

# Winter Operations (2015-2016)

Manage for a decreasing  
population (~4,900-5,000)

Primarily use hunting for  
removals

Capture/cull after February  
15, if necessary



# Outcomes

**Little to no decrease in  
population after calving  
(~4,800-5,200)**

**Hunting, by itself, has not been  
sufficient to limit population  
growth**

**Culling doesn't consistently  
reach removal objectives due  
to variable annual migrations**



NPS Photo/Neal Herbert

# Carrying Capacity

**Coughenour (2005): Capacity for 3,200 bison in northern Yellowstone with 5,000 elk**

**Currently at ~3,400-3,600 bison and >5,000 elk**

**Grass consumption exceeded 70% in some areas of the Lamar Valley (2012-2016)**



# Assessment

**Further increases in numbers (north) are not sustainable without a larger distribution**

**Currently, hunting cannot be the only tool used to reduce bison numbers**

**Other tools (e.g., hunting pastures, quarantine, and slaughter) are necessary**



NPS Photo/Jim Peaco

# Assessment *continued*

**Remove more bison during  
harder winters with larger  
migrations to boundary**

**Positive community relations  
are important**

**Need objectives for both  
conservation and conflict  
resolution**



NPS Photo/Jim Peaco

# 2016-2017 Operations

**Reduce numbers to <3,000 bison on northern range**

**Allow bison to distribute on landscape and hunt where feasible and responsible**

**Cull 50-100 bison per week for meat, quarantine, and research**

**Implement larger culls if larger migration (<25% of population)**



# Alternate Tools

Help meet management objectives by providing meat and live bison to tribes

2011 - 2016	MT	CSKT	Nez Perce	ShoBan	CTUR	ITBC	APHIS	Other
Removed (2,343)	181	1005	434	39	179	359	120	26
Harvest (58%)	13%	39%	32%	3%	13%	0	0	0
Culled (42%)	0	49%	0	0	0	36%	13%	2%

