

Summary Report from the Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting April 6, 2017



First draft presented 25 April 2017 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke

The following summary report reflects activities at the April 6, 2017 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held at the Holiday Inn West in West Yellowstone, MT. This report comes from the flip chart notes of facilitator Scott Bischke¹. The report will be marked *Draft* until formal Partner agreement to making it final before the start of their next meeting. The eight Partner attendees were Don Herriott (APHIS), Leonard Gray (CSKT), Leroy Adams, Jr (ITBC), Martin Zaluski (MDOL), Sam Sheppard (MFWP), Quincy Ellenwood (NPT), Daniel Wenk (NPS-YNP), and Mary Erickson (USFS-CGNF). Mike Honeycutt of MBOL was not in attendance, but MDOL and MBOL act as substitutes for each other as allowed under Partner Protocols. In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~25 staff members from across IBMP organizations and ~55 members of the public were present at various times during the day.

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Action items identified

Action items identified during this meeting

#	Who	What	By when
1	SB	Post the Dec 2017 meeting report to the website as final	ASAP
2a,b,c	(a) SB (b) Partners (c) ME	At the conclusion of this discussion, the Partners gave the facilitator the task of capturing the materials recorded regarding how they could operate more efficiently and then synthesizing those items into a possible actions list (** action item 2a). Facilitator sends to Partners for review and to collect any feedback (**action item 2b). That submitted to Lead Partner as basis for a later Partner call to be organized by the Lead Partner to assess agreement with the plan put forward (**action item 2c). Goal to hold this Partner phone call before June 1 st . The Partners gave explicit direction that they want to focus on outcomes with no labels on any subcommittee/work groups, should they be recommended.	Before (a) May 1 (b) May 15 (c) Jun 1
3	ME	Determine if there will be a field trip on Aug 2, the day before the next IBMP meeting and communicate decision to Partners.	ASAP
4	QE	Talk with the other tribal entities at the next tribal working group meeting to determine if a Lapwai location is best for the Spring 2018 IBMP meeting.	By next meeting

Agreeing to previous meeting minutes

The meeting started with introductions of Partners, staff, and all members of the general public in attendance, followed by a short review of IBMP history. Then the facilitator asked if there were any objections or changes to the draft meeting report from the December 2016 meeting, and noted the report has been available in draft for review since shortly after that meeting. No objections were brought forth. Thus the facilitator, per Partner Protocols, is to post the December 2016 meeting notes to IBMP.info as *final* (** action item 1).

Discussion of 2016/2017 Winter IBMP Operations to date

The Partners based their discussion of winter operations to date on a 3-page data summary document that categorizes how bison were removed from the ecosystem during the 2016/2017 winter season. That sheet is inserted here in its entirety on the pages that follow. (It is also available on the IBMP website; see <http://ibmp.info/library.php> and then click the *Risk Management Action Reports* pull down.) Topics covered in this discussion use table labels (i.e., 1,2,3,4) as shown in the inserted document.

Note that the discussion captured in this report focuses on items not directly addressed in the 3-page data summary document.

Bison Management Operations Winter 2016-17:

Table 1. Summary of Yellowstone bison removed through state and treaty harvests and culled through consignment to slaughter, quarantine, or research facilities, or dying within containment. Table abbreviations are adult (A), yearling (Y), calf (C), and unknown sex (Unk). Harvest numbers are preliminary, in-season totals that may change.

Date	Removal Method	NORTH						WEST					
		Male		Female		Unk		Male		Female		Unk	
		A	Y	A	Y	Unk	C	A	Y	A	Y	Unk	C
Nov 1 – March 8	Harvest (Mont)	25		9		0	0	12		16		0	2
	Harvest (CSKT)	27		72		0	25	24		18		6	9
	Harvest (NPT)	12		7		51	0	0		0		8	0
	Harvest (CTUIR)	31		25		0	25	0		0		0	0
	Harvest (SB)	7		7		6	2	0		0		0	0
	Harvest (YN)	4		9		0	0	0		0		0	0
	NPS ¹	0		1		14	0	0		0		0	0
Feb 8 - Mar 16	Consigned to Tribes							748					
	Held ^{2,3}							0					
Year to Date	HARVEST	106	0	130	0	70	52	36	0	34	0	14	11
	CULL	37	102	310	93	0	206	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	143	102	440	93	70	258	36	0	34	0	14	11
								1106					

¹ - Wounded animals shot by NPS.

² - Approximate number of animals being held in the Stephens Creek Facility for release during spring

³ - As winter operations began in early January, 40 bison captured in winter 2016 were still held at Stephens Creek facility: 15 females were transferred to tribes for slaughter on February 8, 1 male was dispatched due to injury on February 7, and 24 males remain in captivity at the facility. These animals are not included in the summary tables.

Table 2. Bison tested for brucellosis exposure (positive + negative -) within the Stephens Creek Capture Facility.

Date	Male						Female					
	Adult		Yearling		Calf		Adult		Yearling		Calf	
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Feb 8- March 15	24	8	37	68	4	86	199	110	36	72	5	94
Total	227						516					

<u>Disposition of Captured Bison:</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Transferred to Tribes:	748
Transferred for research:	0
Being held for potential quarantine:	35
Mortalities within the Stephens Creek Facility:	2
Released:	1
Approximate number of animals being held within the Stephens Creek Facility for eventual consignment or release:	0

Table 3. Numbers of bison counted in the Gardiner basin by ground observers during winter 2016-17. Bison held within the Stephens Creek Capture Facility are not included in counts.

Date	Mammoth to Gardiner	North Entrance Station to Stephens Creek Facility	Stephens Creek Facility to Park Boundary	North of Park Boundary	Eagle Creek SMA	Total
1/3/2017	80	29	0	37	0	146
1/5/2017	30	70	0	40	0	140
1/9/2017	56	128	0	31	0	215
1/11/2017	182	25	6	0	0	213
1/20/2017	78	80	4	0	3	165
1/23/2017	50	75	0	1	5	131
1/25/2017	158	7	6	22	4	197
1/30/2017	52	116	7	78	0	253
2/6/2017	160	67	11	1	13	252
2/9/2017	264	60	58	10	0	392
2/13/2017	23	472	2	1	0	498
2/21/2017	189	67	36	1	7	300
2/27/2017	210	76	24	0	6	316
3/6/2017	281	87	35	15	5	423
3/13/2017	124	100	61	12	3	300

Table 4. Daily number of bison counted by ground observers outside the northern boundary of Yellowstone National Park, daily estimated number of bison captured in the Stephens Creek Facility, and unconfirmed estimates of animals harvested by hunters.³

Date	Out-of-park maximum Count	Harvests	Captured
1/7 – 2/1/2017		207	401
2/2/2017	75	6	
2/4/2017	19	2	2
2/5/2017	13		
2/6/2017	13		
2/7/2017	22	1	
2/8/2017	50		97
2/9/2017	29	5	
2/10/2017	32		
2/11/2017	52		
2/12/2017	55	8	
2/13/2017	28		
2/14/2017		1	
2/15/2017		4	
2/16/2017	22	9	
2/17/2017	0		
2/18/2017	5	4	
2/19/2017	0		
2/20/2017	5	8	
2/21/2017	20	5	
2/22/2017	19	8	
2/23/2017	26		24
2/24/2017	24	10	18
2/25/2017	24	9	52
2/26/2017	4		
2/27/2017	8		
2/28/2017	15		56
3/1/2017	40	3	
3/2/2017	46	5	
3/3/2017	8		50
3/4/2017			
3/5/2017		3	
3/6/2017	12		41
3/7/2017	24		
3/8/2017	20		
3/9/2017			
3/10/2017	50		
3/11/2017	18	4	
3/12/2017	17		
3/13/2017	15		22
3/14/2017	15		
3/15/2017			

⁴Numbers of bison counted outside the park in tables 3 and 4 may not match because counts were conducted by different observers and at different times of the day.

OVERALL REMOVALS VERSUS PLAN

In their 2016-17 Winter Operations Plan (available at <http://ibmp.info/library.php>), the Partners committed to bison population removals sufficient to decrease the bison population:

The IBMP members have decided to manage for a decreasing population during the winter of 2016-2017. The IBMP members plan to manage numbers and distribution of bison through public and treaty harvests in Montana. Also, the NPS will initiate, with support from IBMP partners, capture operations at Stephen's Creek throughout the winter season to meet population management and conflict resolution objectives. During capture operations, sufficient numbers of bison will be allowed to pass by the facility to continue to provide treaty and state hunting opportunities.

Overall removals (see Table 1 above) from the ecosystem during winter 2016/17 operations exceeded 1200 animals. Based on modeling efforts described by NPS biologists (see document titled "Status Report on the Yellowstone Bison Population, August 2016" available at <http://ibmp.info/library.php>), this level of removal appears to successfully meet the numbers needed to achieve the IBMP goal of managing for a decreased population:

About 900 animals (70% adult, 10% yearlings, 20% calves; 60% females and 40% males) would need to be removed during winter 2016-2017 to stabilize population growth.

During the IBMP meeting the demographic makeup of animals removed (e.g., adults vs yearlings as just described in the NPS modeling efforts) was not discussed. For completeness, the facilitator here presents two relevant calculations from the data shown in Table 1:

- Adult removal rate was: $(143+440+70+36+34+14)*100 / (1106+95) = 61\%$
- Female removal rate was: $(440+93+34)*100 / (1106+95) = 47\%$

HUNT RESULTS

The state of Montana, CSKT, NPT, SBT, and Yakama tribe all described the results of their hunts, mostly focused on harvest numbers, as shown in Table 1.

LW of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe said that the SBT were not a Stephens' Treaty tribe but a Doughty Treaty tribe. The Tribe wants to be proactive on the landscape and recognizes the need for relocating bison. He said the Tribe welcomes everyone to their homeland.

SS noted that one of his game wardens moved to Miles City in part because of job stress associated with management of the bison hunt.

STATUS OF NEW TRIBE(S) PARTICIPATING IN HUNT

Edwin Lewis of the Yakama described that this was the first time in over 100 years that the Tribe had hunted bison. Edwin said that hunters from his nation felt great happiness in being able to take part in the hunt. The Tribal Council had a ceremony for each bison taken.

Throughout other parts of the winter ops discussion, multiple statements from multiple Partners and staff were made to the effect that as more hunters take part in the hunt, the potential for more conflict with homeowners or other hunters increases, as does the potential for increased safety issues.

EVALUATION OF BISON DISTRIBUTION, INCLUDING USE (OR NOT) OF NEWEST NORTH AND WEST SIDE TOLERANCE AREAS

ME noted that the hunt seems to be successful at getting bison to tribes, but not at getting bison onto the landscape. Some discussion focused on bison generally getting further from the Park on the West Side than on the North Side because the latter is largely open country while the former has greater timber cover (for example, between West Yellowstone and Horse Butte).

Some debate occurred regarding whether operation of the Stephens' Creek trap during the hunt hinders success of the hunt due to fewer animals moving out of the Park. QE said it is far better to have the bison hunted

than shipped to slaughter and that we should work to make the hunt more successful and less of an every-person-for-themselves affair. QE said that the trap is not what God intended, and that the trap impacts the NPT way of life and the NPT as a sovereign. Counter-arguments were put forward, including that keeping the Stephens' Creek trap closed until later in the season (until later than February 15th), as was tried last year as a one-time effort, did not seem to make a significant difference to the level of hunting success. In fact, a) more bison were harvested this year than last, and b) the removal was not sufficient to meet the goal of a decreasing bison population. Others noted that nothing will change until there is a change in the behavior of shooting bison the moment they cross out of the Park at Beattie Gulch. Given that immediate hunting pressure at the Park boundary, some radio-collared bison are known to flee from there and head back deep into the Park, not to return to the boundary again.

RW suggested a review of the Partner management actions based on Partner discussion of three areas: 1) What is the winter population goal? 2) What is the winter distribution goal? 3) What are the common interest Partners share for bison outside of the Park? He further asked, could bison be moved to a terminal hunting location/reserve?

Another line of discussion, as it has been in the past, was that the Stephens' Creek trap could be moved to Cutler Meadow, allowing bison to move further out on the landscape before some of them are trapped. Some argued such a change would allow more bison to move farther out away from the Park—where they would be available to hunters—than currently. Additionally, with more bison on the landscape Partners could better learn where bison might try to move/migrate to in the tolerance area outside the Park. Others argued that moving the trap would simply move the firing line to Cutler Meadow, not eliminate it.

A couple of years back many bison came out of the North Side of the Park. Upon a Partner's question, Jeff Mount of MDOL said that during that year bison dispersed to many areas including Cutler Meadow, Yankee Jim Lake, the head of Sphinx Creek, Green Lake, and eventually north of the cattle guard at Yankee Jim Canyon and into Paradise Valley. MZ noted that since we have history of bison moving into Paradise Valley once they get up to Yankee Jim Canyon, moving the Stephens' Creek trap to Cutler Meadow might not be the best idea.

SS and TM both agreed that bison *definitely do* respond to hunting pressure. TM said the Partners need to get a better understanding of hunting pressure and how it impacts animal movement. As he has stated in the past, TM said the CSKT do not believe the Partners have maximized the potential of hunting to remove bison from the population.

QE stated that the Partners could do a better job of partnering with private property owners so that all hunters could access at least some of private lands. He also noted that bison are used to lots of pressure from people and cars inside YNP and asked why can't we get that same kind of tolerance for bison outside of the Park? (Here SS suggested that the NPT set up a meeting with the people of Gardiner.) QE asked again if trapping needs to happen during the hunt. He also asked how the Partners can a) increase the tolerance zone, b) allow bison to develop herd memory for migrating across the landscape. QE noted that current issues will likely multiply as more and more sovereign nations come to hunt on the edge of YNP.

For the North Side, data presented in Tables 3 and 4 shows that the maximum number of bison counted outside of the Park on any day from Feb 2-Mar 14 was around 75. The maximum number in the entire Gardiner Basin (inside or outside the Park) during the same time was almost 500 animals.

PJ noted that there is frustration surrounding bison distribution since the animals face a firing line as they exit the Park, plus they have not made use of the new tolerance zone and seem not to be able to make it there on their own. Why, PJ asked, can't we treat bison like elk?

CULLS /TRANSFER /DISTRIBUTION OF BISON TO PROCESSING FACILITIES

As in the past, several statements were made about closing the Stephens' Creek trap, either entirely or at least during the hunting season. SS noted that given the level of removals the Partners had agreed upon (i.e., manage to a decreasing population), and the fact that the hunt cannot remove that many animals, the trap needs to remain open. Also, given that more bison were harvested by hunt this year than last year, SS said he felt confident the Park had done a good job of allowing sufficient numbers of bison past the trap.

MZ asked if the percent of bison in the Stephens' Creek facility testing sero-positive had increased this year (see Table 2). Though not having had a rigorous look at the data, RW said he thought it was about the same, roughly 60-70% sero-positive for animals greater than 5-years old.

PJ noted that distribution to tribes and researchers is problematic and that it might be best if the tribes worked it out on their own, in concert with the IBMP. He said that NPS did not have the responsibility to distribute culled bison until 2012. DW said that it should not be up to NPS how bison are distributed to tribal entities and that it would be great if those entities worked together to come up with an agreed-upon process for allocating culled bison. NPS, he said, currently assigns bison based on each group's capacity to receive them. <Facilitator's note: see also section below titled "Collection of adaptive management changes for next winter">

Leroy Adams, Jr. said that ITBC's preference is not to send bison to ship and slaughter but instead to bring animals away from YNP alive, including to quarantine facilities at Fort Peck. QE stated that the NPT are no longer a member of the ITBC.

TM said that the hunt is a huge deal for the CSKT people, both for the connection to the animal and also as a source of food as some of their people who benefit from Yellowstone bison live below the poverty line. The Tribe prefers the hunt and it hurts them to see bison in the trap. The only way to mitigate someone not getting an animal from the hunt, TM said, is for them to get bison meat via the ship-to-slaughter program. This outcome is the only way the CSKT can live with the trap. TM also noted that the CSKT fully fund their aspect of the ship-to-slaughter program.

TRANSFER OF BISON TO RESEARCH FACILITIES

No bison were transferred to research facilities during this winter operations season.

TRANSFER OF BISON TO TRIBAL GROUPS

As shown in Table 2 above, 748 bison were transferred to Tribes during this winter operations season.

SCOPE, TIMING OF UPCOMING HUNT PLANNING MEETING—MAY 2017

The Partners noted that a Tribal Working Group has formed. That group includes the CSKT, CTUIR, NPT, SBT, and Yakama. Two areas of focus for the working group are improving bison distribution outside the Park and improving the hunt.

The annual hunt planning meeting will be held in Missoula on May 24th at the Holiday Inn Downtown. Starting time will be 9 AM.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Throughout the course of the discussion of 2016/17 winter operations, the facilitator collected several thoughts that provided big picture looks at the issues under consideration. Those items are presented here:

- ME stated that she didn't believe the new EIS should be looked to for all the answers, as came up several times in the discussions reported on above. She said better to push now for what the Partners could do together and not wait for the EIS. Many questions involving social tolerance exist, including about respect for bison and safety for hunters and residents. ME said she thought that even though there is a call by some for more tolerance outside the Park, she doubted that would be considered until bison began actually using recently added, expanded tolerance zones. ME noted that if the trap needed to be moved to improve IBMP success, the USFS could support such a move. She also asked an open-ended, question that no one responded to: could the tribes operate the trap?
- RW noted that Dr. Metcalf's work done (reported on at the 4/6/16 IBMP meeting; see <http://ibmp.info/Library/20160406/20160406.php>) on behalf of NPS found lots of support for bison among the public. RW further said that current public engagement within the IBMP is terrible. He said, for example, that *all* Partners should show up at the Stephens' Creek facility for the public tour offered. TM said that a rep from the CSKT would be willing to come. QE said that likewise the NPT are in favor of meeting with the public.
- JH of the CSKT said that the Partners are somewhat stalled out, something akin to trying to push a piano through too small a doorway. The new EIS, in this analogy, provides a new path out of the current

situation, in part because the new EIS can and will incorporate much information that has accrued since the 2000 EIS. A key, JH said, was to take an ecosystem management approach rather than an approach solely focused on YNP.

- A thought was put forward that within a month of signing the 2016/17 Winter Operations Plan, some groups sought to change items to which they'd agreed to in the plan. Given the short time that the Winter Operations Plan applies, the uncertainties caused by such efforts make it particularly hard for collaboration and forward movement on the shared goals described in the Plan. Included in decisions requiring rapid turnaround are those dealing with the distribution of culled bison. Changes to the plan shortly after signing included the Governor of Montana blocking transfer of bison and slaughter of bison at certain points in the winter ops season. MZ noted that the Winter Operations Plan was signed with best intentions, but the Governor's decisions supersede essentially all else for state employees.



Figure 1.—Roughly 80 people attended this meeting of the IBMP Partners.

Collection of adaptive management changes for next winter

No adaptive changes requests were brought forth at the meeting. Only a single proposed adaptive change was presented to the Lead Partner before the meeting, and that was to initiate Partner discussion, not necessarily action on an adaptive change. The briefing memo for that item was titled, “Adaptive management discussion; distribution of culled bison to Native American tribes.” This item was not brought forward at the meeting because of sufficient Partner input to the Lead Partner pre-meeting to drop the item from the meeting agenda. That feedback largely said that this item was an issue for NPS and the tribal groups to decide, not the full IBMP. <Facilitator’s note: see also section above titled “Culls /transfer /distribution of bison to processing facilities”>

Considering IBMP goals and effectiveness—can the IBMP evolve to be more effective, efficient, and successful?

This session was set aside for an open Partner discussion and self-assessment regarding their internal workings and effectiveness *as the IBMP Partnership*. It was designed for one-by-one, round-the-table responses by Partners to several questions.

ME began the discussion by recognizing that the Partners have accomplished many things since the 2000 EIS and the 2008 GAO report (examples cited included operating under an adaptive management plan, increased tolerance areas, reinstating the hunt, Citizens’ Working Group). Still, she said, of late we seem to be at a stalemate. Given that as Partners we only meet three times per year how, ME asked, how can we be more effective, efficient, and ultimately more successful? She said her question was more how to set the stage for evolutionary, not revolutionary, change.

The facilitator provided a four questions sets over the course of the session to prompt discussion:

- Q1.—How do the Partners perceive they are working together? What works in the IBMP? What doesn’t?
- Q2.—What are Partners top two concerns for the IBMP? What are Partners top two areas you believe viable progress can be made?
- Q3.—What better methods of organization, structure, or interaction might make the Partners more productive?

- Q4.—Next steps? Organization/effectiveness subcommittee or similar?

For this report, responses to these questions, regardless of the flow of the discussion, are lumped under simple headings for easy review.

WHAT'S WORKING WITH THE IBMP? IN WHAT AREAS DO YOU BELIEVE THE IBMP CAN MAKE VIABLE PROGRESS?

- (1) We work well together, both in the meeting room and on the ground during hunting season.
- (2) As ME noted, yes, there has been progress in many areas. Don't forget, in 2002 we couldn't even work as a group to put out a joint press release. So effectiveness and relationships are hugely improved over the long term. We are much better at understanding each other's positions. (In a light-hearted moment, one Partner said tongue-in-cheek, "Yes it's true: we are more polite now when we say, 'No, my group won't change.'")
- (3) Given the huge variation in interests and jurisdictions and laws that apply across the IBMP Partners, the accomplishments we've made are impressive and should be celebrated. We must recognize that for some our progress will be seen as too slow, for others it will be too fast.
- (4) There has been no brucellosis transfer from bison to cattle.
- (5) The coming to together of 5 tribal groups (in the IBMP and also as part of a tribal working group offshoot of the IBMP) has been remarkable.
- (6) Yes, we've made progress, for example it was just six years ago we only allowed 25 animals to make it to Cutler Meadows.
- (7) We can make progress at the following (this list is a collection of brainstorming ideas from *individual* Partners, not necessarily agreed to by all):
 - a. bison distribution on the landscape
 - b. public engagement and education
 - c. interrelationships and how we as Partners function
 - d. assuring our future actions as Partners result in the IBMP remaining relevant to bison conservation
 - e. developing a vision for moving forward
 - f. utilizing the adaptive management framework with substantive discussions for defined outcomes
 - g. getting live animals to out of YNP for distribution to tribes and other locations
 - h. There *is* a solution that meets everyone's needs or goals: state (disease), federal (wildlife), tribal (conservation herds), public (love of bison—leading reason people cite for coming to YNP)
 - i. Real opportunity to move bison out of the Park to tribes if the quarantine facility is located in the DSA
 - j. Hunt inside Yellowstone National Park²
 - k. Greater tolerance for bison (and, at least for some, bison hunting) outside the Park via engagement of private landowners to the concept of bison restoration
 - l. Provide year-round tolerance for bison outside of the Park and thus greater levels of fall hunting

WHAT DOESN'T WORKS WITH THE IBMP? WHAT ARE EACH PARTNER'S TOP TWO CONCERNS FOR THE IBMP?

- (8) We don't seem to make any progress between meetings.
- (9) We fill our meetings with science talks and similar, but not with work items that we are showing progress on.
- (10) We have not yet proven that bison will use the expanded tolerance zones on the North and, especially, West sides. It is difficult to have a viable and sustainable bison population on the

² Hunting is illegal inside Yellowstone National Park.

- landscape when there are so many people there (hunters, homes—at least at the Park boundary), as well.
- (11) Some Partners are not willing to change or negotiate. (related: One hunting tribe noted that while they attend the IBMP meetings, they are under no agreement with anyone at the table and are principally seeking to protect their treaty hunting rights)
 - (12) We are poor at educating the public. Political change will only come through education. The public doesn't understand compliance, nor that bison are different. We need to become better at educating the public with respect to such things as treaty hunting rights (which may differ by tribe) and the role of hunting. (A counterpoint concern—it can be a trap to always fall back on education solving all problems as in, effectively, “If they only understood us better.”)
 - (13) Are the proper interests always at the table and, more particularly, are the decision makers for those interests represented?
 - (14) Of all issues the Park deals with, bison and IBMP issues are the toughest. Nothing is impossible for those who don't have to do it.
 - (15) We wonder if the goals of the IBMP are the same as they were before. The addition of the tribes has added to the twin goals of the IBMP—for example a new goal is how do we get live bison out of the Park? To be clear, our group thinks that having more tribal involvement is nothing but positive.
 - (16) We have the perception that more and more responsibilities of the IBMP are being shifted to NPS.
 - (17) We have made very little progress with bison escapement from Park and distribution outside of the Park. We need to get more bison outside of the park, further dispersed, to aid in a safe, productive hunt. We need to begin talking about translocation of bison.
 - (18) The meetings become stalemates. We talk and talk at every meeting, but there is no real change.
 - (19) The North Side hunt doesn't work and is not sustainable. The area is too confined, the bison are not moving across the landscape, and the public perception is terrible.
 - (20) We are concerned about the recent move toward downplaying the importance of research and disease mitigation (for example, how to protect from brucellosis infection, how to improve gene pool diversity on the landscape). For the state of Montana, the only pathway that we could move forward without research being a key part of this discussion is if
 - a. brucellosis becomes unimportant (unlikely), or
 - b. the state accepts brucellosis-negative animals
 - (21) Hunters need access to the Park for animal retrieval.

WHAT BETTER METHODS OF ORGANIZATION, STRUCTURE, OR INTERACTION MIGHT MAKE THE PARTNERS MORE PRODUCTIVE?

- (22) Having a work plan that guides efforts and measures accomplishments for each year might be an improvement.
- (23) We have tribes that are not on the IBMP that have great interest (particularly treaty hunting tribes) and could provide useful input to IBMP decisions.
- (24) We have fallen away from the subcommittee format, which seemed to be productive.
- (25) Having smaller focus groups might be useful.
- (26) Finding better ways to utilize public input would be useful. In the Citizens' Working Group, for example, we need to determine how to include livestock interests (as in the Elk Working Group).
- (27) We need to recognize that the IBMP table is not the only place where impacts are made to bison (Yellowstone and beyond). In particular, treaties drive other interactions.
- (28) Creating working groups would help us become more efficient. For example, having the tribal hunting group come to the Partner table with ideas they have already separately agreed upon is useful and efficient.
- (29) Most Partners don't have resources to provide people for a number of subcommittees. Staffs are, if anything, shrinking. So while subcommittees are worthwhile, it would be best to try only for the one or two most important, which might change over time, but which support agreed upon IBMP goals.
- (30) If we create subcommittees, we should

- a. map them to what IBMP goal they support—not just wild bison and not transfer of disease—including any new goals such as getting bison to tribes, supporting treaty hunts, etc;
 - b. set time frames for achieving our goals (e.g., 1, 3, 5 year goals); and
 - c. let the desired outcomes/vision drive what groups meet on what topics.
- (31) Subcommittee logistics might include having the subcommittee(s):
- a. meet the night before the regular IBMP meeting;
 - b. be very focused on a single topic or decision (as identified by Partners); and
 - c. report recommendations at the next day’s IBMP meeting.
- (32) Can the Partners reorganize in a way that mimics the successful Blackfoot Challenge?

WHAT NEXT STEPS CAN THE PARTNERS TAKE TOWARD IMPROVING THEIR EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS?

- (33) What about doing some relationship work, between and among Partners, in meetings separate from the regular IBMP meetings?
- (34) We can’t wait for the EIS. We must move forward using the adaptive management framework.
- (35) We today have both a Secretary of the Interior and a Governor of Montana who are inclined to work on issues of the IBMP. Thus, the Partners in a unique time for making progress. The Secretary of Interior is an honorary member of the Fort Peck Tribe.

At the conclusion of this discussion, the Partners gave the facilitator the task of capturing the materials recorded regarding how they could operate more efficiently and then synthesizing those items into a possible actions list (** action item 2a). Facilitator is to send this possible action list to Partners for review and to collect any feedback (**action item 2b). That edited list will then be submitted to Lead Partner as basis for a later Partner phone call to be organized by the Lead Partner to assess agreement with the plan put forward (**action item 2c). The goal is to hold this Partner phone call before June 1st. The Partners gave explicit direction that they want to focus on outcomes with no labels on any subcommittee(s)/work group(s), should such subcommittee(s) be recommended.³

A review of actions on Citizens’ Working Group (CWG) recommendations

The facilitator provided background on the workings of the CWG, which first brought forth a set of recommendations to the Partners in late-November 2010. A large subset of those recommendations were accepted in May of 2011, hence in this report we refer to them as the “2011 CWG recommendations.” Those recommendations were developed over roughly one year of CWG monthly meetings.

At their last meeting (12/1/16), the Partners—per request from ITBC—listened to Matt Skoglund describe the CWG as having interest in starting up again. Matt’s description was based on a preliminary survey of past CWG members. Hearing that news, the Partners asked the CWG to meet again before this IBMP meeting and provide more insight into what the re-instituted CWG might contribute to the IBMP. In early 2017, the Lead Partner added another request, for the CWG to go back and look at their 2011 recommendations and rate the progress made to date on each recommendation.

Invitations were extended across multiple interest groups and numerous people attended several CWG meetings early in 2017. Those meeting included the three outcomes requested: reinforcement of the earlier sentiment that strong interest exists to reconvene the CWG; ideas for CWG possible efforts in conjunction with

³ While this report provides a condensation of the lengthy Partners discussion on increasing their efficiency, the synthesis to be provided by the facilitator will entail further rework after this report is submitted.

the IBMP; and rating of IBMP progress against their 32 recommendations⁴ from 2011. Using categories suggested by the Lead Partner, the CWG rated progress against those recommendations as follows:

- **5 solid progress** (complete or substantially complete; or ongoing without discrete endpoint)
- **19 partial progress** (some action but either incomplete or started then stopped)
- **8 no action** (or no progress)

==
32

The Lead Partner also asked the CWG to select and prioritize the recommendations it wants most to see addressed from here forward. Thus, the CWG a) selected 12 priority recommendations, b) from those identified the top 4 goals the CWG would like to see the IBMP work on, and c) suggest places where the CWG might aid Partners. Shana Drimal, who took over the CWG spokesperson roll for this meeting, provided detail on that work in the next section of the meeting.

Before yielding the podium to Shana, however, the facilitator reminded the Partners that the key issue up for their consideration was CWG's strong interest in re-forming. Given that, the most important question for the day is this: Will the Partners empower the CWG to reconvene, and, if so, a) in what capacity and b) how does the CWG interact with the IBMP Partners?

Is there an on-going role for the Citizens' Working Group?

Shana Drimal, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Wildlife Program Associate

Shana spoke on behalf of the Citizens' Working Group which, as just noted, reconvened at the request of the IBMP Partners. A summary of Shana's presentation follows; her full presentation can be found on the IBMP website (see <http://ibmp.info/Library/20170406/20170406.php>).



Figure 4.—Shana Drimal spoke to Partners, staff, and public about the Citizens' Working Group, including a review of progress made on the CWG's 2011 recommendations, and a list of priority items the CWG would like to see tackled from here forward.

⁴ Many of the recommendations had parts *a,b,c* and sometimes more. When one counts each of these sub-items as a recommendation, the total comes to over 40. So the number of recommendations attributed to the CWG can vary depending on the counting method.

The CWG met twice, with 21 and 17 people attending, all of whom were bison advocates. The meetings were open and invitations/notification were sent to all interests. Those meetings showed that there is strong interest to reconvene CWG. Attendees hope for future tribal, sportsman, and agriculture constituent participation, but think that it is worthwhile for the CWG to continue forward, even if that participation is not forthcoming.

Shana repeated that in review of the CWG’s 2011 recommendations, there has been some notable progress, but there remains a long way to go (see section above titled “A review of actions on Citizens’ Working Group recommendations”). She said that the CWG believes most of their 2011 recommendations remain relevant and that additionally some new concerns have emerged since 2011.

Shana provided a 6-page table of the CWG’s 2011 recommendations, which includes progress report for each CWG recommendation that the Partners accepted. In her presentation, Shana walked through the CWG’s full progress report on the 2011 recommendations. As noted above, they found at least partial progress on 24 of 32 of their Partner-accepted 2011 recommendations. Figure 3 provides a screenshot of the first page of that CWG progress report. The full review can be found at <http://ibmp.info/Library/20170406/20170406.php>.

CWG 2017 PROGRESS REPORT ON 2011 CITIZENS' WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS		
Categories Used: A. Solid progress - Completed or substantially complete - Ongoing (i.e., action taken but needs to go on year after year, no discrete endpoint or goal)	B. In progress or partial progress - Some action taken but either incomplete or started then stopped.	C. No Action
Grey Highlighting = CWG 2017 Priority Recommendation going forward		
2011 CWG RECOMMENDATION	2017 STATUS	STATUS NOTES
Habitat Recommendation 1: Identify public lands that could/should be open to bison year-round in accordance with state and federal law. (Lead = MFWP/USFS) <i>Note: It was decided that this work would be carried out under the State of MT Bison Management Plan which at the time was in progress and expected to be complete by 2013.</i>	Partial progress (started then stopped).	<i>The State of MT Bison Management Plan is still "in process", and appears to be stuck with no decision expected anytime soon. Furthermore, the state-wide plan EIS did not look at site specific locations - i.e. it was programmatic rather than site specific. Therefore, it will not identify public lands that could/should be open to bison year-round. This would require additional site specific EAs following a decision on the programmatic EIS.</i>
Habitat Recommendation 2: Systematically identify suitable, available habitat outside Yellowstone National Park in the Greater Yellowstone Area (i.e., Federal, State and Private lands). (Lead = MFWP, USFS)	Partial progress	<i>Areas identified on GNP lands were included in the State MEPA analysis for potential expansion west of YNP. Governor's Dec. 2015 decision opens up more than 250,000 acres to limited numbers of bison year-round on the west-side. Consideration of Dome Mountain WMA (and other state, private lands where bison are welcome) was also part of the original recommendation which has not come to fruition. CWG still wants consideration of state and private lands (where bison are welcome), including outside Gardiner Basin.</i>
Habitat Recommendation 3ai: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: a) <u>Hebgen Basin</u> - 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. (Lead = MFWP/MDOL).	Solid Progress	<i>Solid Progress for limited numbers of bison. CWG wants to see consideration of bison on public lands in general outside of Hebgen Basin.</i>
Habitat Recommendation 3aii: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: a) <u>Hebgen Basin</u> - 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.	NA (Partners Rejected)	<i>CWG would like reconsideration of this recommendation.</i>
Habitat Recommendation 3aiii: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: a) <u>Hebgen Basin</u> iii. Investigate and come to conclusion on feasibility of fencing or acceptable alternatives on the Flats to prevent co-mingling with private livestock. (Lead = MFWP/MDOL)	Partial Progress	<i>This was Partially Rejected due to concerns over impediments to other wildlife and because snow levels in the area would reduce the effectiveness of deterring bison during winter months. This is ongoing on a small scale with the Bison Coexistence Fencing Program.</i>
Habitat Recommendation 3bi: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: b) <u>Gardiner Basin</u> - 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. (NGOs with MFWP support).	NA	<i>Subcommittees stated this work was Already Complete. NGO effort shifted to working with individual landowners interested in strategic fencing. NGOs are continuing their work with interested landowners. CWG would like this effort to be updated.</i>

Figure 3.—First page of a 6-page review by the CWG judging progress against the 2011 recommendations they made to the IBMP Partners, and which the IBMP Partners agreed to accept as IBMP goals.

The Lead Partner had also asked the CWG to consider their priority goals for the IBMP Partners. Shana provided the CWG’s top four areas they would like to see the Partners make progress on:

- (1) Completion of the new IBMP
- (2) Completion of the MT Statewide Bison Management Plan
- (3) Habitat and dispersal of bison outside the Park: North Side
- (4) Habitat and dispersal of bison outside the Park: West Side

Table 5 provides greater description of each of these four priority goals, including which of the 2011 CWG recommendations the goal addresses, and what role, if any, the CWG might play in helping achieve the goal.

Table 5.—Prioritization of CWG goals for the IBMP Partners and Potential Projects for the CWG

Four top focus areas/priorities for the IBMP partners going forward	Previous recommendations that could be accomplished through this work...	Potential role for CWG going forward?
<p>1. Completion of the new IBMP that reflects changes on the landscape, sets scientifically based population ranges, treats bison as wildlife, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would address the lack of progress for many of the previous (and accepted) CWG population recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population: 1, 5a-5f*, 6a-6d 	<p>Unsure. Open to ideas from Partners.</p>
<p>2. Completion of the MT Statewide Bison Management Plan, including the identification of sites to reintroduce bison in other parts of MT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would address the lack of progress for many of the previous (and accepted) CWG recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat: 1 & 3e • Population: 2, 3*a, 6a-6d 	<p>Unsure. Open to ideas from Partners.</p>
<p>3. Habitat and dispersal of bison outside the Park—North Side. Additional habitat and habitat improvement for bison outside the Park on the North Side, as well strategies to help bison better disperse in to existing and new habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would address the lack of progress for many of the previous (and accepted) CWG recommendations. <p>Potential Ideas or Actions to get there:</p> <p>A. Secure additional habitat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider state & private lands that would welcome bison (i.e. Dome Mountain WMA) ○ Consider outside the Gardiner Basin ○ Updated or new landowner survey to assess where bison are/would be welcome on the landscape outside the Park (include areas outside the Gardiner Basin). <p>B. Habitat improvement projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work with the Forest Service, etc. ○ Consider prescribed burns or other habitat restoration tools. <p>C. Address the issue of hunting pressure/overcrowding to allow for dispersal of bison on the larger landscape (this includes addressing the firing line issue at Beattie Gulch)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat: 2, 3bi-3biii • Population: 1, 3*b, 4, & 6a-6d <p>(note that item 3.C in column 1 of this table is one of the new concerns since the 2011 CWG recommendations)</p>	<p>A) Yes</p> <p>B) Yes</p> <p>C) Unlikely unless there is interest from the Tribes and FWP to work with the CWG on this.</p> <p>D) Unsure but open to ideas from the Partners.</p>

Table 5.—Prioritization of CWG goals for the IBMP Partners and Potential Projects for the CWG

<p>Four top focus areas/priorities for the IBMP partners going forward</p>	<p>Previous recommendations that could be accomplished through this work...</p>	<p>Potential role for CWG going forward?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FWP/Tribal Cooperative Management Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defines population objectives (min & max # bison) for lands outside the Park ● Based on biological & social carrying capacity, management constraints, etc. ● That adequately balances hunting desires & need for population reduction with goal of <u>broader dispersal</u> D. Move away from managing toward a total population target of 3500 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This limits dispersal/broad distribution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to do we realistically allow for or promote dispersal on to the larger landscape when there’s so much pressure to reduce the total population both through hunting and slaughter? ○ Assume this would have to be tackled through the new IBMP 		
<p>4. Habitat and dispersal of bison outside the Park—West Side. Habitat improvement for bison outside the Park on the West Side, as well strategies to help bison better disperse in to existing habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This would address the lack of progress for many of the previous (and accepted) CWG recommendations. <p><u>Potential Ideas or Actions to get there:</u></p> <p>A. Develop a plan for restoring bison in the new West Side expansion area (i.e. Upper Gallatin, Taylor Fork, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assisted migration? ○ Translocation? ○ Identification of corridor/pathway(s) ○ Habitat improvement – prescribed burns? ○ Highway crossing(s), road mitigation? <p>B. Hunt plan to allow for dispersal/restoration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Should be addressed proactively on the West Side ○ Consensus agreement to limited/no hunting during restoration of bison in to the new expansion area. ○ FWP/Tribal Cooperative Management Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population objectives (min and max # of bison) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Habitat: 3di-3dii ● Population: 2, 3*a-b, 4, & 6a-6d 	<p>A) Yes. CWG could provide plan ideas/recommendations, engage local landowners, help with addressing landowner concerns, etc.</p> <p>B) Unlikely unless there is interest from the Tribes and MFWP to work with the CWG on this.</p>

As part of her CWG report, and at the request of the Lead Partner, Shana also described several projects that might include work by the CWG. Using the numbering scheme from Table 5, Shana described three such projects:

- 4A—Plan for restoring bison in the new West Side expansion area (i.e. Upper Gallatin, Taylor Fork, etc.)
 - Recommendations for a proactive plan
 - Assist with landowner concerns and seek landowner involvement
- 3A—Additional habitat on the North Side
 - Recommendations for state and private lands
 - Assist with new landowner survey (inside and outside Gardiner Basin)
- 3B—Habitat improvement projects on the North Side

DISCUSSION

Shana closed her presentation asking if the CWG’s review and work had been helpful to the Partners and made them think that re-starting the CWG made sense? If so, she asked: a) What projects could the Partners envision the CWG working on? b) How would the Partners envision the CWG to look? C) How would the CWG interact w/Partners?

The following bullets capture Partner feedback to these questions, lumped in similar categories for ease of review. A general theme of the discussion, as noted by the facilitator earlier, was the key question for the day: Will the IBMP Partners empower the CWG to reconvene, and, if so, a) in what capacity and b) how does the CWG interact with the Partners? This discussion was open to Partners, staff, and the general public, so comments shown below could come from any of those sources.

- **Thanks.**—Many Partners and staff stated their thanks to the CWG for getting together and the efforts they had made, and to Shana for spearheading that work and providing the presentation.
- **Possible CWG/Partners interactions.**—
 - Could the CWG work together with the Partners following the Blackfoot Challenge model?
 - Federal Partners cannot use the CWG unless it is chartered under very specific Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) rules⁵. Federal groups can’t look at the CWG as an advisory group.
 - But the CWG *could be* an open, broad-based group. While they could not be mandated to follow the recommendations of a non-FACA group, one choice the Partners *do* have is to include the CWG on the agenda for this meetings. We could do this inclusion for a consensus CWG group, but hard to see doing that for individuals or for individual NGOs.
 - Yes, we could provide a time at IBMP meetings to listen to the CWG thoughts.
- **CWG as its own entity.**—
 - While for federal Partners can’t use the CWG if it is not FACA-defined, there is no reason that the CWG can’t move ahead on its own, for example convening a meeting on the North or West Side with land owners and inviting the Partners, as well.
 - Yes, grassroots movement and activity is great and can make things happen.
 - With open CWG we wouldn’t have to deal with all the rules and restrictions of a federally chartered (FACA) group.
 - There is value of having the CWG working on the ground separate from the IBMP to better engage people in conversation. If that was the CWG’s role, then if CWG asked for time, Partners would agree to listen. Plus the CWG could, in turn, invite the Partners to the meetings the CWG convenes and agencies could send representatives to such meetings.

⁵ This discussion flowed as a follow-on to the CWG presentation. All points in the FACA discussion reported on here should not be considered a legal rendering, but instead cursory in nature.

- It is better to start now, even without Ag representation so that livestock doesn't hold the process hostage. ... Yes, go for a grassroots-get-started-now-open-invite group rather than mimicking the Elk Working Group.
- We have no resolution nor completion of the Statewide Bison Management Plan. I suggest the CWG continue forward without Partner help, but then come back and talk to Partners when appropriate. In other words, CWG does not require empowerment from the Partners to proceed with the CWG's desired work.
- **Possible makeup of a new CWG.—**
 - The CWG believes that locals and land owners must be part of the process, and would like them to be onboard as members of the CWG.
 - We can only have participation by people who want to participate. I think the CWG should continue with an open door policy. I ask the CWG to continue educating everyone and in its deliberations keep a mind open to all interests, even if those interests are not present.
 - Yes I agree we need to keep the door wide open. But I also disagree, we *do* need to get people from across interests. We have, for example, 133 Landowners who signed a no-bison-on-my-land-for-20-years pledge, but on the other hand we have people who want bison on their land. Outcomes or recommendations from the CWG need to show that different constituencies were involved. If no Ag people are on the CWG it is not as powerful of a statement about consensus and it is not the model we tried for with the previous CWG. Or perhaps we need to consider a different model such as the Elk Working Group. That would be a vetted group with all interests represented. I understand for the federal folks that such a group would be tougher because of FACA rules.
 - I agree, it is great to have Ag interests on the CWG; without them there is a perception that it is all wildlife advocates. If you had a focus group, Ag people would be there. The CWG is best if grassroots and vetted.
 - I disagree with some of these comments. Ag interests *were* represented on the original CWG and even in these recent meetings we have an organic farmer, an organic wool grower, and a veterinarian who works with cattle. Instead, we should recognize that there are not a lot of livestock growers in the affected area—that's why there is little interest in the Ag group for participating in the CWG.
 - We should also consider that while the Elk Working Group might be a good model, that group is different. Bison are generally not on private land whereas elk are on private lands. The CWG doesn't really need an Ag rep.
 - For the original CWG we went to places like Crazies, Dillon, and Helena to get our people. We also had a number of landowners, but mostly land owners that were associated with tourism. Non one (!) from any interest group wants any cow to get brucellosis.
 - We would love tribal involvement on the CWG as we have lots of common ground.
- **Possible CWG goals of a new CWG.—**
 - We spend too much time talking. We need to focus attention on getting bison out on the landscape. Let's give quarantine a chance.
 - It seems like we've done well accomplishing the IBMP goal of no brucellosis transmission, but have done nothing on the IBMP goal of maintaining a wild and free bison herd.
 - The CWG can help Partners get information out to the public. There is no reason not to invite or engage the CWG and, by extension, the public.

Partner briefings/updates—status of ongoing activities related to Yellowstone bison and brucellosis

Status of new EIS process—Jennifer Carpenter

NPS is looking to re-energize the process by meeting with the Institute on Environmental Conflict Resolution in the early summer of 2017. Web information on the EIS can be found at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=50877>.

Status of lawsuit regarding access to Stephens Creek facility—Jennifer Carpenter

No new information to present.

Update on NPS Quarantine Environmental Assessment—Jennifer Carpenter

NPS has discussed the assessment, which is still under consideration, with Secretary of the Interior Zinke.

Update on NAS review of brucellosis in wildlife in the GYA—Don Herriott

The National Academy of Sciences panel has completed the final draft of their findings. Anonymous review is complete and has been incorporated in the final copy. The final version of the report will be posted on the NAS website later this spring. A representative(s) from the panel would be willing to share their findings with the IBMP Partners. (Meeting notes and project announcements are available on the NAS website at <http://dels.nas.edu/Study-In-Progress/Revisiting-Brucellosis-Greater-Yellowstone/DELS-BANR-14-03?bname=banr>).

Status of North Side and West Side CGNF habitat studies—Mary Erickson

ME described that Dr. Marlow's team had completed their field work on the North Side of YNP. She expects that a final report on the work will be available by the fall meeting in 2017. CGNF has requested that Dr. Marlow replicate the work on forestlands on the West Side of YNP, as well, and data collection will start shortly.

Update on bison coexistence/fencing project—Shana Drimal

The project goal is to increase or maintain public tolerance to bison outside YNP through the funding (cost share up to \$1000) and technical assistance to build bison exclusion fencing. The effort continues and has funding available for new projects.

Administrative items

The Partners verified the meeting times and locations for their remaining IBMP meetings in 2017:

- August 3rd in Bozeman MT (Best Western Gran Tree Hotel)
 - While not yet planned, the Partners agreed to set aside August 2nd for a possible field trip (one area mentioned was to the Taylor Fork on the West Side of YNP)
 - The go/no-go decision on the field trip is to be made by the Lead Partner (** action item 3).
- November 28th in Pray MT (Chico Hot Springs)

QE provided an invite to the Partners to meet in Lapwai, ID on NPT grounds for one of their next meetings. The Partners agreed to consider holding the Spring 2018 meeting in Lapwai. QE said he would talk with the other tribal entities at the next tribal working group meeting to determine if Lapwai is the best location given all considerations (** action item 4).

Walt Allen presentation

Near the end of the meeting, IBMP Partner Quincy Ellenwood of the Nez Perce Tribe presented a special NPT wool blanket to Walt Allen of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest. Quincy said the gift was in recognition of the efforts Walt made in recent years helping manage the North Side bison hunt, including the thoughtful teamwork he provided to the Tribe. Quincy said of Walt, paraphrasing: *Walt has a beautiful mind and a good heart. He really took the trust obligation seriously. I will miss him, but he will be with us even in his absence.*

Partner Mary Erickson, Supervisor of the CGNF, accepted the gift on Walt's behalf. Walt has now moved out of bison work and is working as a forest service archeologist, largely focused on the eastern district.



Figure 5.—Quincy Ellenwood of the Nez Perce tribe presented a special Nez Perce wool blanket to Walt Allen (inset image). The blanket was accepted for Walt by his boss during his days working on bison, Partner Mary Erickson, Supervisor of the CGNF.

Public comment

The following summaries of public comment are not intended to be complete, but rather to capture key points of each public comment as stated. Upon review, Partners sometimes point out that statements made during the public comment are either incomplete or incorrect.

The facilitator has especially attempted to capture those comments from the public that appeared to be solution-oriented and/or have the potential for inclusion in adaptive management planning, and/or process improvement, and/or use as agenda items for future meetings. These items, as well as other potentially actionable public input, are called out with a “**” in the listings that follow.

Names associated with comments are available from the facilitator. They are not included here, however, in an effort to focus on the comment rather than the speaker. Line breaks in the bullets indicate a new speaker. Public comment was taken just after lunch in reaction to numerous past public comments about public input being of less value at the end of the day.

- Beattie Gulch should be called the valley of dried bones.
- We need hope and life for bison.
- My emails to the Partners are ignored yet what you do affects me every day. That includes after the hunters are gone—for example the horror continues after the hunt when I find animal parts on my land.
- When you increase the number of hunters you increase the number of unsafe hunters, too. Anything can happen. A 7 mm bullet travels 3 miles—I could be shot!
- People who come to visit me think I live in the ghetto. You are lowering our property values.
- ** We need to set quotas for Beattie Gulch and then stop hunting when those are met.
- With the current situation you are pitting group against group.
- ** We need a homeowner stakeholder at the table.

- With all due respect to the tribal partners, you say we are interfering with your life. What about how your people interfering with MY life next to Beattie Gulch?!

- I used to advertise saying, “Winter in Yellowstone is awesome!” Because of the bison slaughter it no longer is awesome and I no longer advertise that way. People want to come see Yellowstone and I have to tell them if they come and stay with me they may get shot.
- In 1985 MDOL made itself in charge of bison. Law 81-2-120 say that we can’t transport bison. We must repeal 81-2-120.
- It is neither a safe nor an ethical hunt.
- I don’t understand this. I am responsible to do things to protect myself and my business. Why shouldn’t cattlemen be responsible for vaccinating their cattle?
- When the bison are slaughtered, and remains left in place, there is a bacterial breeding ground left behind long after the hunters are gone.

- < Facilitator’s note: the next speaker read excerpts from a prepared, lengthy paper that was passed on to the Lead Partner. The paper was titled, “Legislative Audit Division, A report to the MT Legislature Performance Audit Brucellosis Management in the State of MT, Department of Livestock, Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (January 2017).” The first bulleted comment below is from speaker comments; the remainder are the summary bullets copied from the submitted paper. >
- MDOL says that they are worried about the Tribes being capable of testing bison, yet the audit shows that MDOL is not testing all cattle in or being shipped from the DSA.
- The Department of Livestock is not enforcing the required Designated Surveillance Area rules.
- Cattle ranchers in the DSA are not complying with the 5% brucellosis testing requirement.
- Montana is paying higher rates than ID or WY to test for brucellosis and vaccinate cattle.
- The Department of Livestock is making reimbursements for vaccination costs without proper documentation or the required approval for reimbursements over \$5000.
- DSA rule maintains Montana’s brucellosis Class Free status.
- Department of Livestock lethal removals of bison are not following adaptive management guidelines.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is conducting brucellosis risk management actions for elk.

- Our groups celebrates, and advocates for management that celebrates, bison.
- While many of us are hunters, safety on the North Side has become a big deal. We must condemn hunting as a management tool when you witness the Beattie Gulch massacre and mess.
- ** We need to let bison go past Beattie Gulch.
- To call this a hunt is ludicrous. It is death by firing squad.
- While we like the idea of moving the trap north to Cutler Meadow, this simply moves the problem.
- The Fort Peck Tribe did a good job creating their quarantine facility.

- I live on the West Side and worry that it is just a matter of time before the West Side becomes as bad as the North Side.
- Slaughter could happen on Horse Butte, especially after logging clears space and makes bison more visible and accessible to hunters.
- I worry about the logging on Horse Butte. Someone will get hurt and when that happens I will be first in line to sue.
- As a landowner on the West Side, I want to support the concerns of the landowners on the North Side. It is shameful what is going on there.
- I ask the tribes to ask for the repeal of law 81-2-120.
- < facilitator’s note: The speaker provided a letter from Horse Butte owners to MFWP, and another to the Superintendent of YNP and the Governor of Montana. As both letters were dated in 2015, the facilitator is not summarizing them here but they were sent on to the Lead Partner. >

- < The next speaker asked for 3 min of silence as a symbol of speaking for the bison. During that time, the same person handed out a flier of photographs to Partners, staff, and public titled, “What the IBMP Decisions Look Like in the Real World.” >
- I’ve spent a career in beef cattle as a veterinarian. And I have also come to know bison, and have a great respect for the animal.
- It is passed time that we do something concrete to solve this situation.
- ** What we can do is translocate bison so that they can live elsewhere. We can do this. We tried to get them to Fort Peck and it didn’t work. We can still do it within the DSA.
- We can follow the American Bison Society model from 1905. The key is to understand and respect the ecology of the animal.
- ** Why aren’t bison distributed farther and wider? I CANNOT believe you Partners are seriously asking yourselves that question. When 1/4 - 1/3 of the population was slaughtered this season. Look at that and look at Stephen’s Creek and if you want buffalo spread out across the landscape THEN STOP killing almost every one of them that steps across the border. They just need to be allowed to go.
- We watched a yearling spend a month outside Corwin Springs alone and it was adapted by another group. Half of those were eventually shot and half were captured so all are now dead. So why aren’t bison moving across the landscape? Look to yourselves for the answer. They need to be allowed to move freely.
- For my testimony I have a series of questions to ask you. I know you won’t answer them in this forum, but nevertheless I would like to know the answers to these questions:
 - Are bison a species of conservation concern?
 - How can the USFS accept a plan that prevents bison from accessing the majority of our USFS public lands?
 - ** Is there any reason bison should not be allowed on public lands?
 - Does the current IBMP force you to try and do the wrong thing right?
 - Does the Park want to continue trapping, confining, and shipping bison to slaughter houses?
 - Are there any reps from the Secretary of Interior or the Governor’s office here today?
 - Is there more habitat for bison outside the Park where bison can be managed as wildlife?
 - What does “bison are wildlife” mean?
 - Does anyone on this committee represent the interests of the Gallatin Wildlife Association?
 - ** Is habitat without bison a success?
 - Is there consensus to establish year-round populations of populations of bison outside of the Park?
- This is my third year coming to this meeting and what happened today—the time for self-reflection and assessment—was encouraging.
- My biggest concern is this: when are we going to start acknowledging the importance of wild bison on the landscape? I found it hopeful today that for the first time I heard that idea being considered and discussed by this group.
- It is inhumane what is happening. The bison need to be allowed to roam free.
- Historically the US Government tried to exterminate the bison but they survived. Now the government is trying to eliminate them again, but the fertilization rate is so high because the bison are fighting to renew themselves.
- Ten thousand bison are not enough. The planet needs the bison. Thank you for talking about their importance to the ecosystem today.
- I am going to keep at it. I am going to keep praying and keep loving buffalo.

- I've been at this longer than any of you.
- The hunt is the biggest joke I've seen. I am a hunter and feed my family that way, but it is not time to hunt bison.
- The tribes were invited to Yellowstone to kill more bison, not for your treaty rights.
- We need more respect. What do you expect the Native tribes to do? The locals are outraged but it's not the Native Americans who are doing this. I fight for your treaty rights.
- APHIS gave us all a gift with the DSA. Why can't bison go on the same land that elk are allowed?
- The new CGNF management plan won't recognize bison as a species.
- If you want to solve this problem, talk to Mr. Zinke to move them further north.

- NPS must leave a wild genome for generations ahead.
- Describing the values of wild bison, and of wilderness, are beyond the scope of a 3 min time slot.
- Population size is important. As is, Yellowstone bison lack the preponderance of natural selection, which is limited by a) artificial selection at the trap, and b) genetic drift.
- ** The IBMP neglects its own issue of wildness.
- Proposals to hunt the herd are contrary to wildness.

- < A final individual submitted comments to the facilitator but did not speak. These comments were provided to the Lead Partner. A short summary from the 3 pages of text submitted follows. >
- Yellowstone bison are an iconic prehistoric species that carry the pure wild genetic heritage from bison that once lived across most of North America and still survive on the high elevation Yellowstone Plateau. Migratory bison are ecologically extinct throughout their native range; the wild bison of Yellowstone are the last of their kind and the world's most significant population.
- Yellowstone bison are wildlife. Wildlife is a publicly owned resource held in public trust.
- ** It is the right and responsibility of every citizen to help decide how we should manage wild bison.
- The current practice of indiscriminate slaughter and capture for slaughter of bulls, non-pregnant cows and calves without regard for their brucellosis status that migrate out of Yellowstone National Park must be stopped. Current management actions of hazing are expensive and abusive. The current bison management plan has not decreased the prevalence of brucellosis in the GYA.
- MCA 81-2-120 is outdated and should be repealed. Wild bison management needs to be returned to the appropriate agencies.
- Research by the US Geological Survey and partners, published May 11, 2016, says, "Genomics reveals historic and contemporary transmission dynamics of a bacterial disease among wildlife and livestock" showed that "free-ranging elk are currently a self-sustaining brucellosis reservoir and the source of livestock infections, *and that control measures in bison are unlikely to affect the dynamics of unrelated strains circulating in nearby elk populations.*"
- ** The Interagency Bison Management Plan should mirror Elk Brucellosis Management Plans, including recognize bison as wildlife; use best management practices; provide for ethical, "fair chase" hunting of bison, on designated public land; implement habitat improvement projects for elk and bison.
- The IBMP should be based on the best available science; establish capture for quarantine programs in Yellowstone instead of capture for slaughter; provide for the ability to send brucellosis-free wild bison to other suitable conservation areas; recognize and accept the expertise of Native Americans; and acknowledge the expertise of wildlife specialists in YNP.
- In Montana we are learning how to live with grizzly bears and wolves again; the bison deserves a second chance, too.

*** Meeting adjourned ***

Abbreviations

- AJ—Andrea Jones
- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BB—Brooklyn Baptiste
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- CGNF—Custer Gallatin National Forest
- CS—Carl Scheeler
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- CTUIR—Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- CWG—Citizens’ Working Group
- DH—Don Herriot
- DSA—Designated Surveillance Zone
- DW—Dan Wenk
- EA—Environmental Assessment
- EC—Ervin Carlson
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GNF—Gallatin National Forest
- GW—Germaine White
- GWA—Gallatin Wildlife Association
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- ITBC—Inter Tribal Buffalo Council
- JC—Jennifer Carpenter
- JH—John Harrison
- JS—Jim Stone
- LG—Leonard Gray
- LW—Leander Watson
- MBOL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MD—Marna Daley
- MDOL—Montana Department of Livestock
- MDOT—Montana Department of Transportation
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MEPA—Montana Environmental Policy Act
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- MH—Mike Honeycutt
- MOU—Memorandum of Understanding
- MR—Majel Russell
- MSGA—Montana Stockgrowers’ Association
- MSU—Montana State University
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NAS—National Academy of Sciences
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- NGO—Non-governmental organizations
- NP—Nez Perce
- NPS—National Park Service
- NPT—Nez Perce Tribe
- NPTEC—Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee
- NRC—National Research Council
- NRDC—Natural Resources Defense Council
- NT—Neil Thagard
- Park—Yellowstone National Park
- PIOs—Public Information Officers
- PJ—PJ White
- QE—Quincy Ellenwood
- RC—Ryan Clarke
- ROD—Record of Decision
- RF—Rebecca Frye
- RFP—Request for proposals
- RT—Rob Tierney
- RTR—Royal Teton Ranch
- RW—Rick Wallen
- SB—Scott Bischke
- SEIS—Supplemental EIS
- SG—Stephanie Gillin
- 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