

# Summary Report from the Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting April 25, 2019



**First draft presented May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke**

The following summary report reflects activities at the April 25, 2019 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held at the Community Center in Gardiner, Montana. This report comes from the notes of facilitator Scott Bischke<sup>1</sup>. 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), Dennis Clairmont (CSKT), Ervin Carlson (ITBC), Mike Honeycutt (MBOL), Martin Zaluski (MDOL), Mark Deleray (MFWP), Cam Sholly (NPS-YNP), Neil Thagard (NPT), and Mary Erickson (USFS-CGNF). In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~70 other people were in the room over the course of the day, 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 Nov 2018 meeting report to the website as “final”	ASAP
2	SB	Add BCC presentation to the IBMP agenda for summer meeting	ASAP
3	SB	RC noted that APHIS currently has lease commitments at the Corwin Springs facility for the next 3 yrs, but what happens beyond that is currently not known. Those decisions will be handled out of the Washington DC offices of APHIS. APHIS will graduate from quarantine the bison they have now but cannot say beyond that. Given that uncertainty, the new ability to send bison to Fort Peck for Phase 3 (and possibly later more), a Partner noted that they need to have a discussion about how given these changes the quarantine procedure fits into IBMP management, what the future looks like what roles each Partner plays, who funds the quarantine program, where is it located, how would the flow of animals work—e.g., maximum that could be moved, bottlenecks—etc.	Add this item to the Partners’ parked item list ASAP

## Agreeing to previous meeting minutes

The meeting started with introductions of Partners, staff, and all members of the general public in attendance. Cam Sholly made a short presentation to PJ White of his staff regarding a recent award PJ had received, the Craighead Conservation Award. Next the facilitator provided a short review of IBMP history. Then the facilitator asked if there were any objections or changes to the draft meeting report from the November 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 November 2018 meeting notes to IBMP.info as *Final* (\*\* action item 1).



Figure 1.—During introductions, Cam Sholly (standing) recognized PJ White (center, smiling; both of NPS) for being honored with the Craighead Conservation Award.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Following Cam’s words PJ remarked (paraphrasing here): “If I’d have known he was going to do that, I’d have taken a vacation day today!” Those assembled all had a good laugh.

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.

## **Review, discussion of Apr 24<sup>th</sup> North Side field trip**

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Partners, staff, and anyone who attended the field trip from the previous day took part in an open discussion. The Gardiner Basin field trip was organized by the Bear Creek Council. Roughly 60 people attended, largely made up of Partners, staff, treaty hunting tribal members, and BCC members. Some members of the public, both local and distant, as well as members of the press also attended. BCC provided a lunch to all attendees after the field trip, and then a panel discussion was held. Panelists, all from BCC, were Nathan Varley, Sabina Straus, Rick Lamplugh, Fred and Julianne Baker, Sue Oliver, Katie White, and George Buman. The discussion was interactive with the Partners, and included these questions for the panelists that BCC wanted on the table: What is your history in the Gardiner community? How would you describe your relationship to wild bison? What has your direct experience been with the bison hunt? Do you feel there is anything that could be done to improve the situation?

A slideshow of the field trip can be found on the IBMP website at <http://www.ibmp.info/photos.php>. Also, BCC provided a flier for the field trip that included a map of the field trip and BCC talking points. That flier can be found at the meeting webpage: <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20190425/20190425.php>.

The facilitator seeded the discussion with his personal summary (Figure 2) of the field trip and follow-on lunch and panel discussion. Throughout the discussion here nearly every speaker either thanked BCC for their organizing efforts or, alternatively, thanked the Partners and staff for such a strong showing. Some points made during the field trip review and discussion follow:

- We heard lots of complaints about people’s dogs but we should consider that dogs are infringing on wildlife, not the other way around. I’m not saying dogs are the problem, but I *am* saying that *we*—meaning people—are the problem. We build our houses in places where the wild critters belong, then we ask them to mold to our needs when we should be molding to theirs. The human footprint outside the Park is the problem and we have to address that fact.
- The hunt and issues around it are merely a symptom that we are loving the periphery of the Park to death. For example, some see the houses in danger of hunters’ rifle shots. Of course safety is of concern to everyone. But one can also see that houses are built where they should not be, taking up wildlife habitat.
- I appreciate the community on display at the field trip, and in the discussions here. We can work on and solve the trash issues.
- While we are all keenly aware of most of the issues, it is always powerful and instructive to get on the ground and talk with people and hear their concerns directly.
- We are still operating under, or prioritizing, the three goals we set a few years back for the IBMP Partners. We hear the ideas like moving bison across Montana but need to make things work here, under the scale and scope of control of the IBMP Partners. I think that we should work in smaller, less structured ways.
- I agree with earlier statements that maybe we should work on people management. I run cattle but don’t participate in reimbursement program if one of my cows is killed by a grizzly. It was and is their land, and I am simply a visitor.
- I recommend we continue with the concept of place-based discussions and think we should give BCC a time at the following IBMP meeting (**\* action item 2**). We would like to hear ideas for both short-term and long-term solutions, recognizing that the IBMP Partners, with different jurisdictions and mandates, can’t often take immediate action. Perhaps a subcommittee approach might work for local solutions

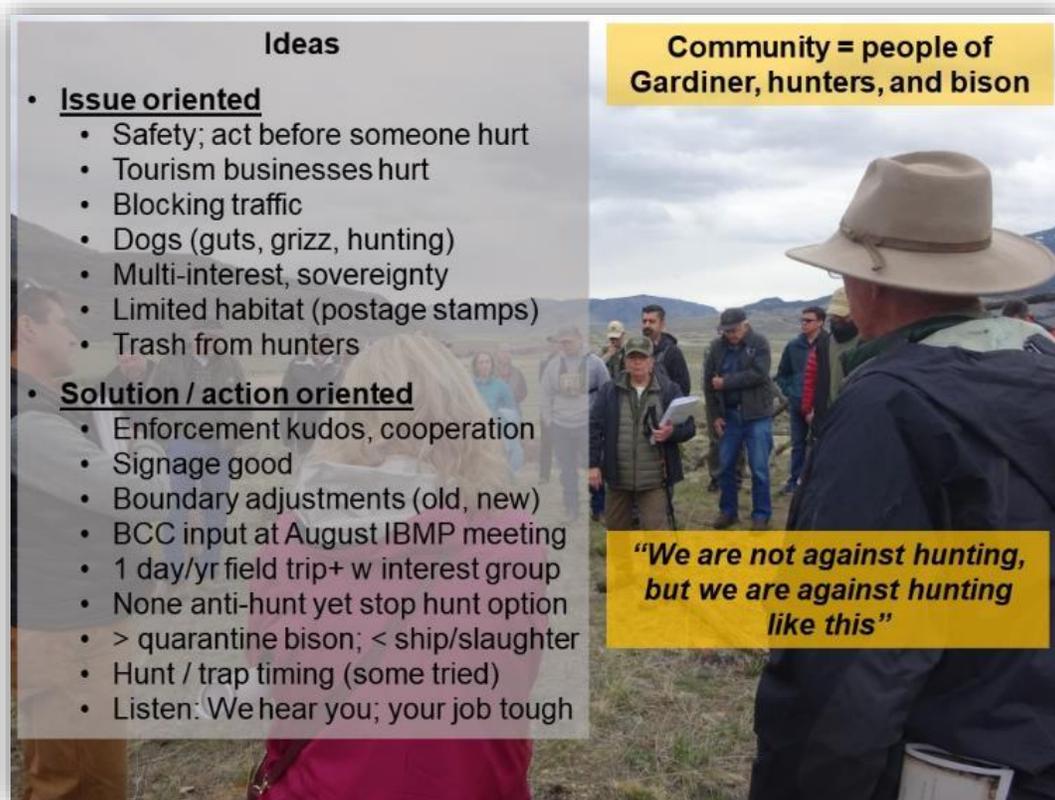


Figure 2.—Facilitator’s summary slide of some key ideas and points of discussion from the April 24 IBMP field trip into the Gardiner Basin, as planned and led by Bear Creek Council.

between BCC and selected staff. Mike Thom from USFS, who is local, could help. (Chris Geremia from NPS was also mentioned.)

- If we follow this path, perhaps we should call it a “working group”.
- It would be useful if BCC provided some key goals, especially if short term in nature, to FWP that could be discussed at the Hunt Managers’ meeting May 16.
- The bison here should be allowed to roam free, both here and on our homeland. We should have regulations on the bison *and* on us.

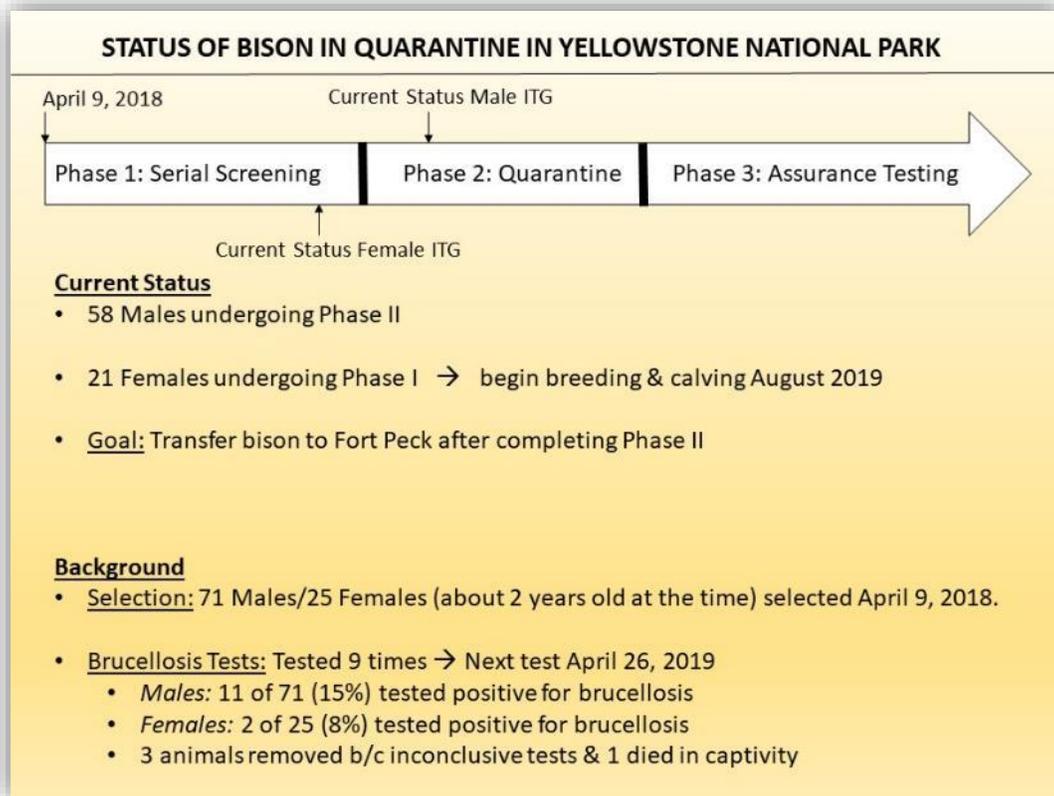
### **Improving safety, quality of the North Side hunt/improving boundary issues**

Partners briefly considered that the previous (April 24<sup>th</sup>) field trip day, as well as the discussion just held, were fully about the North Side hunt. In addition, they recognized that the afternoon session on Winter Operations to date would also largely cover the North Side hunt. As such, they decided to forego this session in lieu of the afternoon Winter Ops discussion.

Before moving to the next topic, Partners pointed out that the annual Hunt Managers’ meeting will occur on May 16, 2019 in Missoula.

### **Bison quarantine and translocation**

CG provide the following graphical summary of the status of bison currently being processed through quarantine.



At the last IBMP meeting (Nov 2018) RC reported that 61 head of bison were being held at the APHIS Corwin Springs facility and that of those, 5 bulls had passed testing and “graduated” the quarantine process (also known as *Phase 2*). At this meeting, RC reported that the 5 bulls had now been transported to the Fort Peck Reservation quarantine facility for Phase 3 assurance testing. These are the first bison that will go through any part of the 3-phase quarantine procedure outside of the DSA. <facilitator’s note: Partners, staff, and public numerous times across the day commented that though a small step, this largely non-controversial transfer was a big and positive step forward to be celebrated.>

While MR celebrated the transfer, she noted—as she has before—that the Fort Peck facility has both the goal and the capability to do other aspects of the quarantine process, i.e., Phases 1 and 2, not just Phase 3. She noted that the Fort Peck Tribe is committed to cooperate with APHIS and the state of Montana to bring more bison to the Fort Peck facility. MR said that if Fort Peck was allowed to do Phase 2 testing, they could take 600 bison (RC said he thought that many might be logistically difficult). We are in the dark as to the impediment keeping us from Phase 2 testing, she said. One Partner cited Montana statute 81-2-120, dealing with bison transport, as the main issue<sup>3</sup>. MH said the bison are not yet considered risk free because even if sero-negative they could convert to being sero-positive after leaving the current DSA. MR said that the Fort Peck Tribe could put the bison down if that were the case. Why not put a DSA around the Fort Peck area? she asked. EC asked why he could see so many elk on the way to Gardiner, many certainly with brucellosis, and no one seems to care.

Robbie Magnan, director of Fish and Game for the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux tribes, expressed happiness over the success of the transfer. He noted that the tribes are using their bison to help spread genetic

<sup>3</sup> This law has been discussed many times at IBMP meetings. The law can be found on the Montana legislature website—see <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/81/2/81-2-120.htm>.

diversity to bison beyond their own tribal lands, and mentioned bison-related interactions with the Bronx Zoo, and sending bison to the Wind River and Rosebud reservations.

CS noted that the transfer of 5 bison, while small in numbers, is an important learning tool for NPS and the IBMP. A big positive, he said, is that with the Fort Peck quarantine facility able to do assurance testing (i.e., Phase 3), those bison no longer have to be held within the limited quarantine space in the DSA to pass that milestone. CS also noted that the NPS goal is to transfer 58 bison to Fort Peck sometime in the fall of 2019 (see CG slide directly above).

As he had previously, RC noted that APHIS currently has lease commitments at the Corwin Springs facility for the next 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 the bison they have now from quarantine but cannot say beyond that. Given that uncertainty, the new ability to send bison to Fort Peck for Phase 3 (and possibly Phases 2 and/or 1 later), a Partner noted that they need as a group to have a discussion about how given these changes the quarantine procedure fits into IBMP management. Key questions include what the future looks like, what roles each Partner plays, who funds the quarantine program, where is it located, how would the flow of animals work—for example maximum that could be moved, bottlenecks—and so on (\*\* **action item 3** – add this item to the Partners’ parked item list).

CS said that NPS hopes to expand the quarantine program. He said that if APHIS steps away from the Corwin Springs facility that NPS could consider looking at taking over that space. CS said that he hopes APHIS stays.

MH provide some concluding thoughts on the session. He repeated earlier statements that moving the 5 bison to the Fort Peck quarantine facility was a big and important step and should be celebrated. He said he heard no controversy over the move at his office, and attributed that fact to the “rigor” and hard work of the Partners over multiple years to develop the science (quarantine process) and educate interested parties as to risks. Even if we disagree on some points of law or geography or others, MH noted, we showed that we can agree upon a method for moving bison out of Yellowstone to Fort Peck and elsewhere in the USA. This step should be considered a huge success to build upon, he concluded.

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

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This item had two topics. The first was to review and revamp, as needed, of timeline shown in Figure 1 of the current (2018/19) Winter Ops Plan regarding South Fork of Madison Arm. This item was a request made at the 11/28/18 IBMP meeting. Here MZ, who made the request, said that the item could be delayed and the desired change made in the next Winter Ops Plan (i.e., 2019/20). Thus, this item was tabled.

ME noted that in the past there had been talk about the potential to manipulate habitat as a way to aid migration into the new West Side tolerance area, including up through the Taylor Fork drainage. Specifically, an idea has been floated for increasing the width of a migration corridor along Hwy 191. ME said the CGNF has done no work to that ends as of this date. She asked if Partners thought that they should form a working group to this ends, perhaps including an NGO. The idea received some discussion but no working group was named nor action item created. ME also said more work with the state of Montana was needed.

MD said that FWP is working with MDOT regarding safety concerns along the Hwy 191 corridor. He also noted that the concept of a temporary hunt cessation for the area, as discussed at the previous IBMP meeting, is still under consideration.

## Availability of an Ecological Baseline for Tracking Ungulate-Vegetation Interaction in the Gardiner and Hebgen Basins

Presentation by Dr. Clayton Marlow, Professor, Department of Animal & Range Sciences, Montana State University



Figure 3.—Dr. Clayton Marlowe of Montana State University spoke to Partners, staff, and public regarding his team’s work to characterize vegetation in the Gardner and Hebgen basins.

Dr. Marlow is a consultant working for the CGNF to assess rangeland condition and makeup in the Gardiner and Hebgen basins. He described his team’s efforts to develop a baseline for the area against which future range studies could then be compared to see how the range is changing under impacts (including herbivory, fire, and other stressors). Dr. Marlowe’s full presentation can be found at the meeting website: [www.ibmp.info/Library/20190425/20190425.php](http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20190425/20190425.php).

Dr. Marlow described the goal of his work for the Forest as being to develop ecological baseline for monitoring sustainability of vegetation and soil. The work includes two objectives: 1) identify historic data sets that might serve as baseline; and 2) construct ecological reference guide for determining vegetation status and trend.

His team sampled 68 sites in the Gardiner Basin, 14 sites in the Hebgen Basin. Sample sites were selected to capture a large variety in ecological status. Criteria for selection included areas that bison might use; landscapes <25% tree cover; broad geologic context; NE and SW aspect to ensure high to low production potential; and four categories of slope to capture range of grazing use. Data collected included in the physical (e.g., soil depth, organic matter) and vegetation (e.g., species, density, canopy cover, biomass production) realms.

Dr. Marlow employed past work, in areas outside the two basins under study, as the best current data we have to estimate range health in the two basins of his study (Figure 4). He pointed out that his team’s work can now serve as the baseline for future efforts to assess rangeland health and trending in the Hebgen and Gardiner basins.

To track ungulate interaction with vegetation, a key aspect of the work with respect to bison viability in the two basins, Dr. Marlow said that regular monitoring of established sites is critical and that few of his

inventoried sites had previously studied (e.g., not cataloged under either Forest Service publications or Montana Natural Heritage listings). Vegetation and soil complexes in the two basins, his work shows, stand at a threshold. Dr. Marlow discussed the nuances of early, mid, and climax stages—what each means relative to vegetation makeup and productivity and ramifications for land managers if you have one type of stage over the other.

Dr. Marlow was asked if what he thought was limiting bison distribution outside of the Park: forage or confinement. He responded that in his mind it was the latter because under the current status bison are not able to access all available forage.

The area has a long history of heavy grazing, Dr. Marlow noted, there is nowhere to go but up. He said that you can have lots of herbivores if you have lots of good habitat.

Species	Cedar Creek % Cover	Gardiner Baseline NE Grassland Phase
Antennaria spp.	6.5 ↑	0.3/2
Artemisia tridentata	1	1/0.5
Carex spp.	7 ↑	0.2/1
Erigeron spp.	1	2/0.5
Festuca idahoensis	18.5 ↑	13/37
Koeleria macrantha	4 ↑	2/4
Astragalus	np	2/1
Lupinus spp.	1	np/np
Achillea millefolium	np	1/1
Pascopyrum smithii	3	np/np
Poa spp.	2	3/4
Pseudoroegneria spicata	3 ↓	4/18
Stipa viridula	2	np/np

Figure 4.—Example of data comparison to assess range health and trend provided by Dr. Marlow and his team’s studies.

## Report on 2018/2019 Winter IBMP Operations to date

CG began with an overview of winter operations from the NPS perspective. In particular, he concentrated on the way the Stephen’s Creek bison capture facility was run and how its operation was coordinated with those hunting to the north of YNP. Chris’s slides, presented below, are well annotated and self-explanatory. His slides can also be found at the meeting website ([www.ibmp.info/Library/20190425/20190425.php](http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20190425/20190425.php)).

UPDATE ON WINTER OPERATIONS 2018/19

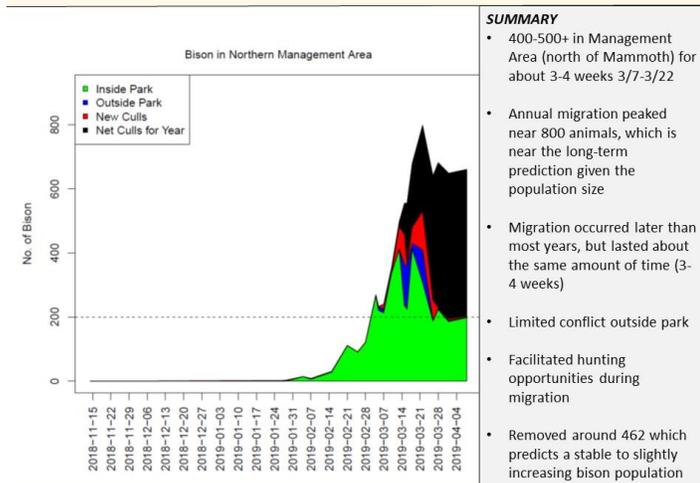
**GOALS (2018-19 Operations Plan)**

1. **Allow/Facilitate Bison to use available habitats**
  - "Habitat learning"
  - "Greater hunting distribution and harvest"
  - "Greater distribution of bison that are not harvested or hazed back into Park"
2. **Allow for Hunting Opportunities**
  - "Minimize capture when there are fewer than 200 bison north of Mammoth"
  - "Reduce capture when hunter harvests are on track to approximate, or nearly achieve annual removal objectives"
  - "Reduce capture when large numbers of hunters are present, if allowed by totality of harvest success, time of season, and anticipated bison migration"
  - "Not capture a group... imminently exiting the Park until the group returns... Unless necessary to meet removal objectives or reduce potential conflicts..."
3. **Stabilize Bison Population**
  - Remove 600-900 bison focusing on the northern herd

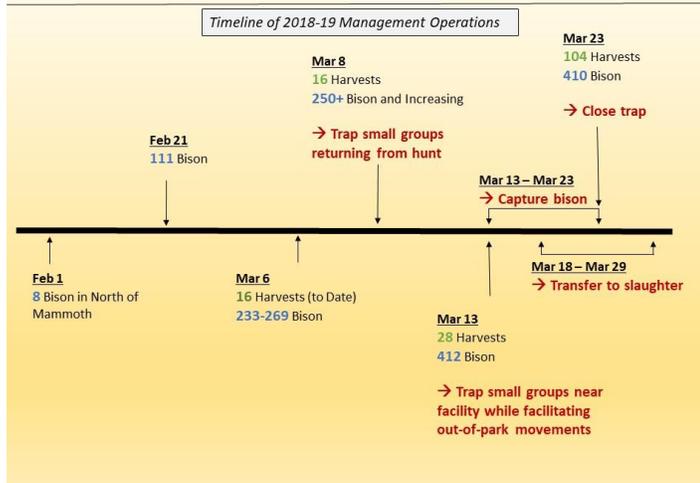
UPDATE ON WINTER OPERATIONS 2018/19



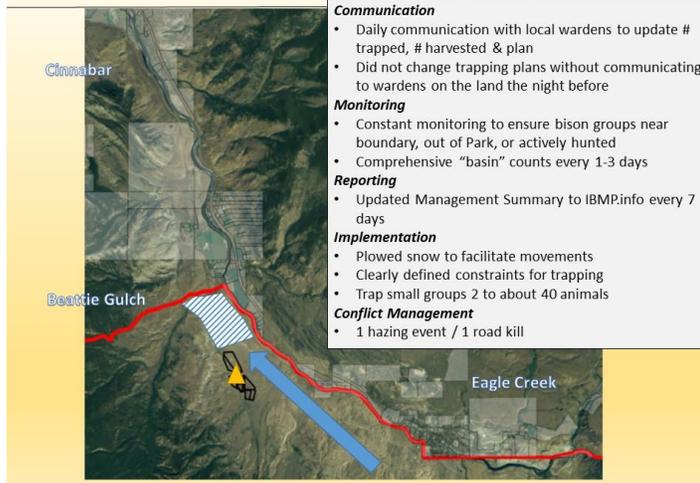
UPDATE ON WINTER OPERATIONS 2018/19



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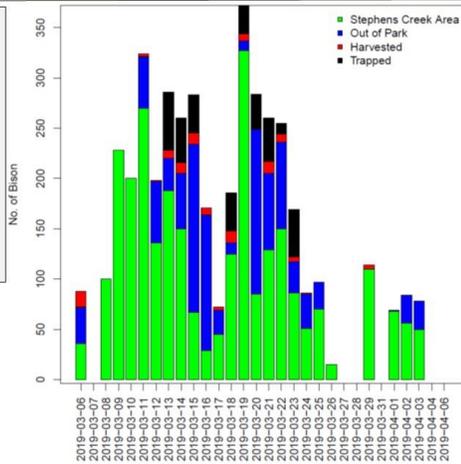


UPDATE ON WINTER OPERATIONS 2018/19

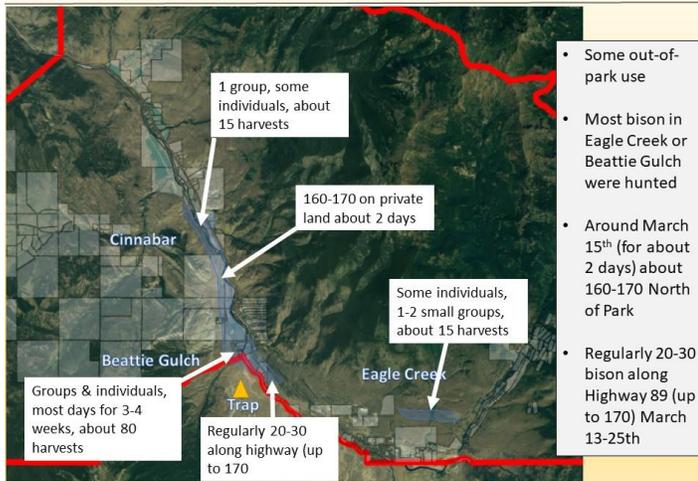


UPDATE ON WINTER OPERATIONS 2018/19

- Hunting**
- 28 prior to March 13
  - 84 March 13 – March 23 (during trapping)
  - 11 after March 24
- Trapping**
- Occurred March 13 – March 23
  - No Trapping on weekend March 16-17
  - Harvests occurred every day of trapping when hunters were present



UPDATE ON WINTER OPERATIONS 2018/19



UPDATE ON WINTER OPERATIONS 2018/19

Date	Removal Method	NORTH						WEST					
		Male		Female		Unk		Male		Female		Unk	
		A	Y	A	Y	Unk	C	A	Y	A	Y	Unk	C
Year to Date	HARVEST	58	4	19	0	14	17	1	0	0	0	1	0
	CULL	27	47	135	41	0	98	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	85	51	154	41	14	115	1	0	0	0	1	0
		460						2					

- Goal**
- Facilitate Out-of-Park Movements
  - Support Hunting
  - Reduce and Respond to Conflicts
  - Stabilize or Slightly Decrease Population
  - Minimize Removal of Central Herd
- Trap**
- 348 captured
  - 1 mortality
  - 347 transferred to tribes
- Hunt**
- About 115 North
  - About 2 West
- Sex Ratio & Age Structure**
- Slight female bias (60%)
  - Juvenile bias (47%)
- Quarantine**
- 0 entered quarantine
- Brucellosis Prevalence**
- Adult Females 60%
  - Adult Males 80%
  - Juveniles 20%
- Herd Removals**
- Radio collars in Area:
    - 1-7 Northern Feb 21 – Apr 8,
    - 1<sup>st</sup> Central discovered Apr 8
  - Radio collars removed: 4 Northern, 0 Central

At the conclusion of Chris's talk, Partners and staff provide the following comments, feedback, or their own data:

- JW said he was pleased to see the data CG had provided; that the situation is not fully real until the data is compiled. He noted that it was a hard year for hunters, that only a few had been successful. He mentioned that CTUIR hunters travel a great distance from tribal lands, and that some advance knowledge of if bison are out and huntable would be helpful given time, distance, and expense to undertake the hunt. JW also noted that he appreciated the improved communication this year and would like to see even more from the state of Montana. He said that Tribal Hunt MOA really helps with communication—it gives parameters on what to do and how to do it, plus what to do if communication breaks down.
- George Meninck of the Yakama Tribe echoed the idea that their tribal hunters have a long way to travel and some advance notice of whether bison are outside the park and huntable would be useful.
- NT said that tribal enforcement gave a good report on the year's hunt and cooperation between tribal enforcement personnel. They had no incidences of note besides a sliced finger and broken ankle. They did use the MFWP hotline and request that the line remain available after state hunting ends. The tribe also extended the length of their hunting season due to poor hunting.
- TM reported that tribal members harvested two bison on the West Side. He said he wanted all to consider that this was *not* a unique winter this year and may be the new norm given climate change. He thought that the fall has seen the most change and that maybe late migration in spring has become the norm. Perhaps we will need to extend the season, TM said. He also said he hoped all eight hunt groups join the Tribal Hunt MOA to better deal with issues of the hunt.
- JW also reiterated the invite for all to join the MOA and noted his hope that Northern Arapahoe, one of the newest treaty hunting tribes, would join the MOA. JW said the purposes of the MOA include improved safety and communication, and providing an official forum to find common ground.
- One hazing event of 20-30 bison was reported on private land.
- TM further added that while quarantine will help, that the market for quarantine bison will eventually saturate. The IBMP Partners need to make bison hunting, which will be a tool we always use, a showcase here. We need to demonstrate that the hunt here in Montana is unique and works because of a partnership that includes great communication on the ground. This is a demonstration process, he said, and everyone in the room is part of that process.
- MD said he will send out the state hunting results. One state hunter was successful. He also noted that the Hunt Managers' meeting is May 16 in Missoula, at the Valley Garden Holiday Inn, starting at 10 AM. MD said he was accepting input on the agenda.
- JH stated public thanks to all the enforcement personnel for their good work.

## **Update on Custer-Gallatin National Forest Plan revision effort**

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ME described the process that the CGNF was undertaking to revise their forest plan. They are in the third year of a four-year process. The strategic planning is supposed to be completed every 15 years, but ME said in practice it is often more like every 30 years.

The Forest released its draft plan and draft EIS and is taking public comment on the plan from March 1 – June 6, 2019. The public has been invited to learn more about the revision options through ten public meetings, as well as via webinars and podcasts. The Forest has also reached out to tribal groups for their education and input. The public meetings have spanned the forest, in cities from Bozeman to West Yellowstone to Ashland to Billings and more. A previous public comment period that ended 3/5/18 generated over ten thousand comments. Those comments helped the Forest scope the range of alternatives (five total, including the no action alternative) currently being considered.

The final preferred alternative is expected to be released in the spring of 2020, followed by an objections period. The CGNF hopes to have its new forest plan finalized by November 2020.

ME also noted that of special interest to this group bison were not being listed as a species of concern per USFS definition in the proposed forest plan. 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. The decision for this listing, made out of the regional office, was that bison do not meet those criteria. While bison were not declared a species of special concern, the forest planning rule requirements still provide for bison management and protection under other auspices.

< facilitator's note: Regional USFS Wildlife Biologist Cara Staub provided a full presentation titled "Bison Conservation Framework in Forest Planning" at the November 28, 2018 IBMP meeting. That talk can be found at the meeting webpage: <http://ibmp.info/Library/20181128/20181128.php> >



Figure 5.—Over the course of the day, roughly 75 people attended this meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan, held at the Gardiner Community Center.

## Update on MT legislature deliberations on all bison-related bills

Dan Wenner of ITBC and Mike Honeycutt of MBOL provided updates on four bison-related bills under consideration by the Montana Legislature during its 2019 session. The two provided insight into the motivation for each bill; descriptions of conflicts, if any, regarding intent of the bill or potential or perceived unintended consequences of each bill; the importance of wording in bill presentation; and similar. Mr. Wenner provided a presentation about several of the bills but asked that the presentation not be included in the notes or posted due to client-attorney privileges.

Bills were in process or being transmitted to the Governor as this meeting was underway. As of this writing (5/8/19), the facilitator provides the name and status of each bill below, as found on the website of the Montana Legislature<sup>4</sup>:

1. House Bill 112
  - a. *Title.*—AN ACT REVISING REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPORTATION OF ANIMALS, ANIMAL SEMEN, AND ANIMAL BIOLOGICS; CLARIFYING DOCUMENTATION OR PERMIT REQUIREMENTS FOR ANIMAL MOVEMENT; REPEALING REGULATIONS FOR SEMEN USED IN ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION; AMENDING SECTION 81-2-703, MCA; AND REPEALING SECTIONS 81-2-401, 81-2-402, AND 81-2-403, MCA.
  - b. *Current Bill progress.*—became law.
  
2. House Bill 132

<sup>4</sup> See the following website to search for information on each bill (accessed 8 May 2019):

[http://laws.leg.mt.gov/legprd/LAW0203W\\$BSRV.ActionQuery?P\\_SESS=20191&P\\_BLTP\\_BILL\\_TYP\\_CD=HB&P\\_BILL\\_NO=112&P\\_BILL\\_DFT\\_NO=&P\\_CHPT\\_NO=&Z\\_ACTIO N=Find&P\\_ENTY\\_ID\\_SEQ2=&P\\_SBJT\\_SBJ\\_CD=&P\\_ENTY\\_ID\\_SEQ=](http://laws.leg.mt.gov/legprd/LAW0203W$BSRV.ActionQuery?P_SESS=20191&P_BLTP_BILL_TYP_CD=HB&P_BILL_NO=112&P_BILL_DFT_NO=&P_CHPT_NO=&Z_ACTIO N=Find&P_ENTY_ID_SEQ2=&P_SBJT_SBJ_CD=&P_ENTY_ID_SEQ=)



**Other items**

ME said that there is a new Resource Advisory Council forming for the CGNF and that interested parties should talk with Mike Thom or Jason Brey of her staff.

## Next meetings, final comments

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### REMAINING 2019 MEETINGS OF THE IBMP

The Partners noted the remaining meetings of 2019 to be as follows: a) summer meeting—July 31<sup>st</sup> in Bozeman MT; and b) fall meeting—December 3<sup>rd</sup> in West Yellowstone MT.

Looking ahead to next year, TM offered that the CSKT host the summer IBMP meeting.

### MEETING CLOSE

Rebecca Frye of APHIS thanked Partners, staff, and public for attending the meeting. She also reiterated thanks that had permeated the day: to the Bear Creek Council for their efforts in creating the April 24<sup>th</sup> field trip. Rebecca bid everyone safe travels and closed the meeting.

## Public comment

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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.

- Member of BCC. Greatly appreciate all the time we’ve had to talk and provide our input, including yesterday’s field trip.
- Want to acknowledge people on Bear Creek Council that helped build trip; it was not just me and I should not get all the credit. Speaker names numerous members of BCC and what they do and did for the field trip. Also mentions other NGOs that helped push the idea of the field trip forward.
- Story of being given multiple bison hides and treasuring them ... except my tanning costs are becoming high. And (*jokingly*) I thus request that no one give me anymore! (*laughter*). So no more but to know, I treasure them!
- Also with BCC. Also want to thank all the Partners, all the staff for your attention and responses at field trip and especially this morning.
- Also want to thank you for the idea that we may have a conduit to work directly with you. I want to make sure we want tribal groups involved, not just USFS or MFWP. We have solutions we believe will work with all groups and want to work with everyone.



Figure 6.—The IBMP Partners went on a field trip the day before the IBMP meeting (i.e., on April 24<sup>th</sup>, see field trip description earlier in this report). The field trip was planned and led by the Bear Creek Council. This photo shows field trip attendees walking in the vicinity of Beattie Gulch.

- Persistence takes change. Hello all. Thanks for your attention for this brief moment. I've had honor of watching this effort for the past 22 years and think I am the only one who has. I see the faces around the table keep changing. I seem to be the constant in the room.
- \*\* The thing that has me baffled is that APHIS and DOL did a great thing with DSA they made it so the state of MT cattle industry did not suffer a consequence for a transmission. But yet the only animals that are allowed to use it are the elk that transmit brucellosis. It just doesn't make any sense that this land isn't opened up to the bison as well, and we can manage them through hunts.
- One of the biggest problems for Native Americans is that treaties say that you can hunt on unclaimed lands, which is national forest – of which there are millions of acres of in the DSA. We are making these poor hunters hunt in a war zone. It is a miracle no one has been shot so far.
- \*\* To me if we open this up for bison to wander we can eliminate this problem. As is, I often wonder if this (not allowing bison onto unclaimed lands) isn't a violation of treaty rights. How can we mandate that we have this one species (elk) only that carries the disease but is allowed to use these unclaimed lands?
- \*\* We need to get this disease off the bioterrorism watch list so that we can do the research to get a real solution instead of killing bison.
- Also, because this is such an unnatural hunt, I would think for community relationships could use money no longer being used for helicopter hazing that we could invest some money to go out at the end of the hunting season and go out there with a back hoe and clean up remnant gut piles. If we are going to create the problems we should be part of the solution.
- I think we are moving in some right directions and like that you are offering BCC the opportunity to suggest some solutions because I think some of these are easy to fix.
  
- Born in Chico Hot Springs 76 years ago so have seen a lot of changes in our life. Some good, some not.
- Really appreciate what Clayton Marlow had to say. You gotta realize that as land managers you can't go down, you gotta go up.
- Few years ago we put up a buffalo fence with APHIS around my land. And my God, you look outside that fence now and the cedar trees are dying. But inside that fence they grew. That's called overgrazing, folks. You gotta take care of the soil.
- What do people want to see Yellowstone look like in a hundred years? Go look at the Lamar. At one time the Lamar Valley looked better than Tom Miner Basin. You better think about that one.

- You need to think about water quality and taking care of this public ground.
- Also on BCC. Want to thank all Partners and staff for coming to Gardiner and want to make a small ask: that it happens more often.
- I want to read a note for a BCC member:
  - Thanks to IBMP. Creating a short term working group that includes BCC is a great first step but I want to emphasize that the management plan needs to change so bison can repopulate MT and can be transported to tribal lands, like Fort Peck.
- Want to thank all. I really appreciate that the Partners allowed BCC to host a field trip and provide this community opportunity to share their concerns and also some of their ideas. This is undoubtedly the most effected community when it comes to how bison are managed today.
- \*\* I hope that there will continue to be regular opportunities for engaging communities that are impacted by Yellowstone bison.
- I also want to say that I am feeling hopeful after yesterday's field trip and discussions, and this mornings. I think that we are making some small steps forward. I do also want to celebrate the 5 bulls that were sent to Fort Peck.
- On the other hand hope that we can eventually bring the quarantine program to scale. As Cam said I think it is really important we get a pipeline of bison moving through the program. I think it is worth it even though I know that it is expensive. But I don't know if we can put a price tag on conserving the genome of our last wild herd of bison, as well as diverting the bison from slaughter, as well as restoring bison to Native American lands. It's so important and quarantine is a tool we can use.
- \*\* I hope we can move toward using Fort Peck as a Phase II facility. I also think that looking at some other options within the DSA would be important, as well.
- One of the primary goals of the IBMP is to maintain a wild, free-ranging bison population. However I think we could make the argument that goal is not being met today -- between hunting and population reduction Yellowstone bison are still largely confined to the Park. And while there has been so much effort toward habitat extension to make lands outside the Park available, the vast majority of those areas are sitting there empty today.
- \*\* So I hope the Partners can start looking outside the box. Last year there was a great presentation by Julie Cunningham and Chris Geremia about potential migration pathways into the west side. But there wasn't any follow up to that work. So I would ask the Partners to re-look at that work and go through and identify what each obstacle was to bison using those pathways, and then figuring out how to remove those obstacles so that we can get the bison using the new tolerance areas.
- I'm with the 9 Quarter Circle Ranch and also representing the Upper Gallatin Landowners.
- Not lots of discussion on the Upper Gallatin today but I want to retouch on a couple points important to us. We continue to be opposed to any sort of mechanical or hazing of the bison into the Taylor Fork area. If they do naturally migrate there that's fine and we'll deal with it. But I'd like to see solutions considered so that we'll be ready on how to handle it and become proactive if they do come.
- We still have concerns with safety for the general public, for camping, guests, for highway corridor. Hope we continue to work with the DOT.
- \*\* Another concern is Taylor Fork grazing as in a map Clayton showed. 33% of that property available for grazing in the Taylor Fork is in the valley bottom which is 100% on our private property. So I am concerned with that and hope we can find a way to do some fencing projects or similar to protect our land and that of other private property owners.
- There's also grazing on public land and I'm also concerned about what might happen to that if we add another ungulate onto that landscape and ecosystem.

*\* FINAL \**

- I do think there is an endpoint in sight and hope that we can continue to work together and keep the communication open. If so, I think we can find long term viability for the bison, for the environment, and for our businesses.
- I learned much over in Beattie Gulch yesterday.
- I understand there are lots of philosophical and scientific issues that we might not all agree on.
- \*\* However I do think there are a few things everyone can agree on and we might be able to take a baby step and cooperate on: First thing is human health and safety issues. No one wants to get shot or feel like they might get shot. So that is a concern. The other thing you could agree to cooperate on would be cleaning up the mess, especially in Beattie Gulch or on the Jardine Road. We saw just a few carcasses out there but next year we might see three or four hundred out there that we'll be walking through. It is possible to clean up the mess.

*\*\* Meeting adjourned \*\**



*Figure 7.—Painting just inside the Gardiner Community Center (unsigned, artist unknown).*

## Abbreviations

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- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BCC—Bear Creek Council
- 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
- DW—Dan Wenner
- 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
- ML—Mike Lopez
- 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