

Briefing Statement

AGENCY: Department of Livestock

ISSUE: Recommend Adjustment to the Adaptive Management Plan for the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP)

DATE: July 21, 2016

Recommended Adjustment

Adopt the geographic boundaries for bison tolerance based on the Erratum Decision Notice issued by the Governor of Montana on June 14, 2016.

Management action 1.1.a – Consistent with the management responses outlined in the Governor of Montana’s Environmental Assessment (EA) Decision Notice of December 22, 2015 and the Erratum Decision Notice of June 14, 2016 (quoted here and as further quoted [quotes not shown] or paraphrased elsewhere throughout this plan), state agency managers at the Montana Department of Livestock and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks are provided “...management discretion on the ground to address potential threats as they are anticipated or arise, rather than simply applying a uniform, inflexible management response that at times may be unnecessary and costly.”

- Hebgen Basin. – YNP bison *will* have access year-round to Horse Butte, and north along U.S. Highway 191 up to and including the Taylor Fork Drainage, as well as the Cabin Creek Wildlife Management Area and the Monument Mountain Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness (year-round tolerance has been allowed in the Cabin Creek and Monument Mountain areas since the original IBMP in 2000). YNP bison *will not* have access south of the south fork of the Madison River or south side of the Madison arm of Hebgen Lake outside YNP, and in that area will continue to be managed under the 2000 IBMP Record of Decision and subsequent adaptive management changes.

Management action 3.2.b – There will be effective haze back date for the West side expanded tolerance area covered under the Governor of Montana’s EA Decision Notice of December 22nd, 2015 (see Western Management Area map at the end of this plan). YNP bison will not have access south of the south fork of the Madison River or south side of the Madison arm of Hebgen Lake outside YNP, and in that area will continue to be managed under the 2000 IBMP Record of Decision and subsequent adaptive management changes. This area has been, and will continue to be, an area of complex and specialized management that needs to be addressed through further adaptive management actions.

Background

On December 22, 2015 the Governor of Montana released an Environmental Assessment Decision Notice expanding year-round tolerance for bison outside of YNP. However, the maps released for the West side of the park did not exactly match the text of the decision. On June 14, 2016 the Governor of Montana released an Erratum Decision Notice amending the previous EA decision so that the text accurately reflected the maps provided with the decision.

Rationale for Adjustment

In April 2016 the IBMP partners updated the Adaptive Management Plan to reflect the Governor’s EA decision. This change would update the Adaptive Management Plan to reflect the Governor’s Erratum Decision Notice and keep the Adaptive Management Plan consistent with the Governor’s intent and final decision.