

Summary Report from the Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting Nov 28, 2018



First draft presented December 10th, 2018 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke

The following summary report reflects activities at the November 28, 2018 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held at the Chico Hot Springs in Pray, Montana. This report comes from the flip chart notes of facilitator Scott Bischke¹. The report will be marked *Draft* until formal Partner agreement to make it *Final* at the start of their next meeting. The nine Partner attendees were Ryan Clarke (APHIS), Leonard Gray (CSKT), Ervin Carlson (ITBC), Mike Honeycutt (MBOL), Martin Zaluski (MDOL), Mark Deleray (MFWP), Cam Sholly (NPS-YNP), McCoy Oatman (NPT), and Jason Brey (USFS-CGNF). In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~90 other people in the room, either staff members from IBMP organizations or members of the public.

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Action items identified

Table 1. Action items identified during this meeting

#	Who	What	By when
1	SB	Post the Aug 2018 meeting report to the website as “final”	ASAP
2	SB	Get data (or more likely links to data) from MDOT representatives on wildlife fatalities on Hwys 89 and 191 and post to web page for this meeting.	ASAP
3	SB	MZ provided perhaps a half dozen line-by-line edits to specific sentences in the draft 2018/19 Winter Ops Plan that were recorded for later replacement by the facilitator.	ASAP
4	SB	In one case, MZ asked that an item regarding the South Fork of the Madison Arm, on page 6 of the draft Winter Ops Plan, be added to the Parked Item list for discussion at a future meeting.	ASAP
5	SB and MD	Drive completion of the 2018 Annual Report and 2018/19 Winter Operations Plan (document management, compilation, editing, and preparation for Partner review and, in the latter case, signing.	By multiple dates shown in body of report
6			

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 August 2018 meeting, and noted the report has been available in draft for review since shortly after that meeting. No objections were made. Thus the facilitator, per Partner Protocols, is to post the August 2018 meeting notes to IBMP.info as *Final* (** action item 1).



Figure 1.—Over the course of the day, roughly 90 people—including Partners, staff, and the public—attended this meeting of the IBMP.

Partners, staff, and public took a short pause to remember Pablo “Chib” Espinoza, Chief Law Enforcement Officer of Fish and Game for the CSKT, who passed away since the last IBMP meeting. Tom McDonald provided some kind words regarding Pablo’s positive outlook on life, gentle spirit, and goodness, then all spent a few moments in silent remembrance.

The facilitator reminded Partners of their plan to include focus on three items that they agreed to as having a good chance for short term success. That agreement, first discussed at their May 2017 meeting and finalized at their August 2017 meeting, can be found at <http://ibmp.info/Library/20170803/20170803.php> (see link titled “Report on increasing IBMP Partner effectiveness”). The three items of focus—1) Improving utilization of expanded bison habitat, especially in new West Side tolerance area, 2) Creating a bison quarantine facility, 3) Improving safety, quality of the north side hunt/improving boundary issues—form three sections of this meeting, as reported below.

Improve utilization of expanded bison habitat, especially in new West Side tolerance area

Background. During the August IBMP meeting Julie Cunningham noted that bison are exploring West Side areas outside YNP. At least one bull bison was seen along Highway 191 this spring and another was reported to have briefly moved into Idaho, north of Island Park. To promote, or at least not hinder, such explorations, Julie reported that MFWP was considering proposing partial closure of West Side hunting. That closure could be accomplished for limited times and/or in limited locations, both selected to stop hunting pressure from limiting the extent of bison migration into the new West Side tolerance zone. Assuming the idea were pursued, the earliest closure implementation would likely be for the 2020/21 hunting season. The process to change hunting season regulations requires a series of steps from public involvement through review and sanctioning by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Following the August meeting, MD sent out a 2-page proposal regarding the partial closure concept for Partner consideration. That proposal is presented in the next two pages, plus can be found at the meeting website (www.ibmp.info/Library/20181128/20181128.php).

MD stated that the idea of a partial closure remained exploratory at this point and that FWP was soliciting Partner feedback. He noted that such a closure would impact state hunters only; to be effective, tribal hunters would also have to agree to the closures. Partner feedback included:

- Q.—Can you verify that the long-term objective is to help bison migrate farther into the new West Side tolerance area, and in the future, then, improve the hunt? A (from MD)—yes.
- CSc noted, we see the primary objective for the closure is a short term impact for a long term benefit, that being getting bison into a larger area.
- MO—NPT yes, we support and with CTUIR statements.
- LG—The CSKT Tribal Council voted to support such a closure, should it occur.
- JW—We must look at all angles in closure, not just hunting. Tribal members must be allowed to express their treaty rights so any closure must be justified. We generally support the idea of helping the animals getting to habitat. But there are other considerations beyond hunters such as habitat issues in YNP, the fact that the road itself is an obstruction to migration, and snowmobiles hiding wildlife movement. Maybe wildlife overpasses or underpasses will need to be part of the solution. Ultimately, decisions need to be data driven.
- LW—We went to the ShoBan Council with this idea. The Council was back and forth. Why would we close if it effects treaty hunting rights? Yes we want to be part of the bison management. We don’t want to lose sight of other management options such as transplant and relocate.
- CS—Questions we need to consider more: are bison conditioned by hunting and how long will they take to get there even in the absence of hunting? If we implement such a closure, do we then monitor success and decide if it is working?
- George Meninick (Yakama Nation Tribal Council)—We have members who prefer the West Side as it is still a hunt, not a harvest like on the North Side. We share the concern about snowmobilers keeping bison from migrating to the new tolerance area.

A Proposal to Revise Portions of Bison Hunting District 395

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks August 31, 2018

At the 8/1/2018 IBMP meeting, partners discussed the potential to close a portion of the West Side hunting area (near West Yellowstone) to reduce disturbance and enhance the opportunity for bison to move north into expanded tolerance areas. The IBMP partners charged MFWP to provide a map and legal description of the potential closure that they could share with and possibly propose to their decision makers. Partners strive for agreement on hunting regulations and conservation activities when possible. The proposed bison hunting closure aims to maintain a wild and free ranging bison population.

MFWP proposes to change the Gallatin Watershed Portion (currently closed to bison hunting) and the Madison Watershed Portion (currently open to bison hunting) as follows: The Highway 191 corridor in the Madison Watershed Portion will be added to what is now the Gallatin Watershed Portion to allow bison movement. The new combined area will be called the West Side Special Management Area (closed) and the remaining open area, a portion of what is now called the Madison Watershed Portion, will be called the Hebgen Portion (see attached map). The Hebgen Portion is where most bison harvest occurs. A proposed state hunting regulation change requires public process and approval of the MFWP Fish and Wildlife Commission to be final.

The Legal Description of the West Side Special Management Area (closed to hunting) would be:

Those portions of Gallatin and Madison Counties lying within the following-described boundary: beginning at the intersection of Buck Creek and the Gallatin River, then up Buck Creek to the Madison-Gallatin Rivers Divide, then south and east along said divide to White Peak, then south along the Cabin Creek-Tepee Creek Divide to the headwaters of Red Canyon Creek, then south along the west bank of Red Canyon Creek to its inlet at Hebgen Lake, then eastward along the north shore of Hebgen Lake to Duck Creek, then east along the north bank of Duck Creek to Cougar Creek, then east along the north bank of Cougar Creek to the Yellowstone Park Boundary, then north along the Yellowstone Park Boundary to its intersection with the Gallatin-Yellowstone Rivers divide, then then in a northerly direction along said divide to Eaglehead Mountain, then in a westerly and northerly direction along the Portal Creek-Porcupine Creek divide and along the Porcupine Creek-Levenski Creek divide to the Gallatin River near the mouth of the West Fork of the Gallatin River, then southerly up the Gallatin River to Buck Creek, the point of beginning.

The Legal Description of the Hebgen Portion (open) would be:

Those portions of Gallatin County lying within the following-described boundary: Beginning where the western boundary of Yellowstone National Park intersects the Montana-Idaho Border, then northerly along the Yellowstone National Park boundary to the north bank of Cougar Creek, then west and north along the north bank of Cougar Creek to Duck Creek, then west along the north bank of Duck Creek to the north shore of Hebgen Lake, then west along the north shore of Hebgen Lake to Red Canyon Creek, then north along the west bank of Red Canyon Creek to the Cabin Creek-Tepee Creek divide, then, north along said divide to White Peak, then northwesterly along the Gallatin-Madison Rivers watershed divide to the headwaters of Beaver Creek, then south along the west bank of Beaver Creek to its confluence with Earthquake Lake, then south and east along the south shore of Quake Lake and Hebgen Lake to the South Fork

of the Madison River, then southerly and easterly along the west bank of said river to Forest Road 478, then southwest along Forest Road 478 to Reas Pass at the border of Idaho, then south and east along the Montana-Idaho border to the point of the beginning.



- TM—The CSKT approved the red zone. It is hard to add new habitat. We need to get buffalo there before hunting can happen. There is no buffalo hunt north of the road now, so we aren't losing anything. We need to develop a corridor for migration. The most likely way is up Highway 191. A big question is how many buffalo need to arrive before we start hunting? This is an experiment for getting bison into a new landscape.
- EC—Yes the Blackfeet are in line for more habitat. Agree with the ShoBan. We want a hunt not a harvest. Yes this is a good thing. It will help decrease conflict if bison are able to disperse farther onto the landscape.

Bison quarantine and translocation

CG reported that 130 bison were captured in February and March at the Stephens Creek facility. Not all animals went through quarantine, but 71 males and 25 females did. They have been tested eight times with seropositive results for 11 of the 71 and 2 of the 25. Seropositive animals were shipped to slaughter. Currently at Stephens Creek there are 59 males and 21 females. They will be tested again next month.

RC reported that at the APHIS Corwin Springs facility they have 61 head of bison. Of those, 5 males that have passed testing and "graduated" the quarantine process (also known as "Phase II").

MR said that the Ft Peck Tribe is ready to accept those 5 bison, but have been told they need to undergo further assurance testing (known as “Phase III”). Before they can receive the 5 bison, the Fort Peck Tribe has been asked to sign an MOU having many criteria (e.g., paying for any damage to private property caused by escaped bison). MR stated that the Fort Peck Tribe will not sign the MOU because they believe it limits their abilities to handle bison to only those animals that have *already* passed Phase II. Thus, under the MOU the Fort Peck facility could only handle Phase III testing, though it is capable of, and designed for, completing Phase II testing.

MR said the Fort Peck Tribe is confused by the attempt to place Phase-III-testing only limitations on them. RC said that the MOU is being handled out of Washington DC and that he cannot thus respond to the questions being asked.

A question was asked to RC: What is the future of the Corwin Springs facility; could it support increased numbers of bison for quarantine, particularly given the concern that the Stephens Creek facility is not big enough to supply a continuous supply of post-quarantine animals? RC responded that APHIS currently has lease commitments at the Corwin Springs facility for the 3 years, but what happens beyond that is currently not known. Those decisions will be handled out of the Washington DC offices of APHIS. He said that APHIS will graduate from quarantine the bison they have now but cannot say beyond that. Currently there is no more room at Corwin Springs pending moving some animals out.

MH said that the state of Montana is committed for the 5 male bison that have graduated quarantine to go to Fort Peck, but assumes that further testing is required (i.e., Phase III). The state must be compliant with Federal rules (i.e., in this case the declaration that Phase III assurance testing must occur).

EC asked why the bulls can’t be moved if the bulls don’t spread brucellosis? We want as many live animals out of YNP as possible. We need closure on the use of the Fort Peck facility.

MR stated that frustration exists with the UM&R (facilitators note: Uniform, Methods, & Rules for Brucellosis Eradication, dated October 1, 2003; available online) as the science has changed and the UM&R no longer represents the best available scientific knowledge. Further, the need to deal with the Washington DC office of APHIS changes this issue from a political one rather than an issue based on science. We are confused on why the IBMP can’t decide and make a strong recommendation.

Improving safety, quality of the North Side hunt/improving boundary issues

MD reported that MFWP considered proposing a closure of north side hunting to state hunters, but decided against pursuing such an approach.

Nothing new was reported under the Tribal hunting MOA. The MOA was described in detail in the summary reports for the IBMP meetings in November 2017, and April and August of 2018. Those reports can be found through the IBMP meeting page (www.ibmp.info/meetings.php).

JW provided a short review of the MOA, including these points:

- signees remain the CSKT, CTUIR, NPT, and Yakama Nation; no new tribes have signed on since the last IBMP meeting
- the state of Montana is not a signee
- all treaty hunting tribes and the state of Montana are invited to be part of the MOA
- the key driver of the MOA is safety and a goal is for a clean, efficient hunt for all
- the MOA has a three-prong approach to its key element—communication—through policy (e.g., IBMP issues), enforcement (regular meetings in the field), and hunter (e.g., education)
- the MOA does not mean any tribe gives away its treaty hunting rights
- the MOA includes aspects for voluntarily limiting the number of guns in the field

Conservation Planning for Bison in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest

Presentation by Cara Staub, Regional Wildlife Ecologist, US Forest Service

Cara provided an overview of forest planning, with a focus on wildlife aspects and, of particular interest to this group, recent deliberation regarding potential designation of bison as a “species of special conservation

concern” in the new Custer-Gallatin forest plan. Cara’s talk, briefly summarized here, can be found in full at the meeting website (www.ibmp.info/Library/20181128/20181128.php).

Cara started with a discussion of the USFS’s forest planning process. While many laws, regulations, and policies guide forest plan development, a key player is the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219).

She described the forest plan as providing a framework, a vision, and a strategy for guiding subsequent, project-level decisions. Ultimately the forest plan seeks to provide for sustainable, multiple use management of our resources. Among many components, forest plans include components set desired conditions for what we want the Forest to be like, set objectives and goals to help us progress toward those conditions, and set standards and guidelines, which serve as constraints to help achieve a desired conditions or mitigate undesired effects.

Cara emphasized that a forest plan is programmatic in nature; it does not authorize projects, nor commit or compel the Forest Service to take any action. It does provide for consistency, however, because every project and activity carried out under the plan must be consistent with what is in the plan.

Regarding revision of the Custer-Gallatin forest plan, she provided the following timeline: assessment in February of 2017; proposed action in April 2018; draft EIS release in early 2019.

Cara noted that all species are considered under a forest plan revision. “We need to maintain the diversity of species found in our ecosystems, and ensure their persistence.” This includes, she noted, bison and also everything else.

In developing a new forest plan, the Forest Service employs—as dictated by the 2012 planning rule—a complementary ecosystem and species specific approach to best maintain a) diverse plant and animal communities, and b) persistence of native species. Cara described this as a **course filter/fine filter approach**, with the ecosystem approach being the coarse filter, and the species-specific approach being the fine filter. Further, the 2012 planning rule provides specific requirements and goals for providing a) ecological sustainability, b) plant and animal diversity, and c) ecosystem services and multiple uses, as well as recognizing and managing for the plan area’s distinctive role in species conservation.

Cara defined species of conservation concern as follows:

A species, other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the regional forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species’ capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area.

She said that in the current forest planning process, they did not recognize bison as a species of conservation concern for the Custer-Gallatin National Forest. Species categorized under this designation generally have some combination of the following: small or decreasing population trends, limited or decreasing habitats, and significant threats facing them such that there is substantial concern they may disappear from the forest. Cara said that bison did not rise to this level of concern on the Custer-Gallatin, in part due to the successful adaptive management plan maintained by the IBMP. The result here has been a perpetuated stable or growing populations that are above population objectives.

While bison were declared a species of special concern, Cara stressed that the forest planning rule requirements still provide for bison management and protection under other auspices. Those include guidelines for ecosystem services and multiple uses (e.g., providing for habitat and forage), in instances where a species plays distinctive roles or makes unique contributions, ecological sustainability, and plant and animal diversity.

Following are a few concepts from the Q&A session that came at the conclusion of Cara’s talk:

- Q—Is the species of conservation concern designation determined at the forest level, in other words in the case of bison here by staff at the Custer-Gallatin National Forest? A—No it is decided at the Regional Forester’s level (facilitator’s note: for the CGNF that is Region 1 of the Forest Service, also known as the Northern Region, out of Missoula).
- Q—The NPT have over 13 million acres of historical grounds and believe it is vital that we look after all species. We do not like the concept of “multiple use” as it seems to just allow industry in. We want the tribes to play a role in the management of the forests. We have done so historically with success. Right now the NPT do lots of fisheries work and have seen the huge ecological impact of fish – wouldn’t bison be the same? A—Yes the Forest Service recognizes the important functional role of bison, ecological impacts of their herbivory, their wallows, and more. One thing to note is that the planning rule of 2012



Figure 2.—Cara Staub of the USFS gave a presentation to Partners, staff, and public regarding forest planning process, with a focus on bison (and other wildlife) issues.

differs from those in the past in that now it includes wildlife and people as part of those multiple uses, not just the removal of natural resources.

- Q—Were bison not considered a species of conservation concern because there is no resident herd in the CGNF, that instead the bison migrate in and out of the forest? A—No, migratory animals can be considered a species of conservation concern.
- Q—Does the forest plan have a goal of establishing a resident population on CGNF? A—There are plan components that do try to fit in with the IBMP Adaptive Management Plan and other alternatives that might help. So yes, it is possible.
- Q—Is the stated IBMP population goals what drive the forest plan and determination of if bison are considered a species of conservation concern? A—No IBMP is only once source under consideration; we also look at population trends, habitat condition, and similar and how all of those are changing over time.
- Q—Is the decision on species of conservation concern set with the forest plan or can it be changed? A—It can be changed if the management of the forest or something else changes drastically warranting a revisit to the designation (either to add the designation or remove it).

Traffic Safety Considerations Associated with the Bison on the North Side

Jeff Ebert (Butte District Administrator) and Pat Wise (Deputy Director)² from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) spoke to the Partners, staff, and public about traffic safety and bison. The discussion has been contemplated for many years and was spurred in part by a) recent discussion of Mike Honeycutt and Tim Reid with Pat and Jeff, and b) recent West Side consideration of the potential for bison to migrate up the Highway 191 corridor.

² Also acting in support of Pat and Jeff was Kyle Demars, MDOT Maintenance Chief from Bozeman.

Pat and Jeff largely handled their presentation as an hour long session as a Q&A session. The Q&A came from Partners, staff, and the public. Coming into the meeting, the Partners provided MDOT a list of questions that had been brainstormed and captured during IBMP meetings and field trips over the past year:

1. What is the process for speed limit change? Can it be seasonal, nighttime?
2. If speed limit is decreased, what is the best method to implement & enforce that change? Cattle guards, signage, other?
3. Does the general public, not just locals and/or wildlife advocates, want speed reduction?
4. What are the best methods of communication between MDT, Park County Sheriff's Office, & IBMP agencies both during and outside of hunting season? How has that changed in given increased bison tolerance in recent years — i.e., potential for bison presence outside the Park year round?
5. What about wildlife besides bison? Can a new program to improve highway safety be structured to decrease deaths of deer, elk, and other species as well? Is so, how?
6. Are there any lessons that can be applied to similar West Side highway safety issues?

Jeff and Pat addressed the questions above through their time, though not sequentially but rather through interaction with those in attendance. The following notes capture key aspects of the discussion. Like questions and responses are lumped together, regardless if they occurred simultaneously:

- Q—What laws impact how MDOT manages Montana's highways? A—Montana code annotated 61-3-309 is the law that defines how speed limit is set in area of road <=50 miles in length. The Transportation Commission cannot set a speed limit for anything longer than 50 miles.
- Q—How do we change a speed limit? A—State law requires that a local entity (e.g., city, county, tribal group) must make a request for traffic study. Key to setting speed is what the speed that 85% of the traffic is traveling at or below through that corridor. The local entity can hire an engineering firm to do the study; it does not have to be MDOT (sometimes it may be faster to hire a consulting firm). Limits exist as to when the studies can be done. For example, we have tubes that go across the highway to collect data—these can't be used in the winter when snow plows could rip up those tubes.
- Q—Is the Park Service considered a local authority? A—No.
- Q—What about Hwy 191 running through and inside the NW corner of YNP? A—We have a handshake agreement with NPS to take care of that highway. It is considered a state and federal highway. It is not considered a scenic highway under official designation. MDOT and NPS signed a MOU in February that defines our interactions.
- Q—Can we do a temporary change along a roadway in Montana, for example to slow traffic at certain times of day or year? A—Yes, non-permanent changes are allowed under law. There have even been situations where requests we made to *increase* speed limits. That's not typical. The law allows MDOT to set a reduced speed at night. For example, coming out of West Yellowstone going north. We lower the speed limit there down to 55 mph for both trucks and vehicles. During the day it goes back up to 70 mph. We get lots of comments from the traveling public saying they don't want to see that 55 mph speed limit during the day because you can see the buffalo. At night the buffalo lay on the road and are harder to see with no reflection from their eyes.
- Q—Can MDOT change the statutory 70 mph speed on the primary system? A—No, the legislation says the department cannot change the speed statewide, we are limited only to 50-mile long chunks as described before.
- Q—How long will temporary speed limit last in W Yellowstone? A—We have made it sort of “temporarily permanent” (laughter). We've gone back to the Transportation Commission a couple of times to assure that the public wants to keep the temporary speed limit active. It's been fairly informal.
- Q—MDOT manages road conditions and has tools to communicate those conditions to the public. Would it be appropriate for the department in the sections of road adjacent to the park have a monitoring program and signage that notify drivers day and night when there were bison active in that corridor? Wouldn't that be better than putting up speed limits that people don't pay attention to anyway? A—We have adopted variable message signs with various and changeable information in real time (say crash in corridor). We have tried to look at migratory behavior set corridor messages from March to May, when



Figure 3.—Jeff Ebert (standing) and Pat Wise of MDOT respond to a question from Cam Sholly of NPS (in vest; also shown at the Partner table is Mike Honeycutt of MBOL).

bison are out on the roads. We have looked at the technology for signs triggered by buffalo presence. It's difficult with buffalo because they will step past the sign but stay on the road corridor for a long time and the signs will go off.

- Q—Do people follow posted speed limits? A—Locals can become complacent to the signs, especially when they haven't seen any animals on the road for many days.
- Q—Is NPS responsible for telling MDO when bison are coming out of YNP? A—We have relied on NPS to tell the townspeople and let MDOT know.
- Q—I live in Gardiner. How many bison have been involved in accidents on Hwy 89 north of Gardiner? Lots of deer and elk, no doubt, but I have not heard about bison being hit on the north side of YNP. A—I am not sure but we can get you that information. (facilitator's note: Jeff and Pat said they would provide this information to the facilitator, likely in the form of web links to MDOT data, and the facilitator would post to the webpage for this meeting (** action item 2). Note that we do have a study that was done on the North Side and we can make that available. We especially have dollars for wildlife (not just buffalo) study and accommodations when we have a new project (e.g., road reconstruction). For MDOT, road safety is our job. Property damage from a car hitting wildlife is does not rise to the priority as a fatality. Our fatalities in these areas are small, which is probably why you don't see a lot of conversation about changes there.
- Q—What opportunities exist or are coming soon? A—MDOT is working with other agencies around the state which will result in a wildlife and traffic summit in December. We will talk about collaboration and available dollars and resources outside of the transportation dollars. Again, I encourage you to pay attention to when major construction projects are going on within these corridors as that is the best time, at least for MDOT, to do studies and analysis that might lead to change.
- Q—Are lowered speed limits near West Yellowstone successful? A—We need more data and time, but we think that it has decreased accidents.
- Q—What information is available about what is ahead, when the next projects will occur? A—MDOT has several items. We have a document we update annually called Pending Construction Programs that lines out the next 5 years for what department will be doing on roads, items we are already working on. We

also have the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program that looks at the new projects coming out over the next 10 years.

- Q—What is the trigger point to decrease speed limit on Hwy 191? A—Been in place in 2006 but how it was arrived at was to keep trucks and cars at same speed which is very important for safety. The general process is that the city or county government makes the request for a certain speed, MDOT does an analysis, we will make a recommendation, they can accept that or the city or county can go to other sources if they believe our assessment missed the mark. In the end the Transportation Commission has the final say.
- Comment—I think we are remiss to chase a lagging indicator, the color of blood, the highway fatalities. I don't think that's the metric we want to trigger action. I know for a fact that wildlife strikes are under-reported. I think there needs to be a confidence interval associated with whatever data we have. Also, I want to correct the earlier statement that NPS is responsible for making a request or being the arbiter for when there is a threat level requiring speed limit reduction. We don't have jurisdiction or authority on Hwy 89. I suggest that this body, under the letterhead of the IBMP, provide such requests or concerns to the county commissioners. A—Thank you for that comment and I think hearing this kind of input is one of the reason we are here today. What our recommendation, based on the success and lessons learned on the west side, would be to recommend to your county commission that MDOT do a speed study on the highway section of concern. We would do the study and make a recommendations for this corridor and that will go to the Transportation Commission.
- Q—Does the general public and not just wildlife advocates care about speed limit? A—We do have lots of dynamics that come into that questions. You are invited to come to the Transportation Commission meetings and I encourage you to talk to Jeff, Kyle, and myself if you have questions for us.

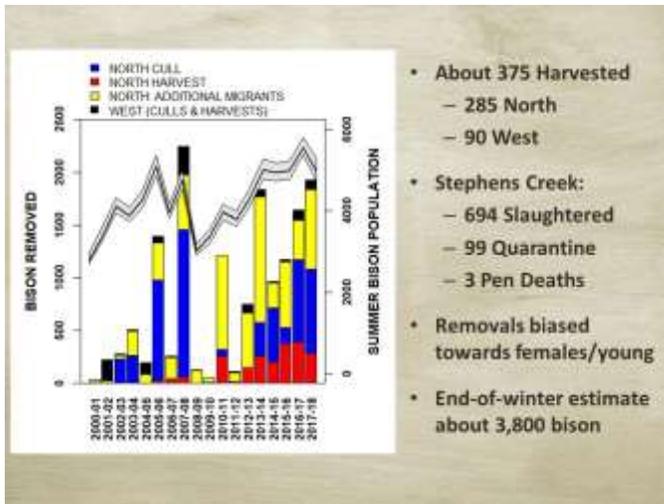
At the conclusion of Pat and Jeff's presentation, Partners and staff thanked them for the time they took to come and share their knowledge and perspective with all assembled. Mike Honeycutt, who along with Tim Reid invited Pat and Jeff to the meeting, provided some summary comments, including (paraphrasing): Thank you to Pat, Jeff, and Kyle for taking the time to be here today. Some of the last questions got to the heart of the matter: when we consider adaptive management we need to get out of the lag measures and instead look at the lead measures and what's ahead of us; that's really important. I'll editorialize: For all of us who attended landowner meetings around the Taylor Fork drainage we know that highway safety was a big negative comment that came up there. So certainly as we consider ability to use that new habitat we have to looking at that—because if we get it wrong and the lag measures shows there's a problem, then it becomes a policy setback for our IBMP group. I will commit (and I'm looking at Mark hopefully he can speak for FWP) that the two state Partner agencies here have to be more proactive at keeping MDOT apprised of our conversations.

Planning for the 2018/2019 Winter IBMP Operations Plan

PJ White of NPS to begin the conversation by recounting recent bison population count and then providing NPS removal target recommendations for 2019. The slides from PJ's full talk are presented here, plus can be found at the meeting website (www.ibmp.info/Library/20181128/20181128.php).

2017-2018 Operations

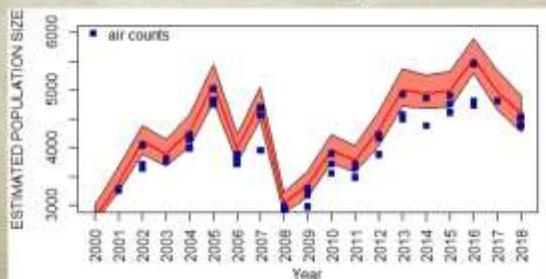
- **Summer 2017: Counted 4,816 bison**
 - 3,969 in north and 847 in central
- **Agreed to manage for a decreasing population**
 - Focus harvests and culls in northern management area
- **Removed about 1,171 bison**

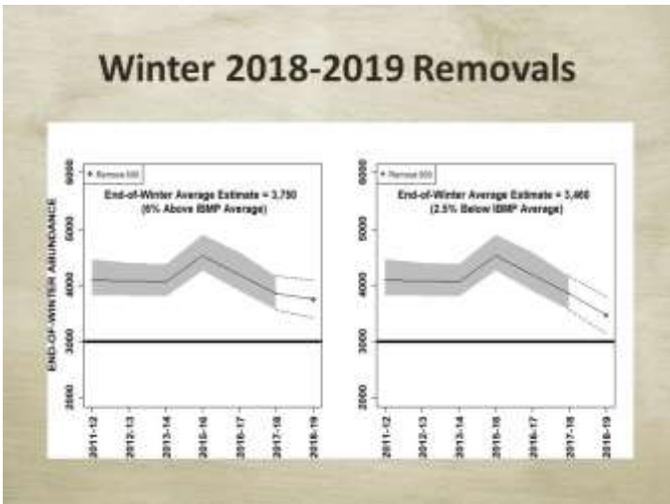
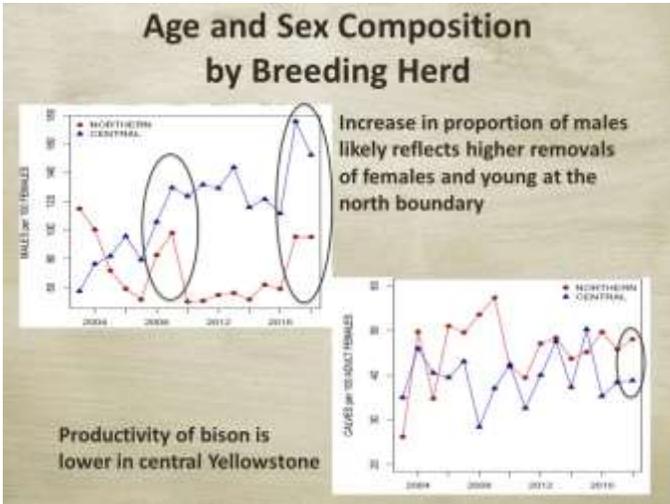
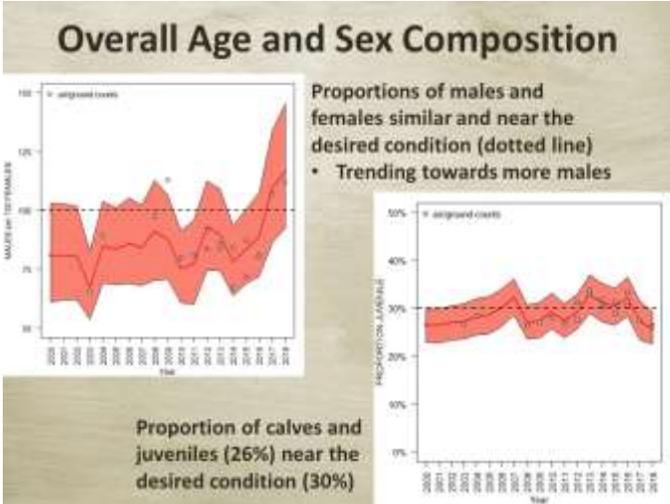


Population Count - Summer 2018

4,527 bison counted after calving

- 3,337 in north; 1,190 in central
- 6% decrease from 2017; -17% from 2016

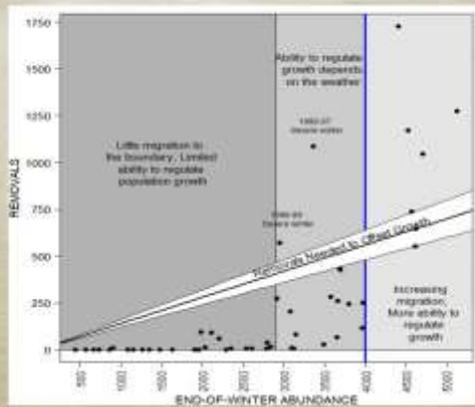




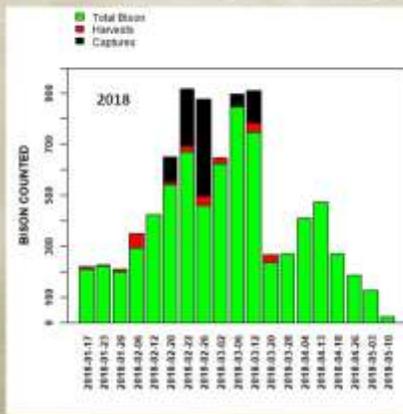
2018-2019 Recommendations

- Remove 600-900 bison (i.e., stable to slightly decreasing population); focus on northern herd
 - Reduce numbers in north (grazing, conflicts)
 - Approach 3,525 bison end of winter (IBMP average); need fewer removals to regulate population
- Allow bison to distribute and hunt where suitable; limit harvests on west side to males (sex ratio skewed towards males)
- Remove bison in proportion to occurrence (~73% adults, 12% yearlings, 15% calves)

Migration: Forecast = Mild Winter



Balancing Hunting and Culling

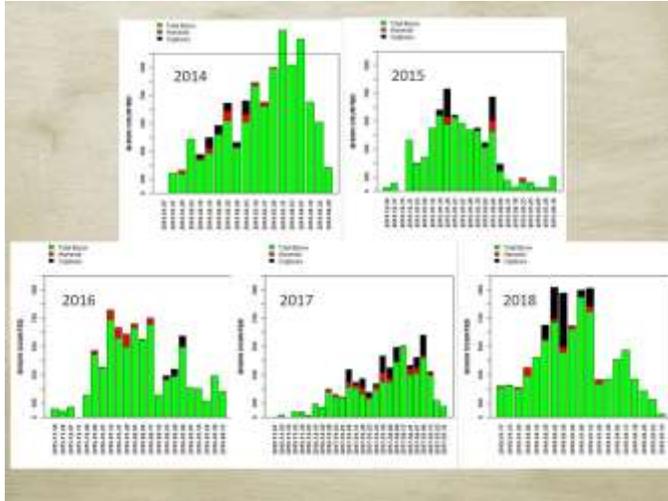


Bison move outside park when >200 north of Mammoth

North harvests averaged 275 (148-389) bison each winter since 2012

- Not enough to regulate population

Agreed to use culls to reach removal objectives



Balancing Hunting and Culling

Winter	Count	Goal		Harvest		
		North	Criteria	North	Cull	Total
2012	3,720	300	No Cull	15	0	15
2013	4,230	425	No Cull	148	0	148
2014	4,924	600-800	None	258	318	576
2015	4,865	900	None	201	518	719
2016	4,910	1,000	Cull >Feb 15	378	150	528
2017	5,449	900-1,400	None	389	788	1,177
2018	4,816	600-1,250	Monthly Hunt Goals (Cull>Feb20)	285	796	1,081

Balancing Hunting and Culling

- Captures limit hunter success by reducing the number of bison that could migrate out of the park
- Allow at least 200 bison north of Mammoth to facilitate migration to the boundary
- Capture 400-600 bison through the winter and minimize the time animals are held at Stephens Creek
- Bison won't necessarily have moved outside the park before being captured
- Capture more bison as numbers north of Mammoth >600



Winter Ops discussion, required actions for completion

Partners had few questions for PJ and moved forward with discussion of the Winter Ops Plan.

The facilitator pointed out that Partners and staff had copies of the current (i.e., draft) 2018/19 Winter Ops Plan, including all mark up (edits) that had been submitted since their August meeting. The Partners paused for several minutes to review the document with staff.

Upon completion of that review, and under guidance from the Lead Partner, the Partners first were given an opportunity to call out sections they believed needed further editing and/or where disagreements occurred in the language or the content.

MZ provided perhaps a half dozen line-by-line edits to specific sentences that were recorded for later replacement by the facilitator (** action item 3). In one case, MZ asked that an item regarding the South Fork of the Madison Arm, on page 6 of the draft Winter Ops Plan, be added to the Parked Item list for discussion at a future meeting (** action item 4).

Survey of other Partners and staff quickly zeroed in on two sections where disagreement occurred with respect to the current language in the draft 2018/19 report. Those sections, and a *brief* overview of Partner deliberations, follows:

- “*Hunt-Trap*” section.—Concerns were stated about several topics, but principle among those seemed to be who would take part in daily hunt meetings. The goals to maximize safety, communication, and coordination around the bison hunt seemed universally agreed upon. Several groups, however, expressed concerns about having the people-power available to meet a mandate in in the Winter Ops plan, as suggested by some, that crew meet in the field every morning of bison hunting season. The other main topic of discussion—as it has been in recent years—was how the trap at Stephen’s Creek would be run in conjunction with the hunt.
- “*Quarantine*” section.—Unresolved issues remain about the status of the quarantine process and what entities and locations are allowed to complete what aspects of the process (see earlier quarantine section). This disagreement led Partners to a decision the current section, as in this draft, needed to be further discussed, clarified, and rewritten.

As they have in other years, the Partners decided to assign interested parties to meet as soon as possible to rewrite these sections. Partners agreed to accept the deliberations of each group as the final input to 2018/19 Winter Ops Plan. Each Partner was given an opportunity to be part of the two ad hoc groups tasked with rewriting the sections in question. The volunteers for the rewrite of the two sections are shown below. In each case, a lead was designated for to the rewrite of the section, with a deadline of returning the materials to the Lead Partner and facilitator by December 12th.

- Team to rewrite the “*Hunt-Trap*” section.—Tim Reid (NPS-YNP, lead), Stephanie Gillan (CSKT), Carl Scheeler (CTUIR), Mark Deleray (MFWP), Chris Geremia (NPS-YNP), Amanda Rogerson (NPT), Michael Thom (USFS-CGNF), Keegan Bordeaux (Yakama Nation)
- Team to rewrite the “*Quarantine*” section.—Majel Russel (lead), Ryan Clarke (APHIS), Marty Zaluski and Mike Honeycutt (MDOL/MBOL), and Chris Geremia (NPS-YNP).

Timeline for completion of 2018/19 IBMP Winter Ops Plan

The facilitator, in conjunction with real-time discussions with the Lead Partner, provided the following timeline for completion of the 2018/19 IBMP Winter Operations Plan (often the “2019 Winter Ops Plan”).

2019 Winter Ops Plan

- Lead Partner MFWP responsible
- Following Nov 28 meeting, facilitator accepts all changes not in dispute in the current draft of the Winter Ops Plan, as well as those made and accepted during this Nov 28 IBMP meeting
- Leads of the teams rewriting the Hunt-trap and Quarantine sections of the Winter Ops Plan return their edits to the facilitator and Lead Partner by close of business Dec 12
- Facilitator makes changes and completes final 2019 IBMP Winter Operations Plan, prepares it for electronic signing, and sends out request for electronic signing by all Partners by 8 AM MT, Dec 17

- Partner signing of 2019 IBMP Winter Ops Plan completed by Dec 31. (As required per Partner Protocols. If Partners do not come to agreement, then most recent Winter Ops Plan remains in effect.)
- Facilitator, after receiving OK from Lead Partner, posts of 2019 IBMP Winter Ops Plan to IBMP website by Jan 1, 2019 and sends both notification of the completed signing, and an electronic copy of the signed document to the IBMP email list.

The Lead Partner stressed the importance of meeting the schedule, and how the timeline left very little wiggle room. The facilitator and Lead Partner accepted an action item to drive completion of the 2018/19 Winter Operations Plan (document management, compilation, editing, and preparation for Partner review and, in the latter case, signing) (** action item 5).

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

Shana Drimal—Update on bison coexistence/fencing project

Shana noted that Bison Co-existence project has now completed 40 projects with approximately \$40,000 contributed to help landowners better live with bison. She said five projects are in the works this summer, one in the Gardner area, the others in the West Yellowstone/Horse Butte area. (Facilitator note 12/9/18: this report from Aug 2018 pending update from Shana, which will be slotted into this location.)

Scott Bischke—Update on Partner Protocol revision

The facilitator reported that at their August meeting Partners had requested updates to their Partner Protocol. The facilitator collected those changes after the meeting and modified the document, retaining versions showing both with the modifications and with the modifications accepted. Changes were largely updates and logistical, with modifications to personnel, agency duties, and timelines. The new and improved version (clean) of the Partner Protocols can be found at the top of the Library page of the IBMP website (see <http://www.ibmp.info/library.php>).

Next meetings, final comments

UPDATE ON AND TIMELINE FOR COMPLETING THE 2018 IBMP ANNUAL REPORT

The facilitator described the current status of the Annual Report based on submissions from Partners and staff to date. The document is partially complete but in need of a great deal more input. The facilitator and Lead Partner provided notes and a timeline for completion of the 2018 Annual Report, as shown below:

- Logistics reminder: a) Lead Partner MFWP responsible, b) Lead Partner has final say on any disputes, c) No signature required per Partner Protocols
- Partner final input by Dec 12
- Document completion by Dec 21; send out to IBMP mailing list with opportunity for Partner and staff review by Dec 30 (return to facilitator by close of business)
- Facilitator makes final edits, verifies with Lead Partner, and posts to IBMP website by

The facilitator stressed that all Partners are responsible for input into the Annual Report. The timeline for completion matches with that for the 2019 Winter Ops Plan. As such, the facilitator and Lead Partner also accepted the action item to drive completion of the 2018 Annual Report (document management, compilation, editing, and preparation for Partner review and, in the latter case, signing) (** action item 6).

SCHEDULING 2019 MEETINGS OF THE IBMP

The Partners set the following schedule of meetings for 2019:

- Spring meeting
 - April 24th: (tentative, save the date) Morning field trip in Gardiner Basin with follow-up public meeting in Gardiner

- April 25th: regular IBMP meeting in Gardiner, MT
- Summer meeting --
 - July 31st: Bozeman, MT
- Fall (late) meeting --
 - December 3rd: West Yellowstone, MT

THANKS TO 2018 IBMP LEAD PARTNER AND MEETING CLOSE

Partners, staff, and public provided Mark Deleray a round of applause for the work he and his staff did in leading the IBMP for 2018. Mark acknowledge the thanks, thanked everyone for their help, thanked everyone for their attendance at this meeting, and bid everyone safe travels.

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 presented. 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. The “***” callouts are especially added to items that the facilitator does not believe are already under consideration by the Partners (or have been in the past).

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.

- I’m a 4th generation rancher from up near the Canadian border. I attend meetings here because decisions made here can impact whole livestock industry in the state as well as wildlife management across the state, not just people down here.
- ** While transfer of brucellosis from bison to cows is well controlled down here in space and time, the transfer of bison to elk and elk to cattle has been a more prevalent concern. The presence of elk across the landscape all over MT makes the quarantine of bison prior to transfer of live bison out of the park really important to ranchers. It is a big concern and fear we have. So for us to know that that quarantine will be held to the highest of standards is of vital importance.
- In northern Montana all eyes are currently on the Blackfoot tribe as we watch them work with their Innii initiative and potentially bring bison from here up there makes the quarantine process all the more important to us so that we can be confident they are disease free. Because whether they are close to cattle up there, they will be close to elk and elk can go wherever they want. So while I understand the Tribes want bison from the park on their land as quickly as possible, to us ranchers that quarantine piece still remains vitally important.
- I’m a Gardiner resident and represent Bear Creek Council. Our concern is that hunting in Beattie Gulch has created a public safety issue. For years nearby residents have complained of constant gunfire. Additionally the large number of carcasses and gut piles left behind draw predators to an area near homes. Gut piles also fetuses with much meat.
- MFWP estimates that each year 200-300 bison are killed within small area at the mouth of Beattie Gulch. This is not safe. It’s common for 20-30 bison to shoot at bison as they cross out of the park. FWP proposed closing a small portion of the area to hunting; however that proposal was removed from Oct 17 FW Commission agenda and I don’t know why.



Figure 4.—This meeting of the IBMP included a presentation by and Q&A session with members of the Montana Department of Transportation regarding, in part, highway safety and bison (see text earlier in the report).

- ** We invite the IBMP Partners to come for a field trip to Beattie Gulch and Jardine area next March. And also to Jardine area. Jardine area is another place where bison are killed near houses and carcasses are left. After the tour we would like the Partners to meet with a panel of Gardiner residents to hear their first hand stories.
- We want to work with the IBMP Partners to solve this issue, and make the Gardiner hunt safer.
- Speaking to you on behalf of the Bear Creek Council. We are a grass roots citizens group in the Gardiner Basin. We work on issues that are local and often resource and wildlife issues. These are issues that as a community we are invested in and our economy is sustained by.
- What we'd really like to see is year round bison that are resident outside YNP—and not just our area but Montana in general. From a cultural and economic standpoint we believe that wild bison are part of the future. We do not believe that has to be incompatible with cattle; cattle ranching is part of Montana's future, as well, though compatibility takes some innovative management.
- We are not against hunting bison, just not as it now takes place. We do support the tribes and tribal hunting and want them to feel welcome in our community. I acknowledge that has not always been the case and for that I offer an apology.
- We would like it to be more of a hunt, not a harvest.
- I would also like to invite you to this field trip, as proposed by the last speaker.
- I am with the Montana Stockgrowers' Association. I do want to reiterate that the brucellosis-free status is very important to us and we want to thank the IBMP for their work on that topic.
- We look forward to working with you in the future.
- We want to make sure that all translocation is designated brucellosis-free and is done by the state and state veterinarian as we look towards that.
- I won't reiterate what a previous speaker has said. I'm new at the job and see some faces in the crowd I know. I look to forward getting to know the tribes. Please grab me in the hall and say hi.
- My pleasure to talk about buffalo migrating north from the Horse Butte area. There are great migration corridors that go up through the Wapiti to Taylor Fork Basin, where habitat is year around. I saved a copy

- of the FWP study that says buffalo could be there in winter and that there's room there for 600 buffalo in the wintertime.
- Then we have the migration corridors facing east on Madison Range and facing west on the Gallatin Range. Takes you into the Porcupine, Buffalo Horn, Elkhorn -- there are all kinds of places where buffalo can tuck into for the winter. I would estimate that in this area, why you could have a thousand buffalo not going back into the park, staying year around.
 - In Gardiner, north on west side of the river walking down into Tom Miner, and then over Tom Miner into Porcupine once again. So there's plenty of room for buffalo to roam if we stop shooting them just as they cross out of the Park. We've got to have tolerance for them. And the Forest Service should request that the bison repopulate in these areas in federal land.
 - Also we're still working on the Big Open centered on the CMR north and south. We could make it a national bison conservation area. We can't get Yellowstone bison up there unless we haul them there by truck.
-
- I am with Elkhorn Ranch, and also representing the Upper Gallatin landowners. I want to thank you for focus on highway safety, a topic near and dear to my heart. I look forward to seeing some of the data, and looking at that.
 - ** I want to encourage Partners to invite people who do the enforcement of these areas to speak someday, as well, about enforcement because as we know speed limits don't count if not enforced.
 - I'm hearing about making it easier for bison to get to the Taylor Fork. If that comes up please keep us landowners informed as that will really affect us. Especially I heard trucking mentioned a few times today and that makes me nervous. Let's keep talking and working together.
-
- I am a retired veterinarian and I've had bison on the brain for years. I've worked with cattle and bison ranches and with the tribes.
 - I've seen a lot of happy ranched bison. I'm not saying we don't need wild bison but I do think we need to stay aware of our livestock health regulations and the tribes are consistently doing a better and better job of managing these animals.
 - ** I just see the need for a bison stewardship initiative, an idea I just wrote down this morning. Maybe an overall program for the life cycle of the bison. They go out there on the range and then they go to slaughter. It's very unceremonious the way will deal with the slaughter situation of bison today. We could do better.
 - I think we could make a quarantine program work; it would money and it needs to be cost effective. The tribes want to do that and they are improving their management along with the rest of the bison ranchers.
 - Let's keep an open mind and maybe get a group together and talk about a stewardship initiative and maybe we could do some trials. I don't want to give up running these bison through quarantine. We learn something every time we do it.
-
- I'm with Defenders of Wildlife. I'm going to cut to the chase. Seems we all have the shared goal of diverting animals from slaughter, which is good.
 - Ft Peck, Ft Belknap, ITBC, Defenders, WWF, National Wildlife Federation recently hosted a tribal buffalo summit in Denver. It was fantastic; there were 40 tribes there. Yellowstone bison was a major topic of discussion -- Tim Reid was there and did a great job of synthesizing the information on quarantine--the process and what it means. Everyone came away encouraged that we can finally move bison out of the park and restore them to tribal, as well as public lands.
 - It's been a long marathon but I feel like we can get to the finish line.

- ****** The question is, can APHIS agree to use Ft Peck's facility for quarantine, and specifically Phase II? As we heard from Majel today, using the facility for Phase III alone as an assurance facility is not enough. Especially since they've gone through so many hurdles already. This a ½ million dollar facility and they could really help with quarantine capacity, and that's what we're facing at Stephen's Creek.
- So how do we get APHIS there with the MOU? The two issues I see are the UMR regulations—which some people contend are out of date—and then the EA that was signed by DOI which does say Ft Peck can serve as occupational quarantine based on meeting structural and biosecurity requirements (speaker reads some of the EA). But again, the UMR is not aligned with the EA. So that's the burning issue here. EA stated that male bison, having negligible chance of transmission, could go to Ft Peck. Negotiations were underway for sending them there but then negotiations stopped when APHIS decide that there was a 7% risk of those bulls converting back to sero-positive.
- ****** What I'd like to ask this body is you could influence this decision at the DC level. If you could write a letter to APHIS to request modifying the UMR with language for facilities outside the park, with language about bulls being able to go to Ft Peck, making the two documents to agree, then I think we can get somewhere.

- Here to announce that I am leaving NRDC, last day in a few weeks. Will be starting a bison ranch. I worked at NRDC for 10 years. Much has happened in those 10 years. A couple comments and observations.
- Much progress on this issue. The relationships in this room have really improved. I think the field trips really help in that sense, getting out on the ground and breaking down some barriers. I encourage you to continue to do those. (a kind word to the facilitator) And from a bison standpoint—just look at Horse Butte. So there's been a lot of progress and I encourage everyone to look for win-win, lasting solutions. Lastly a big thank you to everyone.

- I work for Buffalo Field Campaign. Not easy to speak to you. I feel compelled to say something to interject something from my perspective of being a person who loves buffalo, and see them as being very special, especially wild ones.
- There's a resource in these wild buffalo that if we lose it, we will regret it. Our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren would not know wild buffalo and that would be a very bad thing.
- Humans need wild buffalo on the landscape. My hope and my prayer is that somehow this body and all of us as people who know and are connected to buffalo will keep that in mind as a goal. The US government tried to exterminate buffalo from this land and almost succeeded. The buffalo that hid in YNP are the survivors; they went and hid and lived and they are still alive. And they have a lot to teach us about survival.
- Money and economy, yes, those things matter. But wild is a resource, and these wild buffalo are incredibly precious. Please hear me as I say this. And you all at this table are carrying the responsibility of that resource for generations.

- We are a group of free thinking rabble-rousers dedicated to protecting the people, the forest, and water, and wildlife of the West. In that vein, my group is suing Sec. Zinke, Governor Bullock, and most of the group's here.
- The goal of the lawsuit is to get more Yellowstone bison out of the Park permanently. We'd like to see new populations that could be hunted year around perhaps.
- My understanding is that right now there is a small area called Beattie Gulch and FWP said this is unsafe and in past proposed closing the area. We are concerned about public safety. I get the sense that FWP and Bullock are afraid to close the hunt because people will say that the natives still get to hunt and we don't want to upset our constituent, the white guys. And that doesn't fix the safety issue.



Figure 5.—Bison inside Yellowstone National Park, during a warmer time of year.

- In court we can ask the judge to stop the white hunt but that doesn't address the Native American hunt. And as new tribes come to hunt the problem just gets worse.
- ** So when I see a request for creative ideas I suggest this: if the tribes want to exert their treaty rights, they can wait for the bison to come out of the park, and then they can get behind the bison with guns on their shoulders and say we're going to hunt these bison but we're not going to hunt them right nw. We're going to walk these bison 5 miles, 10 miles, ... we're going to keep walking them and disperse these bison further into Montana so that we can have larger populations in the state of Montana.
- If the tribes are interested in this idea, I'd love shake your hand, have some coffee or tea, talk with you.

- I'm also with Defenders of Wildlife. This is my first meeting. I'd like to speak about something else, about forest plans. I encourage IBMP Partners to participate of that process.
- The Forest Service provided an overview of their species of conservation concern determination on bison, and thanks to Cara. I encourage this group to engage in that process as it has implications for conservation of bison.
- I served for many years on a Federal Advisory Committee advising the Sec. of Agriculture on implementation of that Forest Service planning regulation, it's challenging and I want to provide a couple of observations possible interest to this group: a) Forest Service is to make an independent determination on species of conservation concern, and that is to be supported by best available science – it's a challenging process because you have to translate the science into that conservation status determination; 2) one of the things USFS uses is reviewing what other entities (e.g., IUCN, states) have said in making their own determinations.
- Again, I encourage this group to be engaged in that process, and listen the various stake holders.

- I am upset with the treatment of these animals.
- Bison are migratory and should be allowed to migrate outside of the park. Especially Dome Mountain offers incredible bison habitat. And also bison have the ability to repopulate the high plains: the CMR and APR and tribal lands are all good habitat.

- Perhaps most important is maintenance of genetic diversity and viability of the herd which I've heard very little about over the years.
- Please put bison over politics, thank you.
- I've been working and watching closely the Custer-Gallatin forest plan revision process. I am disappointed that the regional office does not see need for listing bison as a species of conservation concern.
- I feel that the forest has more than just responsibility for providing habitat but also has responsibility for success of the conservation of bison so that we have a free-ranging herd on CGNF. I don't think that's going on right now, but I sure would like to see it.
- I welcome the habitat improvements being talked about. Maybe that could be part of the coming EIS.
- I want to echo the point about the importance of genetic viability. That 3000 number is not necessarily viable genetically.
- I think you know that climate change presents challenges to the survival of all of our megafauna. We need to err on the side of conservation.

*** Meeting adjourned ***

Abbreviations

- AM—Adaptive management
- AR—Amanda Rogerson
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- CG—Chris Geremia
- CGNF—Custer Gallatin National Forest
- CSh—Cam Sholly
- CSc—Carl Scheeler
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- CTUIR—Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- CV—Clay Vines
- CWG—Citizens' Working Group
- DSA—Designated Surveillance Zone
- EA—Environmental Assessment
- EC—Ervin Carlson
- EH—Eric Holt
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GW—Germaine White
- GWA—Gallatin Wildlife Association
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- ITBC— InterTribal Buffalo Council
- JC—Jennifer Carpenter
- JH—John Harrison
- JW—Jeremy Wolf
- LG—Leonard Gray
- LW—Leander Watson
- MBOL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MD—Mark Deleray
- 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
- MOA—Memorandum of Agreement
- MOU—Memorandum of Understanding
- MR—Majel Russell
- MSGA—Montana Stockgrowers' Association
- MSU—Montana State University
- MV—Mike Volesky
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NAS—National Academy of Sciences
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- NGO—Non-governmental organizations
- 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
- RC—Ryan Clarke

- ROD—Record of Decision
- RF—Rebecca Frye
- RFP—Request for proposals
- RTR—Royal Teton Ranch
- SB—Scott Bischke
- SEIS—Supplemental EIS
- SG—Stephanie Gillin
- SK—Salish Kootenai
- TM—Tom McDonald
- TR—Tim Reid
- 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