

Briefing Statement

AGENCY: Nez Perce Tribe

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

DATE: July 28, 2016

Recommended Adjustment

The current IBMP AM Plan states:

- Management Action 1.3.d—Consider a voluntary compensation program for livestock owners who agree to release livestock on private land beyond May 15.

We recommend that this be changed to say:

- Management Action 1.3.d—Consider a voluntary compensation program for livestock owners who agree to release livestock on private land beyond May 15. *In addition, encourage the Custer Gallatin National Forest to build flexibility regarding turnout dates into grazing permittees' Annual Operating Instructions.*

Background / Rationale for proposed change

Research indicates that the bison that exit Yellowstone National Park during the winter months begin making their return journey to the Park between April and June each spring. (Thein et al. 2009; Wilmers et al. 2013).

In order to allow Yellowstone bison to act and migrate naturally, the Tribe makes the proposed change to the IBMP AM Plan shown above.

Section 1.3.d of the IBMP AM Plan addresses private land but not public land Annual Operating Instructions. The recommendation is to change the adaptive management plan to address livestock turnout dates on public land.

The Tribe suggests that the AM Plan encourage the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) to build flexibility regarding turnout dates into grazing permittees' Annual Operating Instructions. This will enable CGNF to alter turnout dates if bison are present or migrating through an allotment, thereby allowing bison to move freely on the range as they head back to their summering areas within Yellowstone National Park. It will also enhance separation between cattle and bison as livestock owners utilize their public land grazing allotments, thereby reducing the possibility of disease transmission.

References

- Thein, T.R., F.G.R. Watson, S.S. Cornish, T.N. Anderson, W.B. Newman, and R.E. Lockwood. 2009 – The ecology of large mammals in central Yellowstone: Sixteen years of integrated field studies. Elsevier, San Diego, CA.
- Wilmers, C.C., K. Ram, F.G.R. Watson, P.J. White, D.W. Smith, and T. Levi. 2013 – Climate and vegetation phenology: Predicting the effects of warming temperatures.