

**\*\*PROPOSED\*\***

# **Management and Operations Plans for Yellowstone Bison**

**Winter 2012**

**\*\*AS PROPOSED but not yet approved  
1 Dec 2011\*\***

# Situation

- ~2,300 northern herd; 1,400 central herd
  - Largest number of bison in northern herd
- Forecast : Above-average winter
- Developed population and migration models
- Predicted migration: >800 north; 500 west



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# Management Plan

- Manage abundance and composition
  - End winter with ~3,000 bison
  - Equal sex ratio and herd numbers
- Hunting/selective culls of infectious bison
  - Remove ~330 bison (not counting winter-kill)
  - Focus on females in northern herd (~200)



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# Revised 2009 Operations Plan

- Outlines actions to implement IBMP
- Proposes desired population conditions based on IBMP and NPS mission
- Incorporates 2005-2011 adaptive adjustments



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# Operations Plan – Sections

- Organization and responsibilities
- Monitoring and management activities
- Hunting (Public and Treaty)
- Hazing and capturing bison
- Disease suppression
- Lethal removal
- Transfer of surplus bison
- Vaccination of bison and cattle
- Safety (Agency staff and public)

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# Issues

- **No consensus on Plans/Adjustments**
  - e.g., population levels; agency contributions
  - Can't agree to changes in timely manner
- **Tolerance outside park? – uncertainties**
  - Litigation
  - Require a change in hazing practices
  - Reasonable numbers and distribution
- **Hunting – tool for reducing abundance**
  - Hunting not authorized in Yellowstone
  - Locations; Timing; Age/sex classes
  - Does little to \*\*AS PROPOSED but not yet approved  
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# Issues

- **Slaughter – tool for suppressing disease**
  - **Governor may prohibit the importation of bison into Montana**
  - **Transport bison to Tribes for slaughter?**
- **Quarantine – not a long-term solution for reducing abundance**
  - **Quickly reach saturation of disease-free bison**
  - **Trouble placing disease-free bison on public lands in Montana or elsewhere**
- **Stephens Creek – holding bison**
- **Not talking about issues: distrust/litigation**

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# Winter 2012

- Consider Citizen's Working Group recommendations
- Implement 2011 tolerance agreement with 150-200 bison north of park
  - Increased hunting; Learn to live with bison
  - Will likely need to hold bison (Stephens Crk)
- Implement selective culling of infectious bison and vaccination of females during February (after most hunting)
- Transfer bison to Tribes and research
- Respond to unilateral actions/litigation

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# How do we finalize a revised Operations Plan in the near future?



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