be allowed on Horse Butte year-round.
13. Statement to the Tribes that they should pursue a tact that to not allow bison on national forest lands is against their treaty rights.
14. Statement that Zone 3 should be only private lands.

15. Statement that Buffalo Field Campaign wants more access to the northern boundary, the Stephens Creek facility, and so on. Feel locked out for no good reason.
16. **A request for a web cam to be placed inside the trap while it is in operation.
17. **Statement that the Partners consider Tom Pringle's study describing that this population [does? may have?] mitochondrial disease. Given that disease the population could go extinct.
18. Statement that speaker is newly on the scene as a Master's student at Montana State University and represents the Wind River Reservation.
19. Statement that the speaker is working on behalf of the Shoshone tribe and would like to be included in Partner discussions.
20. Statement that the speaker will work with ITBC.
21. ** Statement that the Shoshone want bison as wildlife on the reservation.

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