

MEMO

To: Pat Flowers, MT FWP
Dr. P. Ryan Clarke, USDA-APHIS-VS
Suzanne Lewis, YNP
Becky Heath, USFS

From: Dr. Thomas F.T. Linfield, MT DOL

Date: July 6, 2005

Subject: Interagency Bison Management Plan – Adaptive Management Adjustments
in Western Boundary Area

On July 6, 2005, the Board of Livestock approved proposed adaptive management adjustments of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) for the Western Boundary Area of Yellowstone National Park (YNP). Specifically, the Board approved a bison hunting demonstration project, utilizing bison hunting as an additional management tool in the Western Boundary Area, contingent on the following conditions or criteria:

- 1) Hunting would be permitted in the areas described in Alternative 2 in Bison Hunting Environmental Assessment including:
 - a. Lands defined in the IBMP as “Zone 2” in the West Yellowstone Basin, where up to 100 bison would be tolerated; and
 - b. Public land with no cattle allotments in the Cabin Creek Recreation and Wildlife Management Area, the Monument Mountain Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, and the upper Gallatin River drainage south of the mouth of Taylor Fork.
- 2) Hunting would be permitted from November 15, 2005 thru February 15, 2006, when cattle are typically no longer present in the West Yellowstone Basin.
- 3) Conduct daily monitoring of bison abundance, distribution, and movement in Zones 1 and 2 in the West Yellowstone Basin.
- 4) Establish the following locations in Zone 2 in the West Yellowstone Basin where, if significant numbers of bison (“significant numbers” may vary depending on time of year, weather conditions, snow levels, and other stochastic events) and their movement approach or go beyond, the State Veterinarian, in consultation with the IBMP agencies, will evaluate the site-specific circumstances to determine if other management actions, such as hazing or capture, should be implemented:
 - a. Witts Lake Road (North of Hebgen Lake on Hwy. 287) and
 - b. USFS Road 1731 (South of Hebgen Lake near Madison Arm Resort).

- 5) Conduct more intensive monitoring (2 or more times daily) as bison approach Witts Lake Road or USFS Road 1731.
- 6) Enact 24-hour hunting closures, when necessary, to implement other management actions such as hazing, capture, or lethal removal if:
 - a. Bison numbers exceed 100 in Zone 2 in the West Yellowstone Basin.
 - b. Bison continue to approach Zone 3 in the West Yellowstone Basin beyond Witts Lake Road or USFS Road 1731.
 - c. Unable to contain bison within Zone 2 in the West Yellowstone Basin. (Bison that breach Zone 3 will be lethally removed if initial hazing or capture, if attempted, is not successful).
 - d. Excessive bison egress from YNP, ongoing or imminent, due to snow conditions, extreme weather conditions, or stochastic events.
- 7) Conduct sero-surveillance on all harvested bison (distribute blood collection kits to licensees.)
- 8) Conduct critical evaluation of bison hunting demonstration project at the conclusion of the hunting season to determine if:
 - a. Hunting should continue to be utilized as a bison management tool;
 - b. Adjustments to the bison hunt are necessary;
 - c. The agencies can successfully manage any bison that breach Zone 3;
 - d. Hunting is compatible with other management efforts (if conducted);
 - e. Hunting is compatible with accepted land uses on public and private lands; and
 - f. Hunting was conducted under ethical hunting conditions (i.e. fair chase).
 - g. Temporal and spatial separation of bison and cattle can be maintained.
 - h. Montana's Brucellosis Class Free status or ability of livestock producers to market their cattle were compromised.
- 9) Amend IBMP "Operating Procedures" to include the bison hunting demonstration project, utilizing hunting as an additional management tool in the Western Boundary Area.