

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Interagency Bison Management Plan Partners’  
Response to Citizens’ Working Group Recommendations**

*Presented 9 March 2012 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke<sup>1</sup>*

The following summary report reflects the responses from the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners to the recommendations of a Citizens’ Working Group (CWG). The recommendations were presented to the Partners at their regular Nov30/Dec1 2011 meeting in Chico Hot Springs (Pray MT). The eight Partner attendees were Mary Erickson (GNF), Pat Flowers (MFWP), Christian Mackay (MBOL), Brain McCluskey (APHIS), Tom McDonald (CSKT), McCoy Oatman (NP), Dan Wenk (YELL), and Martin Zaluski (MDOL). The ITBC did not send a representative to this meeting. In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~20 staff members from across IBMP organizations and ~40 members of the public were present. Scanned attendance sheets are available from the facilitator.



*IBMP Partner/CWG meeting  
24 Feb 2012*

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## Overview

This report begins by providing the timeline currently driving Partner decisions on the CWG recommendations presented to the Partners at their regular Nov30/Dec1 2011 meeting. It then details Partner discussions on each of the 33 recommendations, using the three categories—Habitat Effectiveness / Habitat Expansion; Population Management, and Risk Reduction—called out by the CWG. Each recommendation is presented individually with limited capture of the discussion surrounding that recommendation. A simple one-page compilation of Partner decisions from this meeting can be found in Table 1. Action items captured in this meeting can be found in Appendix A. Abbreviations can be found in Appendix D.

**Table 1.—Summary of Partner decisions on CWG recommendations, shown under CWG Recommendation categories that match text. (\* = Partner rewrite of recommendation or caveat in decision—see report text)**

Habitat Expansion / Effectiveness		Population Management (PM)		Risk Reduction	
CWG rec# for this category	Partner Decision	CWG rec# for this category	Partner Decision	CWG rec# for this category	Partner Decision
1	Accept	1	Same as/see Habitat 3di	1	Same as/see PM 13
2	Accept	2	Same as/see Habitat 1, 3e	2	Reject
3ai	Move to rework	3a	Accept	3	Same as/see PM 14
3aii	Reject	3b	Accept*	4	Reject Accept
3aiii	Accept as rewritten*	3c	Accept	5	Same as/see PM 15
3bi	Accept	3d	Accept*	6	Move to rework
3bii	Accept	3e	Accept	7	Move to rework
3biii	Move to rework	3f	Accept	8	Cannot make decision
3ci	Reject	4	Accept	9	(See PM15)
3cii	Reject	5a-f	Accept*	10	Same as/see PM 2; Habitat 1, 3e
3dii	Accept	6a	Accept		
3e	Same as/see Habitat 1	6b	Reject*		
		6c	Accept*		
		6d	Accept*		
		7	Move to rework		
		8	Accept*		
		9	Accept		
		10	Accept		
		11	Accept*		
		12	Accept		
		13	Accept* Reject*		
		14	Accept*		
		15	Accept		
		16	Accept		

**TIMELINE FOR IBMP PARTNER DECISIONS ON CWG RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2011—CWG met through much of the year (~monthly) to develop recommendations to the Partners
- Nov30/Dec1 2011—CWG presented recommendations to the Partners at the regular IBMP meeting
- Jan 2012—IBMP subcommittees met and created list of 34 clarifying questions to the CWG regarding the CWG’s recommendations
- Feb 13, 2012—CWG met all day to respond to IBMP subcommittee questions
- Feb13-23, 2012—IBMP subcommittees meet to discuss and formulate near-final responses to CWG recommendations
- Feb 24, 2012—IBMP Partners meet with CWG to present tentative decisions (yes, no, timing) on CWG recommendations
- Feb 24-May 1, 2012—CWG opportunity to develop appeal to decisions (yes, no, timing) made by IBMP Partners. A single, unified response requested from the CWG to the IBMP Partners.
- May 1-2, 2012 (regular IBMP meeting)
  - CWG opportunity to present appeal(s) to IBMP Partners
  - IBMP Partner final decision on CWG recommendations

**PROCESS FOR PARTNER DELIBERATIONS**

As shown in the timeline above, the IBMP technical subcommittees—which are aligned with the three CWG Recommendations categories—deliberated over the CWG recommendations to develop input to the Partners regarding accepting and acting upon those recommendations. The subcommittees were asked to present their findings in a tabular format, similar to Table 2, with the outcome of their deliberations for their presentation to the Partners. Results of the subcommittee deliberations, and hence the presentation to the Partners, can be found in Appendix B (note: not all subcommittees followed the table format explicitly).

**Table 2.—Table to collect subcommittee input to Partners regarding CWG Recommendations**

CWG Rec#	Sub-comm priority for implementation	If accepted	If rejected
1		<input type="checkbox"/> already in progress <input type="checkbox"/> to be implemented ____	not possible now due to ____ potential date & conditions for revisiting ____
2		<input type="checkbox"/> already in progress <input type="checkbox"/> to be implemented ____	<input type="checkbox"/> already in progress <input type="checkbox"/> to be implemented ____
3	etc	etc	etc
etc	etc	etc	etc

One member of each subcommittee presented their findings to the Partners, who had agreed to use the Process shown in Figure 1 for their deliberations of the CWG Recommendations. It is important to note that the subcommittee input served as a starting point for Partner deliberations. In some cases Partner decisions followed the subcommittee findings, in other cases they did not. In the latter cases, often the Partners sought clarification on citizen intent via interaction with CWG members present, and with that information made a decision counter to their subcommittees’ findings.

**FUNDAMENTAL TENSIONS RECOGNIZED**

Through the course of the meeting, several fundamental tensions were recognized by Partners and Citizens:

- **Accept/reject terminology.**—The process was set up for the Partners to “accept” or “reject” each CWG recommendation. A continuing theme presented was that “accept” was simply the first step in moving to action on a CWG recommendation. Workplans, personnel, and funding would still be needed to put

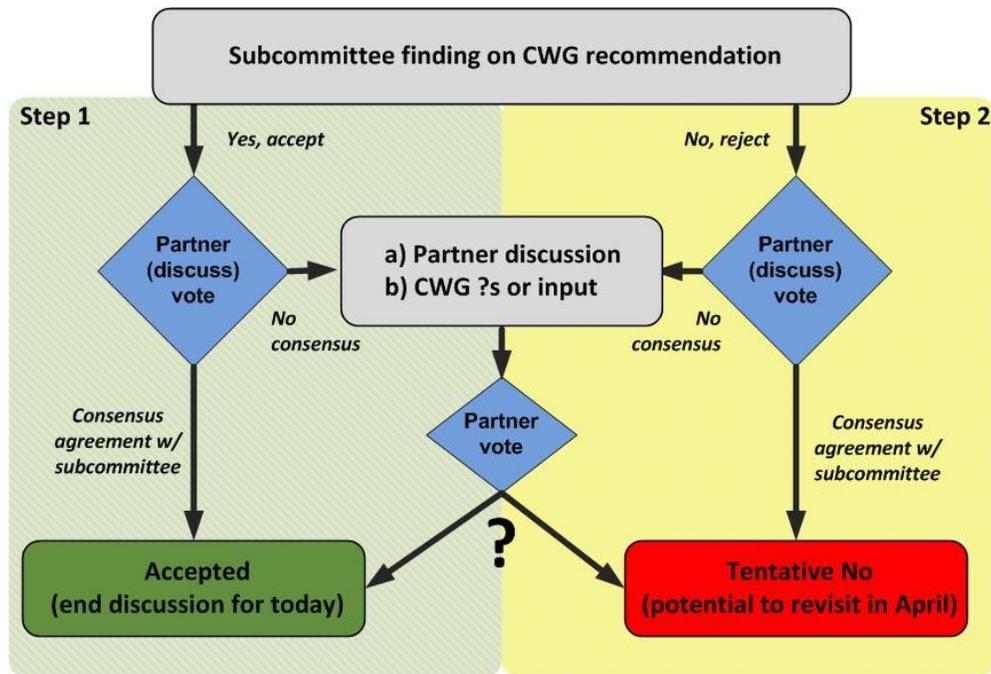


Figure 1.—Process for Partner decision making on CWG Recommendations

a CWG recommendation into motion. Similarly, Partners repeatedly stated that “reject” did not mean that they thought the idea had no merit. Instead, in almost every case it meant that the idea had either low priority relative to other recommendations or their staff’s on-going responsibilities; or was not in their scope of control.

- **Reality and scope of control.**—At the heart of the accept/reject conundrum, the Partners stated, was their desire to be realistic with the Public. In many cases, recommendations were “rejected” by the Partners simply because they felt they had no direct line of control over what the recommendation asked to be done.
- **Addition of new category.**—Given the angst (both Partner and CWG) over the accept/reject categorizations, Partners decided to add a third category called “Move to rework”. These items effectively went into a holding pattern, pending greater clarity on what the recommendation entailed. This clarity could be provided at the upcoming Partner meeting in May, when Partners agreed to set aside more time for CWG presentation.
- **Rewriting CWG intent.**—Solid interaction occurred between Partners, staff, and members of the CWG throughout the day. As Partners learned more concisely what was or was not meant about many of the CWG recommendations, they several times began to modify the recommendation to one they could accept. On many occasions, however, Partners or Citizens put up a caution that the Partners should be acting on the CWG recommendations on their face, not rewriting them.
- **Guiding Principles.**—At the start of the meeting, PF noted that he had instructed the subcommittees to focus on the CWG recommendations, not their guiding principles as also listed in the CWG Recommendation report. PF also noted that likewise the Partners each have their own guiding principles.

## Partner Response to Citizen Working Group Recommendations

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The follow subsections capture Partner decisions on the full set of CWG recommendations (recall that Table 1 provides a simple tabular compilation of those decisions). Key Partner and CWG discussions are captured if unique from the information provided in the subcommittee findings (Appendix B). The recommendations are provided in *italics* below; the full CWG Recommendation report with supporting text can be found in Appendix C for reference. The identical text can be found as a stand-alone document at [www.ibmp.info/Library/20111130/20111130.php](http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20111130/20111130.php).

### HABITAT EFFECTIVENESS / HABITAT EXPANSION

(7 recommendations; Partner Subcommittee presenter Jodie Canfield [USFS/GNF])

**Recommendation 1.**—*Identify public lands that could/should be open to bison year-round in accordance with state and federal law.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept

**Discussion.**—This work will be carried out under the State of MT Bison Management Plan, which is in progress and expected to be complete by 2015. The scoping process is expected to start soon.

**Recommendation 2.**—*Systematically identify suitable, available habitat outside Yellowstone National Park in the Greater Yellowstone Area (i.e., Federal, State and Private lands)*

**Partner decision.**—Accept

**Discussion.**—Already underway by Habitat Subcommittee.

**Recommendation 3ai-3aiii.**—*Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically:*

a. Hebgen Basin

- i. *Designate Horse Butte Peninsula and the Flats as year-round bison habitat by May 2012 following an adequate public process for this management change.*
- ii. *By the end of 2012, interview and map landowners to identify where bison are welcome, unwelcome, which landowners are on the fence and what their reservations are.*
- iii. *By the end of 2013, implement adequate fencing or acceptable alternatives.*

**Partner decision.**—(3ai) Move to rework

**Discussion.**—The Partners affirmed that their intention is that bison be allowed to move year around tolerance on Horse Butte but will need to go through Public Process before implementing. Recommendation not accepted due to concerns about the Flats.

**Partner decision.**—(3aii) Reject

**Discussion.**—Private property owner concerns drive Partner decision. CWG states that one of their goals is to clarify/improve inaccuracies in current maps (e.g., maps label areas have no tolerance for bison when indeed they do).

**Partner decision.**—(3aiii) Reject as is, but Accept as rewritten to say, “Investigate and come to conclusion on feasibility of fencing or acceptable alternatives on the Flats to prevent co-mingling with private livestock.”

**Discussion.**—Subcommittees concern that due to heavy snow loads the ability to use fencing successfully in the Hebgen Basin is less certain than in the Gardner Basin.

**Recommendation 3bi-3biii.**—Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically:

b. Gardiner Basin

- i. By the end of 2012, interview and map landowners to identify where bison are welcome, unwelcome, which landowners are on the fence and what their reservations are.
- ii. By the end of 2013, implement adequate fencing or acceptable alternatives.
- iii. Following the interview process and implementation of fencing/alternative strategies, consider designating the Gardiner Basin year-round habitat using an adequate public process.

**Partner decision.**—(3bi) Accept

**Discussion.**—Subcommittees state this work is already complete.

**Partner decision.**—(3bii) Accept

**Discussion.**—Subcommittee accepts for but considers of low priority. \*\*action item 1—request to CWG to define “acceptable alternatives”.

**Partner decision.**—(3biii) Move to rework

**Discussion.**—Subcommittee statement that bison will not use the Gardiner Basin year-round. CWG counter that we haven’t let them try, so how do we know? Obstacles identified for making decision: results from (1) State of MT EA on and pending legal actions against Gardner Basin adaptive management changes. Partners note that this recommendation hits at the very issue of current lawsuits and thus they cannot recommend on it until the lawsuits are resolved.

**Recommendation 3ci-3cii.**—Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically:

c. Beyond the Gardiner Basin

- i. Based on a minimum of two years of bison experience in the Gardiner Basin, and
- ii. Using adequate public process, consider allowing bison to roam on Dome Mountain Ranch, Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area and surrounding lands with landowner concurrence.

**Partner decision.**—(3ci, 3cii) Reject.

**Discussion.**—Strong concern over high potential for conflict. Dome Mountain originally set aside for elk. Concern that bison would wander beyond Dome Mountain since there are no ready topographic breaks. Counter thoughts that the recommendation only says, “consider”, recognition that one landowner in the area wants bison, and excellent area for bison hunt.

**Recommendation 3di-3dii.**—Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically:

d. Upper Gallatin/Taylor Fork/Cabin Creek/Porcupine/Buffalo Horn Creek, etc.

- i. Begin a public process to evaluate opportunities for reintroduction and management of bison in this area, including within Yellowstone National Park.
- ii. Start work to amend/alter State and Federal Management Plans and other decisions to account for the presence of bison on the landscape and take responsibility/be accountable for successfully implementing those plans regarding bison.

**Partner decision.**—(3di) Accept.

**Discussion.**—Recognized need to clarify the Zones (1,2,3) of the ROD.

**Partner decision.**—(3dii) Accept.

**Discussion.**—NA.

**Recommendation 3e.**—*Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically:*

e. Additional Habitat Areas

*Immediately initiate and complete by the end of 2013 the statewide bison management plan to restore wild bison to additional biologically suitable, socially acceptable areas.*

**Partner decision.**—(3e) Same as, see Habitat #1.

**Discussion.**—Some discussion that the date stated in this recommendation is unreasonable.

## POPULATION MANAGEMENT

(16 recommendations; Partner Subcommittee presenter Karen Loveless [MFWP])

**Recommendation 1.**—*Modify the Interagency Bison Management Plan Zones 1, 2, and 3 with an eye to finding better habitat solutions particularly in light of changes that have occurred since zones were designated in 2000. Identify habitat that can alleviate population pressure, including available public and private lands, and potential habitat acquisition as well as potential funding sources.*

**Partner decision.**—Same as, see Habitat 3di.

**Discussion.**—Recognized need to develop a method to change Zone (1,2,3) definitions and expecting to go forward with Habitat Subcommittee approach. Expect that State of MT MEPA process will be required to modify Zone definitions (and as a result, tolerance).

**Recommendation 2.**—*Strive to manage bison as wildlife, and complete, implement, and support a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks management plan that includes setting bison population objectives and hunting strategies as a priority population management tool.*

**Partner decision.**—Same as, see Habitat 1.

**Discussion.**—Yes, in progress already as per State of MT Bison Management Plan.

**Recommendation 3\*.**—*(a) Make hunting a bigger component of bison management and consider different seasons or other opportunities to increase the impact of hunting. (b) Outside the Park, the main means for controlling bison abundance and distribution should be state-administered and tribal hunting. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should test new methods for dispersing hunting in time and space. (c) A late-winter hunt for yearlings only should be tested for hunter interest and public acceptance. (d) "Depredation" hunts should be available throughout the year and used to manage bison distribution. (e) Other means of population control should include fencing bison out of areas where they are not welcome, and (f) using fire, fertilizers or other habitat management to attract bison to areas where they are welcome. (b) Lethal removal by agency personnel should be a last resort.*

\*Note: labels (a) – (e) added by subcommittees

**Partner decision.**—(3a) Accept.

**Discussion.**—In progress.

**Partner decision.**—(3b [note two parts above]) Accept.

**Discussion.**—In progress. ~~However, caveat that current ROD and court settlement established seroprevalence reduction as an IBMP priority, and hunting alone will not accomplish this goal, hence lethal removal of infectious animals remains an IBMP tool.~~<sup>2</sup>

**Partner decision.**—(3c) Accept.

**Discussion.**—NA.

**Partner decision.**—(3d) Accept.

**Discussion.**—In progress. FWP may go to the legislature to request a change in the statute.

**Partner decision.**—(3e) Accept.

**Discussion.**—In progress.

**Partner decision.**—(3f) Accept.

**Discussion.**—\*\*action item 2: request to CWG to provide specific habitat improvements that would help move bison to places they are not.

**Recommendation 4.**—*Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Tribes hunting Yellowstone bison should work more closely together to set collective hunt targets and to document the hunting success numbers.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept.

**Discussion.**—Recognized hesitancy on behalf of tribes to commit to an absolute hunting limit—would they commit to one? Response—yes but should be based on population, population goals, and what is available to tribal hunters. CWG request that 1) Partners switch emphasis from how many do we take to how many do we leave, and 2) recognition that hunting changes behavior (e.g., migration patterns, where new groups might establish themselves).

**Recommendation 5a-5f**\*.—*Agree on and establish a target population range that is biologically and ecologically acceptable and accounts for a variety of public interests. As Interagency Bison Management Partners, agree on criteria for evaluating and determining a population range and appropriate management tools, such as:*

- a. *Winter range outside the Park (target population range could change to reflect changes in habitat availability),*
- b. *Risk factors,*
- c. *Individual agency management mandates, constraints and responsibilities (such as the National Park Service’s mandate to manage its resources unimpaired for future generation and its natural regulation policy),*
- d. *Genetic diversity, population structure and demographics, reproduction, and distribution,*
- e. *Realistic opportunity for addressing private land owners’ concerns, and*
- f. *Hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.*

**Partner decision.**—(5a-f) Accept as rewritten to say, “The Partners will use 5(a-f) in future population number determination using 3000 as a guideline, not a target.”

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<sup>2</sup> This sentence removed per discussion at 050112 IBMP meeting. See notes for that meeting for explanation.

**Discussion.**—Partners—Population target of 3000 exists in the ROD and took into account factors listed. CWG feels that 1) no one knows what 3000 means and how to adaptively manage (i.e., change) that goal (thus, the request for a population range), 2) concern over 3000 is the genetic brink and thus a great danger for long-term bison viability, and 3) that much has changed since the completion of the ROD .

**Recommendation 6a-6d.**—*When bison have to be removed because of high migration numbers, management constraints, safety, etc., the priorities should be (in order):*

- a. *Hunting outside the park,*
- b. *Moving them to nearby appropriate available lands,*
- c. *Translocation from the Yellowstone area (capture, quarantine, transport and release), and*
- d. *Lethal removal by managing agencies.*

**Partner decision.**—(6a) Accept.

**Discussion.**—In progress. Tribes would like to see hunting available every year and a move away from the idea that moving bison is necessary (i.e., hunting could be the main population control).

**Partner decision.**—(6b) Reject.

**Discussion.**—Moving (hazing) and translocation (capture and move) are recognized to not be effective tools for long-term population management. They are, however, in the short term a tool managers need at their disposal.

**Partner decision.**—(6c) Accept (note: post quarantine bison only).

**Discussion.**—NA.

**Partner decision.**—(6d) Accept (note: same note as in 3b discussion above applies regarding seroprevalence)

**Discussion.**—NA.

**Recommendation 7.**—*Quarantine should be economically justified in comparison with other means of producing Brucella-free Yellowstone bison for conservation purposes.*

**Partner decision.**—Move to Rework.

**Discussion.**—Obstacles identified: 1) not applicable with no operational quarantine at the time, 2) don't know what "economically justified" means, 3) other alternatives for conservation that are more affordable. CWG states concern that quarantine is costly and diverts attention from the real concern.

**Recommendation 8.**—*In order to locate bison to lands elsewhere, Montana should develop and implement a translocation process for bison leaving quarantine. The quarantine process should minimize infrastructure requirements for places receiving bison.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept with the following modification to the second line: "The quarantine process should use the minimum containment infrastructure necessary for places receiving bison."

**Discussion.**—In progress.

**Recommendation 9.**—*Determining where bison completing quarantine will go and how they will be restored and conserved on the landscape, with the highest priority on managing them as public and tribal wildlife, must precede capturing bison and implementing quarantine. Recipients of quarantined bison must be identified and an acceptable, appropriate translocation process must be in place prior to quarantining Yellowstone bison. This determination of where bison will go should be integrated with all Fish, Wildlife and Parks or other assessments of relocation possibilities for wild bison in Montana.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept.

**Discussion.**—In progress.

**Recommendation 10.**—*Bison translocation and bison movement should not include moving seropositive animals outside the current DSA, and may preclude relocating seropositive animals to new areas within the DSA with the intent of establishing new herd ranges. The intent is to avoid establishing new sources of disease and new disease risks to cattle.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept.

**Discussion.**—Partners agreed to recommendation but not the “clarification” noted in the Population Management Subcommittee’s spreadsheet (Appendix B).

**Recommendation 11.**—*Hazing of bulls should be minimized, unless there are issues with property damage or safety, because they are not a factor in the issue of brucellosis transmission. Hazing of newborn calves should be minimized for humane reasons.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept. (Partner clarification: accepting this recommendation is not equivalent to saying bull bison are allowed anywhere at any time.)

**Discussion.**—Partners asked for clarification from the CWG on this question: Did they mean within current tolerance areas or did they mean regardless of current zone system? Response = 1) If we are within the current tolerance zones bison are already allowed; the recommendation meant anywhere in space and time regardless of zone with recognition that safety and other qualifies still exist. Partners—not sure we can do that (tolerance outside allowed Zones) without MEPA process. \*\*action item 3: Partners request greater clarification from CWG on what is meant by recommendation 11.

**Recommendation 12.**—*Discuss expected adverse weather events (similar to fire management) and work with involved entities (public and private) to develop and agree on contingency plans.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept.

**Discussion.**—In progress. Recognition by all that advances in weather prediction tools are a great benefit to predicting bison movement for short term (e.g., month-to-month rather year-by-year) adaptive management changes more in.

**Recommendation 13.**—*Develop and work with the livestock industry to implement an effective cattle vaccine and protocol to reduce the risk of transmission and make bison presence/translocation more acceptable. Support/secure funding for ongoing vaccine research.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept improvement of current protocol. Reject support for vaccine research.

**Discussion.**—Partners: 1) work with livestock industry is a yes and in progress; 2) reality is that brucellosis impacts one discrete part of country and thus there will not be funds available for vaccine research nor will it be a primary goal for IBMP Partners (suggestion of \$5M for finding agreeable deployment method, \$15M finding a new vaccine); 3) CWG overestimating power of Partners in thinking they can override funding and/or Homeland Security challenge to getting new vaccine research undertaken. CWG: 1) Why is research always on sero+ animals not on sero- animals to understand why they are sero-? 2) But vaccine important not just for livestock protection against sero+ bison, but also sero+ elk, which is the real issue; how can we let elk run loose unencumbered and state no tolerance for bison?—it is thus illogical to say both no to vaccine and no to change in

bison tolerance; 3) key focus of CWG is to focus on protection of cattle not management/vaccination of bison. \*\*action item 4—RC suggests Partners have Steve Olsen to give pre-meeting seminar on issues of elk and brucellosis.

**Recommendation 14.**—*Lobby for removing the significant barriers that exist for Brucella abortus research because of the select agent listing.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept.

**Discussion.**—Partners: two members have made concerted effort, but issue comes down to public health groups; Senator Baucus also made an attempt but result of all efforts remains CDC say not coming off; believe this effort would be stronger coming from a grass roots citizens' coalition. CWG: Can Partners write a letter or in some way (e.g., letter to representatives) affirm their interest for the CWG to use in their lobbying efforts? \*\*action item 5—Partners agree to write a letter to representatives stating their support for removing the significant barriers that exist for *Brucella abortus* research because of the select agent listing.

**Recommendation 15.**—*Develop and implement a strong, factual education component so an informed public is involved in the discussions.*

**Partner decision.**—Agreed.

**Discussion.**—\*\*action item 6—to be added to a future IBMP meeting.

**Recommendation 16.**—*Outside the Park, hazing and removals should be minimized in selected, suitable areas to establish year-round populations of Montana bison. This approach should be pursued incrementally in a “learn as we go” fashion. This will be a public process that identifies the boundaries of the area and a contingency plan if bison leave that area.*

**Partner decision.**—Accept.

**Discussion.**—Partners added a clarification that they are voting yes (accept) on the recommendation provided by the Subcommittee in their spreadsheet (Appendix B), not on the qualifier provided in the same spreadsheet for this CWG recommendation.

## RISK REDUCTION

(10 recommendations; Partner Subcommittee presenter John Trainor [NPS/YELL])

Note: The Risk Reduction Subcommittee based their written findings (Appendix B) on the set of clarifying questions/answers between themselves and the CWG (see section titled, “Timeline for IBMP Partner decisions on CWG Recommendations”), rather than on the recommendations themselves. Thus some confusion ensued initially during this discussion, until the Partners and CWG decided to discuss the CWG Recommendations explicitly, not the clarifying questions.

**Recommendation 1.**—*Reduce risk of transmission of brucellosis from wildlife to livestock by improving implementation of currently known livestock vaccine protocols, and through further research and refinement of livestock vaccination.*

**Partner decision.**—Same as, see Population Management 13.

**Discussion.**—Partners: If decreasing seroprevalence is not the goal, what does the CWG think the goal should be? CWG—We need to get away from the mindset that seroprevalence is bad therefore decreasing seroprevalence must be good; seroprevalence does not equal infectious.

**Recommendation 2.**—*Work with livestock industry to work toward adoption of mandatory statewide Official Calfhood Vaccination (OCV).*

**Partner decision.**—Reject.

**Discussion.**—Partners: 1) Not the role of the Partners to enforce OCV; BOL already took up as a recommendation to meetings around the state and there was no desire to accept this concept (notably, less acceptance the further from the GYA you got); 2) also worthy of note, acceptance of this recommendation might decrease livestock industry acceptance of tolerance; 3) vaccine must be administered by a vet and in far north MT there are is both no risk and few vets, thus a mandatory

vaccination would be illogical. CWG: note that “seroprevalence” is not in the recommendation and we request that the Partners think outside the box.

**Recommendation 3.**—*Lobby to modify the Select Agent List (Homeland Security) to enable improved livestock or other vaccine research on Brucella abortus.*

**Partner decision.**—Same as, see Population Management 14.

**Discussion.**—NA.

**Recommendation 4.**—*(a) Strongly encourage continued funding and research to develop a practical test on live animals to distinguish between infected and resistant animals. (b) Given the epidemiological importance of building ‘herd immunity,’ it is important to develop the tools to allow us to stop managing animals as if seropositive is equivalent to ‘infectious.’*

*\*Note: labels (a), (b) added by Partners*

**Partner decision.**—(4a) Reject.

**Discussion.**—CWG: 1) some animals that are sero+ may be resistant to disease ; 2) note some work being done at Texas A&M on this question. Partners: 1) we lack technology to differentiate (i) animals that are resistant versus susceptible to disease and (ii) seropositive animals from shedders; 2) indeed some animals get exposed but are not infected but we see that number to be very small; 3) we do not agree that some animals are resistant to brucellosis; 4) we see high seroprevalence means most infected—issue is that some will shed and some will not.

**Partner decision.**—(4b) Accept.

**Discussion.**—NA.

**Recommendation 5.**—*Provide a clearinghouse and other opportunities to gather and report on research related to Brucella abortus and management tools from various research institutions to present to the public annually.*

**Partner decision.**—Same as, see Population Management 15.

**Discussion.**—NA.

**Recommendation 6.**—*Reduce livestock/wildlife interactions at key seasons. This will include building upon and improving techniques already in use as well testing and application of other innovations (e.g. strategic hazing using low-stress animal handling methods; targeted fencing; guard dogs to keep wildlife off feedlines/haystacks/calving areas; trained dogs to locate fetal material to enable cleanup, and so forth).*

**Partner decision.**—Move to rework.

**Discussion.**—Partners: decreasing interactions very important. However not realistic as this is not our job. Obstacles identified: 1) funding to support, 2) who handles, trains, etc dogs? 3) what would it look like (e.g., use APHIS guard dogs?)? 4) more specificity asked from the CWG.

**Recommendation 7.**—*Reduce artificial concentrations of animals (elk or bison) that may be exacerbating transmission. This principle applies to a variety of locations, and will require a variety of implementation strategies (e.g. at Stephens Creek where bison are intermittently confined; on private lands with restricted hunting where elk congregate; bison crowding in/near the Park; Wyoming feed grounds).*

**Partner decision.**—Move to rework.

**Discussion.**—Obstacle identified: 1) elk, 2) role of Stephens Creek in managing bison. CWG: no consensus on capture facility.

**Recommendation 8.**—*Remote vaccination of wild bison using the current vaccine and delivery method as a means of reducing risk of transmission should not be a priority at this time.*

**Partner decision.**—Cannot make decision.

**Discussion.**—EIS is in progress. Partners cannot make a declaration of intent on this CWG Recommendation as it would be pre-decisional to the EIS.

**Recommendation 9.**—*Education – to be addressed by the education group.*

**Partner decision.**—(See Population Management 15).

**Discussion.**—NA. Note, this recommendation was never addressed by an Education sub-group of the CWG.

**Recommendation 10.**—*Advocate for completion of a Statewide Bison Management Plan. This is an overarching and persistent theme within the CWG. It is necessary not only as part of population management and habitat planning, but is also a sensible step toward developing risk management that is consistent with what we know about both bison and elk, in the interest of both livestock producers and wildlife advocates.*

**Partner decision.**—Same as Population Management 2; Habitat 1, 3e.

**Discussion.**—Some discussion about the reality that the Montana Statewide Bison Management Plan is subject to the whim of the State Legislature.

## What's Next

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The meeting concluded with a short discussion of looking ahead to the future for continued movement on the CWG Recommendations. Partners assured the CWG that 1) their input has been taken seriously, 2) that they recognize that consensus products are fragile, and 3) that thus a driving consideration in this effort has been to move quickly to act on those recommendations that have been accepted. In return, the Partners asked the CWG to recognize that the Partners 1) do not have full control over every item that that the CWG asked to be addressed, 2) that they must next assign priorities, budgets, and people power to the activities, and that this administrative work does take time to work through.

The following timeline was constructed:

- *Prior to 1,2 May 2012 IBMP meeting<sup>3</sup>:*
  - Report from this meeting will come out in ~2 weeks (\*\*action item 7)
  - CWG potential to meet with Technical Subcommittees, especially to discuss areas of agreement
  - CWG potential to convene to discuss appeal of those recommendation that were rejected
  - CWG and Partners to address action items noted in this report, Appendix A.
  - Lead Partner and facilitator will go through the accepted recommendations and make first pass at assigning the lead agency. This will be sent out to Partner by March 31 (\*\*action item 8)
  - Partners will review this assignments and develop priorities, timelines, and workplans for implementation to bring to May Partner meeting (\*\*action item 9)
- *At the 1,2 May 2012 IBMP meeting:*
  - CWG allowed time, should they ask for it, to either appeal rejected recommendations or provide greater detail on jump starting accepted recommendations
  - Partners step through accepted recommendations and discuss their priorities, timelines, and workplans for implementing the recommendation

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<sup>3</sup> This meeting had originally been planned for 8-9 April 2012 but changed given input of the Partners at the meeting.

## Appendix A.—Action Items Identified

Action items developed during the course of this meeting are captured below. Note that most of the items were agreed upon without explicit delivery/completion dates being stated.

**Table 1.—Action items identified during this meeting**

#	Who	What	By when
1	CWG	Partners request to CWG to define “acceptable alternatives” under their Recommendation Habitat 3bi.	
2	CWG	Partners request to CWG to provide specific habitat improvements that would help move bison to places they are not.	
3	CWG	Partners request greater clarification from CWG on what is meant by recommendation 11	
4	RC	RC suggests Partners have Steve Olsen to give pre-meeting seminar on issues of elk and brucellosis.	Next IBMP meeting
5	Partners	Partners agree to write a letter to representatives stating their support for removing the significant barriers that exist for <i>Brucella abortus</i> research because of the select agent listing.	
6	Partners	Add discussion of the following CWG concept to a future IBMP meeting: Develop and implement a strong, factual education component so an informed public is involved in the discussions.	
7	SB	Scott to complete the report for this meeting and post to IBMP.info after review by lead Partner	Within 2 weeks
8	PF, SB	Lead Partner and facilitator will go through the accepted recommendations and make first pass at assigning the lead agency.	Mar 31
9	Partners	Partners will review this assignments and develop priorities, timelines, and workplans for implementation to bring to May Partner meeting	Next IBMP meeting

## Appendix B.—Tabularized IBMP Subcommittee Findings on CWG Recommendations

The tables that follow are as presented by the Subcommittees to the Partners. These tables, which contain the Subcommittees recommendation to the Partners on accepting or rejecting each of the CWG recommendations, served as the basis for Partner discussion and decision making. Note that the Partners did not accept the Subcommittee recommendations in all cases. See Overview section for a summary of Partner decisions.

Habitat			
Priority	Recommendation from CWG report	Subcommittee Accept/Reject	Comments
	#1	Accept	FWP working on statewide plan looking at any and all options for to open to (seronegative) bison year-round
	#2	Accept	Habitat subcommittee is working on identifying additional areas and will be looking for feedback from the partners at the April meeting.
Highest Priority	#3 ai	Accept	The recommendation for expanded bison tolerance on Horse Butte has also been recommended by the habitat subcommittee and we think it is reasonable to move forward, but will need to verify social acceptance with the Horse Butte area residents; this will be recommended to the partners and we will ask for feedback on what will be needed to prepare for a decision (adequate public process, etc.).
	#3 ai	Concerns outside of Horse Butte on the "Flats"	The Gallatin Forest Plan does not preclude having bison on NFS lands; however, due to the geographic complexity within Hebgen Basin, this is not an easy implementation action. On the Flats, there are over 200 head of cattle across the river on private land; this would require much further discussion to have a good plan of action in place to prevent co-mingling. We know that bison have a high propensity to keep moving to the west toward Idaho and therefore have a high potential to mingle with cattle on private lands. In addition, much of the area, even if available to bison, is not suitable bison habitat - being characterized as mostly steep and forested. The forested nature of this area also makes it difficult to manage the boundary in terms of where bison are and how many there are.
	Added information		South Fork-Watkins (allotment decision) - not really the critical component for providing bison tolerance, but South Fork could be a corridor to the expansion to the west; however, there may be limited suitable habitat for bison on NFS lands in this area (steep, forested) and issues with the juxtaposition of federal and pvt lands.
	#3aii	Accept with concerns and in progress	Landowner engagement/ discussions are ongoing but we would not produce a map due to privacy concerns.
	#3aiii/ #3bi	Accept with concerns and in progress	Fencing can be acceptable and has been used on the north end; fencing may not be practical on the west side (wetlands, snow, impacts on other wildlife; recreation impacts); we envision this as an on-going process; we would like to know more about what is meant by "acceptable alternatives" .
	#3bii	Accept with concerns and in progress	We have completed several fencing projects in Gardiner Basin and are continuing to work with landowners on fencing solutions.
SECOND	3biii	Accept	This could require a highly involved, controversial public process. It may be of marginal importance to the population overall; not sure if the gain is worth the cost. This is a naturally migratory population and biologically the bison would not use Gardiner Basin yearlong except for a small number of bulls that might stay. This would require some site specific hazing (game damage response) to keep bison out of irrigated meadows. We recommend staying the course with bison tolerance in the winter; we could focus on getting the female groups back into the park and not focus on moving the males, who could then be available for hunting.
	3cii	Reject	Resources needed to manage this is unfeasible and unreasonable. Stakes too high and potential for conflicts are too high at this time.

Habitat			
Priority	Recommendation from CWG report	Subcommittee Accept/Reject	Comments
THIRD PRIORITY	3di	Accept	Perhaps there is a different, larger potential adaptive zone on the west side? The subcommittee reviewed the area and thought there may be merit in looking at the headwaters of the South Fork Madison, south of West Yellowstone. There is tolerance for bison in the Taylor Fork if they get there on their own (page 17 in the ROD); an immediate action would be to clarify why there is tolerance in the IBMP and yet it is designated Zone 3; there are no obstacles (except time and work schedules) that preclude starting the internal process to provide this clarification. We look for clarification on the CWG on this recommendation (relocate bison to Upper Gallatin?). In the future, we may want to change the tolerance Zone of this area, which would require an EA; and would require the support of the Director's office and FWP Commission ( given the current lawsuits).
	3dii		See previous response. This would require thoughtful discussion among the partners and alignment and then further discussions with the potential stakeholders in that area.
	3e	Accept	FWP has initiated a process to evaluate opportunities to manage wild bison in other locations throughout Montana beyond the current Yellowstone bison conservation area. This will take some time to work through the public and environmental processes (currently scheduled to be completed in 2015).

*Footnote: Other recommendations have not been given an priority since they are either iterative, in progress, or outside of the scope of the IBMP*

**Population Management**

CWG Rec#	Subject	Accepted ?	In Progress/to be implemented	Not possible/date or conditions for revisiting	Comments
1	Modify bison tolerance zones	Y	<u>In Progress:</u> (addressed in detail by habitat subcommittee)		
2	Complete FWP bison mgmt plan	Y	<u>In Progress:</u> FWP bison management plan is in progress with completion target date of 2015	<u>Conditions for Revisiting:</u> Pending public process and litigation regarding expansion of bison tolerance/hunting zone in Gardiner Basin, population objective/harvest strategies for bison in Gardiner Basin should be established prior to completion of statewide bison management plan. This could potentially be included as part of 2014 season setting process.	-
3	increase impact of hunting, disperse hunting in time and space	Y	<u>In Progress:</u> 1) Expanded hunt area proposed for Gardiner Basin (pending public process and litigation regarding expanded tolerance zone), 2) Hunting licenses proposed for harvesting bison outside of tolerance areas, 3) proposed hunt of bulls outside regular hunting season		Current ROD and court settlement established that seroprevalence reduction is an IBMP priority. Removals of bison using hunting only will not result in decrease of seroprevalence, as opposed to using hunting in conjunction with targeted removals of likely infectious animals.
	Outside the Park, the main means for controlling bison abundance and distribution should be state-administered and tribal hunting. Lethal removal by agency personnel should be a last resort.	Y/N	<u>In Progress:</u> (this is integral to ongoing efforts to increase harvest by expanding tolerance zone for bison outside of YNP) In terms of distribution management, lethal removal is a last resort.		
	A late-winter hunt for yearlings only should be tested for hunter interest and public acceptance.	Y	<u>In progress:</u> The 2012 management plan recommended 50 yearlings be removed through harvest/targeted removal. <b>To be implemented:</b> A late season hunt would be a season structure change, which can be proposed during the next biennial season setting (2014). Discussions to determine		

Population Management					
CWG Rec#	Subject	Accepted ?	In Progress/to be implemented	Not possible/date or conditions for revisiting	Comments
	<p>“Depredation” hunts should be available throughout the year and used to manage bison distribution.</p> <p>Other means of population control should include fencing bison out of areas where they are not welcome</p> <p>using fire, fertilizers or other habitat management to attract bison to areas where they are welcome.</p>	<p>Y/N</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p>	<p>hunter interest/public acceptance should begin immediately and continue over the next year in order to propose season change in fall of 2013.</p> <p><u>In Progress:</u> FWP Commission approved use of hunters to manage bison outside of tolerance zones. <u>To be implemented:</u> Game damage quotas and structure have not been established for bison, this would need to be done, most likely time-frame is 2014 season setting.</p> <p><u>In progress</u></p> <p><u>In Progress:</u> Habitat restoration has been underway in Cutler Meadows. Other potential habitat projects are subject of ongoing discussion between FWP and USFS, including feasibility, potential effectiveness and impacts on other species.</p>	<p>Not possible to make game damage hunts available throughout the year: Montana Game Damage statute limits timing of hunts to August 15 - Feb 15.</p>	<p>Landowner eligibility requirements and seasonal restrictions may limit usefulness of game damage hunts for managing distribution of bison in the Gardiner Basin</p> <p>This is a tool for managing distribution (not population). Fencing is addressed in more detail under habitat recommendations</p> <p>On the small scale of what is available to bison, habitat quality is not a driving factor. Though habitat projects that are beneficial to bison as well as other wintering ungulates are worthy of support, the effectiveness of habitat projects at managing bison distribution is questionable.</p>
4	<p>Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Tribes hunting Yellowstone bison should work more closely together to set collective hunt targets and to document the</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p><u>In progress:</u> MFWP and the respective aboriginal hunting tribes work closely on monitoring all aspects of both the state and tribal hunts. We share information and collaborate on a weekly basis throughout the hunts. We also meet after the season to discuss all aspects of bison management including harvest numbers, population trends, and future management. The State and each of the respective Tribes have different</p>		

**Population Management**

CWG Rec#	Subject	Accepted ?	In Progress/to be implemented	Not possible/date or conditions for revisiting	Comments
	hunting success numbers.		methods of documenting harvest, however the overall harvest numbers provided for last year represent a very accurate summary of the total harvest. YNP, FWP and the tribes will continue to work collaboratively on all matters surrounding state and tribal hunting.		
5a	Agree on and establish a target population range that is biologically and ecologically acceptable ...	Y	<u>In Progress:</u> Population target of 3000 was agreed upon and is established in the ROD		
5b-f	agree on criteria for evaluating and determining a population range and appropriate management tools...	Y	<u>In Progress:</u> These criteria are already accounted for in modelling efforts and discussions among agencies that resulted in the 3000 population target.		
6	Prioritize tools for limiting bison numbers:				
6a	1st: Hunting outside park	Y	<u>In Progress:</u> If hunting is an available tool we prioritize it over lethal removal		
6b	2nd: moving bison	N		Movement or quarantine are not effective tools to address outmigrations as very few animals can be accommodated with these approaches. Also, nearby appropriate lands are not available, and movement of non-quarantined bison outside of DSA is recommended against by the CWG (see rec #10 below). Movement of bison for purposes other than population limitation is being considered and has been addressed by habitat sub-committee.	
6c	3rd: translocation	Y/N	<u>In progress:</u> Post-quarantine bison only	Non-quarantined bison are not appropriate for translocation, new bison are not currently being taken into quarantine (consistent with recommendation #9 below). <u>Conditions for Revisiting:</u> Upon completion of feasibility	

Population Management					
CWG Rec#	Subject	Accepted ?	In Progress/to be implemented	Not possible/date or conditions for revisiting	Comments
6d	4th: lethal removal	Y	<u>In progress:</u> Lethal removal for population limitation is a last resort	study/ when and if operational quarantine becomes available	See note regarding lethal removal as a seroprevalence reduction tool in #3 above.
7	Quarantine should be economically justified in comparison with other means of producing Brucella-free Yellowstone bison for conservation purposes.	N		The quarantine feasibility study is wrapping up, and operational quarantine is not being considered, so there is no need to justify because there are no plans to continue quarantine study or initiate operational quarantine. <u>Conditions for Revisiting:</u> if plans are proposed to initiate operational quarantine for the purposes of producing brucella-free bison for conservation purposes.	
8	In order to locate bison to lands elsewhere, Montana should develop and implement a translocation process for bison leaving quarantine. The quarantine process should minimize infrastructure requirements for places receiving bison.	Y  N	<u>In Progress:</u> The purpose of quarantine feasibility study is to develop/implement this process	Infrastructure requirements are necessary until the post-quarantine assurance testing requirements have been completed. <u>Conditions for Revisiting:</u> After the initial post-quarantine bison have completed the testing protocol and feasibility study has been completed.	Outside of IBMP mandate/jurisdiction to find placements for Yellowstone bison. In absense of demand, there is no mandate for IBMP to create it.
9	Plan for disposition of bison before initiating quarantine	Y	<u>In Progress:</u> This was agreed upon by managers at December 2011 Chico meeting		

**Population Management**

CWG Rec#	Subject	Accepted ?	In Progress/to be implemented	Not possible/date or conditions for revisiting	Comments
10	Bison translocation and bison movement should not include moving seropositive animals outside the current DSA, and may preclude relocating seropositive animals to new areas within the DSA with the intent of establishing new herd ranges. The intent is to avoid establishing new sources of disease and new disease risks to cattle.	Y	<u>In Progress</u>		Clarification: CWG supports movement of potentially seropositive bison within DSA in order to establish new herd range in Taylor Fork/ Upper Gallatin/ Cabin Creek/ Porcupine/ Buffalo Horn Creek area. This issue is addressed by the habitat subcommittee
11	Minimize hazing of bulls  Minimize hazing of newborns	Y  Y	<u>In Progress:</u> bulls are hazed when outside tolerance zones or when they pose threats to safety or property within tolerance zone  <u>In Progress:</u> Efforts are made to minimize hazing of newborns and allow mothers/newborns to stay behind until recovered from birthing while staying within goals of plan. May 15 deadline is an issue for newborns on west side only.		
12	Discuss expected adverse weather events (similar to fire management) and work with involved entities (public and private) to develop and agree on	Y	<u>In Progress:</u> 2008 Adaptive Management adjustments require partners to develop a plan and reach consensus on management actions for each upcoming winter. This year's management plan was presented to the public at the December 2011 Chico meeting, however progress on this plan was limited due to public process (EA) and litigation on bison distribution. (See www.IBMP.info, 2008		

Population Management					
CWG Rec#	Subject	Accepted ?	In Progress/to be implemented	Not possible/date or conditions for revisiting	Comments
	contingency plans.		Adaptive Mgmt Adj 3.2c and 3.2d)		
13	Develop and work with the livestock industry to implement an effective cattle vaccine and protocol to reduce the risk of transmission and make bison presence/translocation more acceptable.  Support/secure funding for ongoing vaccine research.	Y  N	<u>In Progress:</u> All recent infected livestock had been vaccinated	Though some of the partner agencies have supported research and/or provided limited funding for research, this is not the primary role or mandate for these agencies and is beyond the scope of the IBMP. Research is primarily done at the university level.	<u>Clarification:</u> Vaccine is only effective at reducing likelihood of infected animal aborting, so vaccinating livestock does not address risk of transmission from infected bison to cattle and is therefore unlikely to increase acceptance of bison presence in proximity to cattle.
14	Lobby for removing the significant barriers that exist for Brucella abortus research because of the select agent listing.	N		Outside jurisdiction/mandate of IBMP. Citizens may consider initiating a grass-roots process.	
15	Develop and implement a strong, factual education component so an informed public is involved in the discussions.	Y	<u>To be Implemented:</u> subcommittee agrees this should be discussed and implemented, and recommends this be added to the agenda of the next meeting to identify/clarify how to implement (i.e. public seminars associated with IBMP meetings?) Also, Paul Cross with USGS is developing a website to provide information/education to the public, agencies should collaborate with Dr. Cross on this project.		

**Population Management**

CWG Rec#	Subject	Accepted ?	In Progress/to be implemented	Not possible/date or conditions for revisiting	Comments
16	Outside the Park, hazing and removals should be minimized in selected, suitable areas to establish year-round populations of Montana bison.	Y/N	<u>In progress:</u> consideration of select areas <b>with appropriate bison summer range</b> to support year round occupancy (i.e. Horse Butte) - this is addressed under habitat recommendations	For areas currently occupied by bison that are winter range: bison naturally migrate out of these areas to summer range. It is not a priority to encourage occupancy on winter range year round, as there would be heavy impacts to spring/summer vegetation that could reduce winter forage, and there is abundant summer range available in the park. <u>Conditions for Revisiting:</u> If/when plans to increase tolerance for bison in the Gardiner Basin during winter have been implemented and impacts/public tolerance assessed (recommend 2 winters to assess), potential benefits/costs of year-round bison presence should be discussed	Increasing tolerance for bison year round on periphery of YNP would likely result in few animals remaining (mostly bulls), but would minimize need to haze in spring and might increase availability of bulls for harvest in the fall.

Risk Reduction			
CWG Rec#	Priority	If accepted	If rejected
1. QA(1)	Low		Already in progress 1. Vaccine research is ongoing
1. QB(2)	Mod		Not possible now due to: 1. Elk not being considered
1. QC(3)	High		Set revisiting date 1. After CWG reaches consensus and receives requested information from IBMP partners.
2. QA(5)	Low		Not possible now due to: 1. Not role of IBMP to enforce statewide OCV 2. Impractical due to significant challenges and cost
2. QA(6)	Low		Not possible now due to: 1. Lobbying for change in select agent listing is outside IBMP Jurisdiction 2. Recommendation should be responsibility of CWG
3	Low		Already in progress 1. Scientific study published
4	Low		Already in progress 1. Website available with research articles
5	Low		Set revisiting date 1. Recommendation should be responsibility of CWG
6	High		Not possible now due to: 1. No consensus/clarity from CWG on use of capture facilities 2. Recommendation to Increase habitat outside the park is not a focus of the brucellosis reduction subcommittee
7	High		Not possible now due to: 1. No consensus/clarity from CWG on vaccination of bison
8	Low		Not possible now due to: 1. To be addressed by education group
9	Mod		Already in progress: 1. Target completion date 2015

## Appendix C.—CWG Recommendations to the IBMP Partners

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### CITIZENS WORKING GROUP ON YELLOWSTONE BISON

Presentation of Recommendations to IBMP Partners (30 Nov 2011, Chico Hot Springs, Pray MT)

#### INTRODUCTION

These Citizens Working Group recommendations are the result of a collaborative effort among diverse interests seeking responsible management solutions for Yellowstone bison. After nearly a year of discussions, we were able to come to consensus on many significant issues, as laid out in this document. We strove to find both broad and detailed solutions, as we were not bound by fragmented agency authority that sometimes precludes an integrated approach to assessment and management of landscapes. We hope these recommendations will serve as a starting point for agency action involving continued public discussion.

#### BACKGROUND

At the August, 2010 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, the agency Partners reaffirmed their desire to see the creation of an open citizens' process. Several Partners noted that they would be open to, and highly motivated to listen to, input from a diverse, citizen-formed working group (CWG) that included strong representation from livestock and bison conservation interests. In response, Matt Skoglund of the Natural Resources Defense Council and Ariel Overstreet of the Montana Stockgrowers Association convened an initial CWG meeting in November, 2010. Their assessment was that the time was ripe for a CWG to provide input to the IBMP process with the goal to get a diverse group of Montanans together to try to move the issue of Yellowstone bison forward. The IBMP Partners agreed to provide funding for professional facilitation of a CWG.

The first public meeting of the Yellowstone Bison Citizens Working Group was convened on February 22, 2011 in Bozeman. This and all subsequent meetings were facilitated by Virginia Tribe. The initial and subsequent meetings were open to any and all interested citizens, however continued attendance over the course of the series of meetings was expected. The group's ground rules included welcoming any and all participation by citizens, but with the recognition that late comers would need to integrate into the state of the discussions, i.e., late comers could not reset the process but must accept where the group has arrived at from its past deliberations and be willing to go forward from there. Meetings were held monthly from February through November, with all but one occurring in Bozeman (the May meeting was held in Gardiner). Typically 25-30 citizens attended, and in every meeting there was a diversity of interests that included local residents living with bison, business owners, livestock producers, sportsmen, bison conservation advocates and other interested citizens. The group operated by consensus.

The Yellowstone Bison Citizens Working Group discussed a large range of issues relating to bison and cattle management, and brucellosis. Ultimately, the CWG focused its discussion on three major topic areas:

- I. Brucellosis risk reduction,
- II. Bison population management, and
- III. Bison habitat.

This report describes the actions we were able to reach consensus on within these three topic areas. In addition, an education group was formed to suggest approaches to create and implement well-designed education programs covering a number of topics and with a variety of useful approaches.

Several overlapping actions were recommended repeatedly in separate discussions by the three different working group subcommittees (risk reduction, population management, and habitat) because each group recognized the value of that action to achieving the desired end results in their topic area. For example, these overlapping recommendations among the three topic groups included completion of the statewide Montana bison conservation plan, the importance of fair chase hunting as a management tool, the need to emphasize risk reduction efforts in livestock, and the need to remove obstacles to further research on *Brucella abortus*. We recognize that many of the CWG recommendations are not new, and indeed many are already underway. What is new is the degree of agreement about prioritization and the willingness to work openly toward mutually satisfactory solutions.

The participants in the CWG are pleased to present our consensus recommendations. We appreciate the financial support provided by the IBMP Partners to professionally facilitate our meetings, without which progress would have been difficult if not impossible. We recognize that the IBMP Partners cannot implement all of these recommendations on their own, but that continued progress on bison management will require the active participation of all interests.

## **I. RISK REDUCTION**

### **Issue Statement and Rationale**

Although many people would *like* to eradicate the disease in wildlife, we recognize that it is not possible to do that in the foreseeable future. Therefore it makes sense to focus primarily on reducing risk of transmission. We don't want debate and disagreement about the theoretical possibility of eradication to displace or distract from the more immediate, practical, cost-effective, and manageable obligations to minimize brucellosis occurrence in livestock. We believe that this strategy is proportionate and well-targeted because actual transmissions of brucellosis from wildlife to livestock are infrequent considering the presence of exposed elk in the Greater Yellowstone Area and bison in and near Yellowstone National Park for decades. We recognize that disease transmission is not the sole concern but believe that responsibly, explicitly addressing brucellosis risk will be a valuable prerequisite for an honest, constructive strategy for addressing other bison-related concerns.

### **Guiding Principles**

- a) Minimizing the risk of brucellosis transmission is desirable.
- b) Risk of transmission is greater when animals are concentrated.
- c) Vaccination of livestock is the most valuable available tool for reducing risk of disease transmission and for protecting public health.
- d) Bison represent cultural and spiritual values to many people.
- e) Our society's management of wild bison reflects important value judgments about wildlife and our relationship to it.
- f) Range management strategies may help reduce risk.
- g) We recognize that there are critical time periods (seasonality) for economic viability of livestock producers.
- h) Although many people would like to eradicate the disease in wildlife, we recognize that that is not possible in the near term. Therefore it makes sense to focus primarily on reducing risk of transmission.

- i) We recognize that even if risk of disease transmission is effectively eliminated, there will be other sources of conflict relating to bison management.
- j) Best management practices with regard to livestock are the responsibility of producers.

### **Recommendations**

1. Reduce risk of transmission of brucellosis from wildlife to livestock by improving implementation of currently known livestock vaccine protocols, and through further research and refinement of livestock vaccination.
2. Work with livestock industry to work toward adoption of mandatory statewide Official Calhhood Vaccination (OCV).
3. Lobby to modify the Select Agent List (Homeland Security) to enable improved livestock or other vaccine research on *Brucella abortus*.
4. Strongly encourage continued funding and research to develop a practical test on live animals to distinguish between infected and resistant animals. Given the epidemiological importance of building 'herd immunity,' it is important to develop the tools to allow us to stop managing animals as if seropositive is equivalent to 'infectious.'
5. Provide a clearinghouse and other opportunities to gather and report on research related to *Brucella abortus* and management tools from various research institutions to present to the public annually.
6. Reduce livestock/wildlife interactions at key seasons. This will include building upon and improving techniques already in use as well testing and application of other innovations (e.g. strategic hazing using low-stress animal handling methods; targeted fencing; guard dogs to keep wildlife off feedlines/haystacks/calving areas; trained dogs to locate fetal material to enable cleanup, and so forth).
7. Reduce artificial concentrations of animals (elk or bison) that may be exacerbating transmission. This principle applies to a variety of locations, and will require a variety of implementation strategies (e.g. at Stephens Creek where bison are intermittently confined; on private lands with restricted hunting where elk congregate; bison crowding in/near the Park; Wyoming feed grounds).
8. Remote vaccination of wild bison using the current vaccine and delivery method as a means of reducing risk of transmission should not be a priority at this time.
9. Education – to be addressed by the education group.
10. Advocate for completion of a Statewide Bison Management Plan. This is an overarching and persistent theme within the CWG. It is necessary not only as part of population management and habitat planning, but is also a sensible step toward developing risk management that is consistent with what we know about both bison and elk, in the interest of both livestock producers and wildlife advocates.

### **Desired End Result**

If risk reduction and education are successful, there will be:

- i. Better understanding among public and interest groups about actual risks of disease, economic risk of disease, and other risks associated with bison in the current environment.
- ii. Reduced risk.
- iii. View of bison as more asset than liability.
- iv. Improved discussion of finding habitat for wild bison inside and outside the Greater Yellowstone Area.
- v. Greater likelihood of agreement on improved population management approaches.

- vi. More constructive and direct discussion of how to address concerns about management of the range resource.
- vii. Development of an ongoing program of monitoring bison and human behavior. This learn-as-we-go approach will influence management decisions.
- viii. Landowners and residents will have an improved understanding of how to live with bison.

## **II. POPULATION MANAGEMENT**

### **Issue Statement and Rationale**

There is disagreement among agencies and the public about a population target for Yellowstone bison, what a target means, how it is determined and how management will occur given a target. There are sustainable, manageable bison populations in and around Yellowstone National Park. Federal and state agencies have different responsibilities when it comes to managing bison, and populations targets will depend on available suitable habitat both inside and outside the Park. Successful population and risk management strategies can facilitate making additional suitable habitat available for bison.

### **Guiding Principles**

- a) Bison can be an asset for Montana and other interests, such as Tribes, and an informed public is better able to see bison as an asset.
- b) Population management means not just population levels but also populations in designated areas, and consequently, population management has a strong connection to both available, suitable habitat and risk reduction.
- c) Herd dispersal is a legitimate population management tool. At the same time, bison may not be tolerated in all areas. Acceptable population levels will depend on risk management strategies.
- d) Wild bison are wildlife, not livestock, and should be managed more like wildlife. One factor in their management is the concern about brucellosis being transmitted from bison to cattle.
- e) Seasonal weather events are important factors influencing population management.
- f) Hunting is an effective tool for managing bison populations and offers sport hunting opportunities.
- g) Translocation (capture, transport and release) is an effective tool for managing the Yellowstone bison population, improving genetic diversity and allowing for establishment of bison conservation herds.
- h) Translocation should not result in brucellosis seropositive bison being put in new locations outside the current Designated Surveillance Area (DSA) or along the edges of the current DSA.
- i) Legal mandates and administrative policies for managing natural resources, including bison, differ between the National Park Service and the State of Montana.

### **Recommendations**

1. Modify the Interagency Bison Management Plan Zones 1, 2, and 3 with an eye to finding better habitat solutions particularly in light of changes that have occurred since zones were designated in 2000. Identify habitat that can alleviate population pressure, including available public and private lands, and potential habitat acquisition as well as potential funding sources.

2. Strive to manage bison as wildlife, and complete, implement, and support a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks management plan that includes setting bison population objectives and hunting strategies as a priority population management tool.
3. Make hunting a bigger component of bison management and consider different seasons or other opportunities to increase the impact of hunting. Outside the Park, the main means for controlling bison abundance and distribution should be state-administered and tribal hunting. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should test new methods for dispersing hunting in time and space. A late-winter hunt for yearlings only should be tested for hunter interest and public acceptance. "Depredation" hunts should be available throughout the year and used to manage bison distribution. Other means of population control should include fencing bison out of areas where they are not welcome, and using fire, fertilizers or other habitat management to attract bison to areas where they are welcome. Lethal removal by agency personnel should be a last resort.
4. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Tribes hunting Yellowstone bison should work more closely together to set collective hunt targets and to document the hunting success numbers.
5. Agree on and establish a target population range that is biologically and ecologically acceptable and accounts for a variety of public interests. As Interagency Bison Management Partners, agree on criteria for evaluating and determining a population range and appropriate management tools, such as:
  - a. Winter range outside the Park (target population range could change to reflect changes in habitat availability),
  - b. Risk factors,
  - c. Individual agency management mandates, constraints and responsibilities (such as the National Park Service's mandate to manage its resources unimpaired for future generation and its natural regulation policy),
  - d. Genetic diversity, population structure and demographics, reproduction, and distribution,
  - e. Realistic opportunity for addressing private land owners' concerns, and
  - f. Hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.
6. When bison have to be removed because of high migration numbers, management constraints, safety, etc., the priorities should be (in order):
  - a. Hunting outside the park,
  - b. Moving them to nearby appropriate available lands,
  - c. Translocation from the Yellowstone area (capture, quarantine, transport and release), and
  - d. Lethal removal by managing agencies.
7. Quarantine should be economically justified in comparison with other means of producing *Brucella*-free Yellowstone bison for conservation purposes.
8. In order to locate bison to lands elsewhere, Montana should develop and implement a translocation process for bison leaving quarantine. The quarantine process should minimize infrastructure requirements for places receiving bison.
9. Determining where bison completing quarantine will go and *how* they will be restored and conserved on the landscape, with the highest priority on managing them as public and tribal wildlife, must precede capturing bison and implementing quarantine. Recipients of quarantined bison must be identified and an acceptable, appropriate translocation process must be in place prior to quarantining Yellowstone bison. This determination of where bison will go should be integrated with all Fish, Wildlife and Parks or other assessments of relocation possibilities for wild bison in Montana.

10. Bison translocation and bison movement should not include moving seropositive animals outside the current DSA, and may preclude relocating seropositive animals to new areas within the DSA with the intent of establishing new herd ranges. The intent is to avoid establishing new sources of disease and new disease risks to cattle.
11. Hazing of bulls should be minimized, unless there are issues with property damage or safety, because they are not a factor in the issue of brucellosis transmission. Hazing of newborn calves should be minimized for humane reasons.
12. Discuss expected adverse weather events (similar to fire management) and work with involved entities (public and private) to develop and agree on contingency plans.
13. Develop and work with the livestock industry to implement an effective cattle vaccine and protocol to reduce the risk of transmission and make bison presence/translocation more acceptable. Support/secure funding for ongoing vaccine research.
14. Lobby for removing the significant barriers that exist for *Brucella abortus* research because of the select agent listing.
15. Develop and implement a strong, factual education component so an informed public is involved in the discussions.
16. Outside the Park, hazing and removals should be minimized in selected, suitable areas to establish year-round populations of Montana bison. This approach should be pursued incrementally in a “learn as we go” fashion. This will be a public process that identifies the boundaries of the area and a contingency plan if bison leave that area.

#### **Desired End Results**

- i. Bison population targets are agreed-upon and explained. In order to discuss bison population targets, we need to have agreed-upon target ranges and be able to explain all the factors that are considered in establishing target ranges that ensure, sustainable, and manageable populations of bison.
- ii. The unique genetic diversity of Yellowstone bison is protected. There is significant interest in protecting and conserving the genetic diversity of the Yellowstone bison, and that diversity can be affected by how we manage the bison.
- iii. The DSA is not expanded. (Any expansion of the current DSA will create additional hardships for producers and the recommendations are intended to ensure the DSA is not expanded.) The rights of private property owners are respected. Issues relating to bison presence on private property should be resolved.
- iv. A variety of tools are used for managing bison. Hunting; moving bison to nearby areas; translocation of brucellosis-free bison to nonadjacent areas; and lethal removal are possible tools if bison must be removed when population targets are exceeded. Agencies are working together to minimize and eventually eliminate the mass slaughter of bison. Hunting opportunities are available for State-authorized and tribal hunters.
- v. Translocation target areas must be determined if that tool is to be used. Translocation may be an appropriate tool when bison must be removed from the areas immediately north and west of Yellowstone. Since translocated Yellowstone bison must go through quarantine first, Montana should ensure that before an operational quarantine is fully implemented, translocation target areas are identified and an acceptable, appropriate translocation process is in place that only moves brucellosis-free bison.

### III. HABITAT EFFECTIVENESS/HABITAT EXPANSION

#### Issue Statement and Rationale

The rationale for our habitat recommendations is based upon the fact that the current bison population does not have access to enough year-round habitat. Significant habitat, however, exists outside Yellowstone National Park which includes National Forest lands. We'd like to see bison have access to more of this habitat allowing for more fair-chase hunting as a management tool which is more desirable than the expenditure of taxpayer dollars for haze, capture, and slaughter practices. That said, we think that local public input (i.e. residents and private property owners) is critical to habitat expansion and should be given a high priority in the process. The habitat exists, win-win solutions to protect landowners exist, and we hope to see the winter and year-round habitat expanded for the bison population.

#### Guiding Principles

- a) We believe that bison should be managed. We recognize that some bison are wildlife and some are commercially owned.
- b) We believe that Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has a right and a responsibility to manage brucellosis-free bison as wildlife in the State of Montana.
- c) We recognize that there are varied economic and cultural interests associated with bison.
- d) Yellowstone National Park bison need year-round habitat and the Park has limited year-round habitat. We believe there are year-round opportunities for bison outside the Park.
- e) We recognize that there are public and private property rights issues associated with bison habitat and bison management.
- f) We believe that agencies should acknowledge their responsibility to allow bison on State and Federal lands managed as wildlife habitat.
- g) We believe that feed grounds are not legitimate alternatives to wildlife habitat.
- h) We believe any translocation of Yellowstone bison to an area where they would be geographically separate from Yellowstone herds should be brucellosis free.
- i) We believe brucellosis-free bison should be available to entities/localities that desire them and are adequately prepared to accept and manage them as wildlife.
- j) We acknowledge Tribes' cultural and other interests in restoring bison to Tribal lands and life ways and recognize that their management strategies might be different than ours.

#### Recommendations

1. Identify public lands that could/should be open to bison year-round in accordance with state and federal law.
2. Systematically identify suitable, available habitat outside Yellowstone National Park in the Greater Yellowstone Area (i.e., Federal, State and Private lands)
3. Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically:
  - a. Hebgen Basin
    - i. Designate Horse Butte Peninsula and the Flats as year-round bison habitat by May 2012 following an adequate public process for this management change.

- ii. By the end of 2012, interview and map landowners to identify where bison are welcome, unwelcome, which landowners are on the fence and what their reservations are.
  - iii. By the end of 2013, implement adequate fencing or acceptable alternatives.
- b. Gardiner Basin
  - i. By the end of 2012, interview and map landowners to identify where bison are welcome, unwelcome, which landowners are on the fence and what their reservations are.
  - ii. By the end of 2013, implement adequate fencing or acceptable alternatives.
  - iii. Following the interview process and implementation of fencing/alternative strategies, consider designating the Gardiner Basin year-round habitat using an adequate public process.
- c. Beyond the Gardiner Basin
  - i. Based on a minimum of two years of bison experience in the Gardiner Basin, and
  - ii. Using adequate public process, consider allowing bison to roam on Dome Mountain Ranch, Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area and surrounding lands with landowner concurrence.
- d. Upper Gallatin/Taylor Fork/Cabin Creek/Porcupine/Buffalo Horn Creek, etc.
  - i. Begin a public process to evaluate opportunities for reintroduction and management of bison in this area, including within Yellowstone National Park.
  - ii. Start work to amend/alter State and Federal Management Plans and other decisions to account for the presence of bison on the landscape and take responsibility/be accountable for successfully implementing those plans regarding bison.
- e. Additional Habitat Areas
  - i. Immediately initiate and complete by the end of 2013 the statewide bison management plan to restore wild bison to additional biologically suitable, socially acceptable areas.

**Desired End Results**

- i. Expanded habitat with private land-owner concerns addressed.
- ii. Habitat expansion and use modification that results in minimal use of management tools such as hazing, capture, slaughter, invasive procedures, etc.
- iii. Measurable, annual results.

## Appendix D.—Abbreviations

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- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BB—Brooklyn Baptiste
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- BM—Brian McCluskey
- CM—Christian Mackay
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- CWG—Citizens’ Working Group
- DH—David Hallac
- DSA—Designated Surveillance Zone
- DW—Dan Wenk
- EA—Environmental Assessment
- EC—Earvin Carlson
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GNF—Gallatin National Forest
- GWA—Gallatin Wildlife Association
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- ITBC— Inter Tribal Buffalo Council
- JS—Jim Stone
- KL—Keith Lawrence
- MBOL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MD—Marna Daley
- MDOL—Montana Department of Livestock
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MEPA—Montana Environmental Policy Act
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- MK—Michael Keator
- ML—Mike Lopez
- MO—McCoy Oatman
- MOU—Memorandum of Understanding
- MR—Majel Russell
- MSGA—Montana Stockgrowers Association
- MSU—Montana State University
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- NGO—Non-governmental organizations
- NP—Nez Perce
- NPS—National Park Service
- NPCA—National Parks Conservation Alliance
- NRDC—Natural Resources Defense Council
- 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
- SB—Scott Bischke
- SEIS—Supplemental EIS
- SK—Salish Kootenai
- SS— Sam Sheppard
- TM—Tom McDonald
- USFWS—US Fish and Wildlife Service
- USGS—US Geological Survey
- WMA—state of MT wildlife management areas
- YELL—Yellowstone National Park
- YNP—Yellowstone National Park