

# Summary Report from Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting October 15-16, 2008

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The following summary report reflects activities at the October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the IBMP partners, carried out at the State Capitol in Helena (room 172) and hosted by the Montana Department of Livestock. This report comes from the notes and flip chart records of facilitator Scott Bischke. The report contains a *Facilitator's Draft* watermark to recognize that as presented the IBMP partners have not reviewed these notes and accepted the facilitator's recollection/interpretation of events. Attendee leads: IBMP partners Jerry Diemer (APHIS), Mary Erickson (GNF), Pat Flowers (MFWP), Suzanne Lewis (YNP), Christian Mackay (MBoL), Marty Zaluski (MDoL); ~15 staff members present from across IBMP organizations each day; ~10 members of the public each day. Scanned attendance and speaker sign-up sheets are available from the facilitator.

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## PARTIAL LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- CM—Christian Mackay
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GNF—Gallatin National Forest
- GP—Glenn Plumb
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- JD—Jerry Diemer
- MBoL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MDoL—Montana Department of Livestock
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and parks
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- PF—Pat Flowers
- PIOs—Public Information Officers
- RC—Ryan Clarke
- RoD—Record of Decision
- RT—Rob Tierney
- SL—Suzanne Lewis
- YNP—Yellowstone National Park



## Action items identified

Action items developed at the meeting are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Action items, responsible parties, and due dates.

	Who	What	Complete by
1	Scott	Multiple meeting logistics: 1) send all files presented at Oct 15,16 to Steve Merritt for posting to IBMP.info; 2) send ver2.0 draft north side AM plan to partners and staff; 3) send draft agenda for Nov 5, 6 meeting to partners and staff; 4) send Oct 15, 16 meeting summary to partners and staff	Tuesday, Oct 21, 8 AM
2	Partners	Each Partner must send the facilitator their recommendations for North side Mgmt Obj 1.1.a. Partners agreed that their recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will not include any black and white, binary, yes/no requirements</li> <li>• must seek to incorporate understanding for the viewpoints and desired outcomes of their partners (these viewpoints were expressed eloquently by all parties during ~90 min of open discussion on Oct 2)</li> </ul>	Wednesday Oct 29 5 PM
3	Scott	Based on Action Item #2, the facilitator will combine these inputs into a single Mgmt Obj 1.1.a and return to the Partners. Partners and staff will then have until the Nov 5 <sup>th</sup> meeting to consider their agreement to, or proposed changes to, the facilitator-combined Mgmt Obj 1.1.a.	By Friday Oct 31 8 AM
4	Technical committee (BeckyF, PJW co-chairs)	Mapping Zone 2 on the North side (Partners seeking to get an agreed upon Zone 2 map): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Get the map from the RoD; agree on boundaries stated therein; bring that map to next meeting</li> <li>2) Produce a second map where (potentially) you make adjustments to the RoD map that make sense w/respect to topography (watersheds, etc) that possibly weren't considered at the time of the RoD. Try to consult with Tom Lemke of FWP as he is very familiar with the landscape in question. Bring the map to next meeting.</li> </ol>	For Nov 5, 6 meeting
5	DoL (MZ) and APHIS (RC)	Update status of adult cow vaccinations to the existing (already presented Oct 2, 3 meeting) briefing sheet	
6	All partners and staff	<i>Please plan accordingly:</i> For Chico meeting, Partners agreed to extend meeting time to start at 930 AM (will be reflected in the meeting agenda) and potentially go as late as 7 PM on Nov 5. On Nov 6 we will close the meeting at the normal 12 noon time to allow for travel.	
7	All partners	Recognition that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has contacted a subset of the Partners about a possible upcoming conference. No action here other than to be aware that further contact may occur.	
8	Tech Committee	Complete the next level of the West side plan—ver3.0 (i.e., starting with the ver2.0 document supplied by Scott on Oct 6). Fill in the Monitoring Metrics, Management Thresholds, and Range of Actions (green box of Figure 1). The Goal is to arrive at single quantitative recommendations (flag those—if applicable—that no consensus can be found) to support the Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions agreed to by Partners. The Technical Committee must also identify responsible parties for all required activities. The Technical Committee is requested to make available their full results for the West side at the Nov 5/6 meeting.	
9	Technical Committee	Similar to action item #8, the Technical Committee is requested to make available their full results for the North side at the Dec 17,18 meeting.	For Dec 17,18 meeting

## Meeting summary notes

Due to multiple facilitator activities, the notes presented are not comprehensive but hit some highlights of partner discussions. For the most part, interested parties are asked to see the IBMP web site where briefings and other documents created at this meeting are posted (see [www.ibmp.info](http://www.ibmp.info)).

## **BRIEFINGS**

### ***DoL/APHIS update on status of cattle vaccinations on the North sides***

Ryan Clark and Marty Zaluski presented a summary of their conversations with producers on the North sides regarding the reasons that they do or do not participate in cattle vaccination. Issues included the limited number of times cattle are handled each year (generally spring and fall), cost, potential (or at least belief) that RB51 can cause abortions if administered in the fall during pregnancy (therefore desire is to only vaccinate in the spring), concern about marketability of adult cattle which have a tattoo showing that they have been vaccinated for brucellosis. Statements were made to the effect that 1) the IBMP Partners should take it upon themselves to provide education to the producers, and 2) request for recognition that even after hearing all possible information producers may still choose not to vaccinate. No briefing paper was presented. Partners request an update to the Oct 2,3 APHIS meeting paper on cattle vaccination given any new North side information.

### ***DoL update on status of joint DoL/FWP citizen's task force on brucellosis***

Per Marty Zaluski, this committee is largely focused on elk and brucellosis. Applications are currently being solicited and considered with an effort to engage citizens across a wide range of interest groups (especially ranchers and wildlife enthusiasts). No briefing paper was presented but further information can be found at <http://mt.gov/liv/news/2008/20081007.asp>.

### ***Update on status of immunocontraception as it potentially applies to bison***

Jack Rhyan of APHIS presented a talk titled "Contraceptive Techniques for Wildlife." The talk began with an overview on the method of transmission of brucellosis from bison to cattle and stated that if there is no pregnancy in bison then there is no possibility of brucellosis transmission. Thus Jack moved on to provide multiple techniques from ensuring that bison do not become pregnant, for example sterilization, steroidal implants, IUDs, coupling GnRH to a toxin, engineered viruses. Jack spoke particularly to the use of immunocontraceptive vaccines, which cause the body to produce an immune response to reproductive proteins, thereby resulting in the interruption of hormones that regulate egg production (sperm possible also, depending on the compound employed). He provided data on numerous studies completed in recent years, plus a description of studies to come. The partners also asked Jack to give his best guess at the cost of a study to be completed outside of YNP.

Slides from Jack's talk are available at [www.ibmp.info](http://www.ibmp.info).

### ***Update on the status of the YNP Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Remote Vaccination of Bison***

Glenn Plumb of YNP gave a talk describing the present status of the park's project is to address a National Park Service responsibility to implement the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) by expanding an in-park vaccination program as directed by the 2000 Record of Decision (ROD). Remote delivery is distinguished from hand delivery that occurs in capture pens near the park boundary when bison leave the park. Three alternatives are under consideration:

- The no action alternative describes the current vaccination program that is intermittently implemented at the Stephens Creek capture facility in concert with capture operations.
- The second alternative would include a combination of the capture program at Stephens Creek and a remote delivery vaccination strategy that would focus exclusively on young, non-pregnant bison of both sexes. Remote delivery vaccination would occur from March to June and mid-September to mid-January through many areas of bison distribution in the park.
- A third alternative would include all components of the second alternative, as well as the remote vaccination of adult females during autumn. The vaccination program is intended to lower the percentage of bison susceptible to brucellosis infection.

Glenn provided an analysis of the three options, plus a timeline for completion (currently a final decision is expected in the winter 2010). Glenn's talk and a related briefing paper are available at [www.ibmp.info](http://www.ibmp.info).

## **CREATING THE NORTH SIDE ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN DRAFT VERSION 2.0**

Prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting (Oct 2,3) the Partners had been requested to review West side AM plan ver1.0 and given roughly two weeks to make desired edits and return to the facilitator. The facilitator then had

several days to blend the resulting five documents (original + FWP, YNP, GNF, DoL/APHIS) into a new document. Based on this blended document, at the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting (Oct 2,3) meeting, the Partners took a step forward, moving the West side AM plan from ver1.0 to draft ver2.0. This ver2.0 document included agreement on the Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions that will make up the IBMP adaptive management plan for the West side, as well as the overall AM framework (Figure 1) that will also be used for the North side AM plan (note that the green box section of this framework in Figure 1 is slightly modified from the September version, as per decision of the Partners on Oct 2).



FIGURE 1.—Framework for adaptive management plan designed and accepted by the IBMP partners.

For the Oct 2,3 the Partners also had also provided the facilitator their first cut on the North side AM plan. The facilitator combined these ideas and—per Partner desire—fit them into a framework as closely as possible as that used for the West side. This North side AM plan ver1.0 was tabled then until this 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in Helena.

In meeting 5 (Oct 15,16) in Helena, the Partners tackled the unique issues dealing with the North side of YNP. The partners' goal was to gain agreement on the Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions for the North side, at which point the North side document would move to ver2.0 status. To advance the North side plan to this ver2.0 level required—based on the earlier compiled inputs—agreement on 37 line items that made up the Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions for the North Side. By the end of the meeting in Helena the Partners had agreed on 36 of those 37 items. The only item where agreement was not achieved was *Management Objective 1.1.a—Defining when and where bison can be outside the northern YNP boundary.*

*Charge to the Partners:* The Partners had difficulty working toward resolution of Management Objective 1.1.a for the North side, which deals with quantifying how, when, where, and what variety of bison (age, sex, testing status) will be allowed outside of YNP. At the conclusion of the meeting the Partners came up with a homework problem to assign themselves (this item is reflected in the action item table presented earlier). By Oct 29 the Partners must send the facilitator their recommendations for Mgmt Obj 1.1.a. Partners; the Partners agreed that their recommendations:

- could not include any black and white, binary, yes/no requirements
- must seek to incorporate understanding for the viewpoints and desired outcomes of their partners (these viewpoints were expressed eloquently by all parties during ~90 min of discussion on Oct 2)

The facilitator will then combine these inputs into a single Mgmt Obj 1.1.a and return to the Partners by 8 AM Oct 31. Partners and staff will then have until the Nov 5<sup>th</sup> meeting to consider their agreement to, or proposed changes to, the facilitator-combined Mgmt Obj 1.1.a. This topic will make up the major agenda item on the morning of Nov 5<sup>th</sup>.

Table 2 shows a simplified timeline of the status of the West side and North side adaptive management plans, including facilitator’s expectations of goals for meetings 6 and 7.

Table 2.—Status of adaptive management planning for IBMP partners. The next meeting of the Partners is meeting #6.

IBMP Partner Meeting						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Aug 6,7	Aug 28,29	Sep 8,9	Oct 2,3	Oct 15, 16	Nov 5,6	Dec 17,18
Addressed GAO recommendations 3,4,5	1) Adopted DOI AM model	Completed West side AM plan ver1.0	Completed 1) West side AM plan ver2.0	Completed North side AM plan ver2.0 with 1 exception (see next meeting)	Goals: 1) Agreement on North side Mgmt Obj 1.1.a	Goal: 1) Agreement on North side ver3.0 (final?) 2) Schedule operational meetings winter 2008/09
	2) Selected 3 most urgent action areas		2) North side AM plan ver1.0		2) Agreement on West Side Ver3.0 (final?)	

*Charge to the Technical Committee:* The Technical Committee (chaired by Becky Frye and PJ White) has been charged with completing the next level of the West side plan—ver3.0 (i.e., starting with the ver2.0 document supplied by Scott on Oct 6). Their task will be to fill in the Monitoring Metrics, Management Thresholds, and Range of Actions (green box of Figure 1). The Goal is to arrive at single quantitative recommendations(flagging those—if applicable—that no consensus can be found) to support the Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions agreed to by Partners. The Technical Committee must also identify responsible parties for all required activities. The Technical Committee is requested to make available their full results for both the West side at the Nov 5/6 meeting.

A similar action from the technical Committee is expected for the North side for the Dec 17,18 meeting.

## Selected comments from public

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The following highlights from public comments (three minutes per person on the first day, 4 minutes per person on the second day) come from Scott's notes and Scott's interpretation of the speaker's intent.

### OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup>

- Statement of encouragement regarding the dual purpose goals of the IBMP
- Statement that as good neighbors the IBMP partners must do this work
- Statement that the IBMP partners must do their work with an idea to understanding the carrying capacity of the land
- Statement of uncertainty that the partners are not going to get done what they need to get done
- Request that the IBMP be amended
- Concern that there is much discussion about what AM is and is not
- Concern that Partners are dickering over minor details and missing the big picture
- Statement that we know what has changed and should react to those changes; statement that we fail to apply what we've learned in these discussions
- Statement of agreed frustration to the IBMP process
- Very discourage to hear that nothing that we learned on the West side can be applied to the North side
- Statement that some agencies are committed to both IBMP goals while other agencies are committed to only one goal of the IBMP
- Statement that GYC is committed to both goals of the IBMP
- Statement that on West side there is conflict with owners including threats of being placed under arrest and dishonesty from State agencies; statement that there is a double standard
- Request to see joint NPS/GNF study to see what happens to bison on Horse Butte
- Statement of support for Gallatin Wildlife Association plan and for Wild Bison Recovery Act
- Statement that the cattle industry is on high alert on the North side due to two cases of brucellosis there (Pray, Emigrant); both cases likely from elk
- Statement that ranchers have been doing everything that they can
- Question—do bison infect elk? Do we know?
- Statement that likewise our traders out of state/country are on high alert
- Statement that decisions made by IBMP Partners will greatly impact the MT cattle industry
- Statement that increased tolerance for bison should not result in bison living outside YNP year around
- Statement from cattleman that "I can never be 100% protected by vaccination"
- Statement that from cattlemen's perspective worst case is seeing 100% of your herd sent to slaughter because of brucellosis and standing there with a tear in your eye as they are hauled away
- Statement that times are tough.
- Question—can bison be outside the park without an EIS?
- Statement of volunteerism for helping bring remote vaccination on-line.
- Request for IBMP Partners to remember that from a rancher's perspective they can have no positive-tested (for brucellosis) cattle

### OCTOBER 16<sup>TH</sup>

- A statement that the Gallatin Wildlife Association has reviewed the EA for the RTR property and finds it problematic
- Concern about section 8 of the document and the belief that it gives RTR veto power and the ability to restrict movement of bison to public and private lands north of the Royal Teton Ranch
- Belief that the EA is an abrogation of responsibility of the under the IBMP and of FWP

## Next meeting agenda

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The meeting agenda for the Nov 5/6 meeting in Chico Hot Springs has been posted at [www.ibmp.info](http://www.ibmp.info). The major focuses of the meeting will be 1) seeking agreement on Management Activity 1.1.a for the North side and thus completing the North\_side\_AMplan\_Draft\_ver2.0; and 2) discussion, possible modification, and acceptance of the creation of the West\_side\_AMplan\_ver3.0, with initial emphasis on the quantitative information presented by the Technical Committee.

## Facilitator recommended agendas for future meetings

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### TEMPLATE TO CONSIDER FOR ALL MEETINGS

This section is largely the same as my recommendations after meeting 1. Under hour 2, however, note that we have—at least in part—covered a few of the topics mentioned or plan to do so in meeting 4.

- *Hour 0.5*—Welcome, Introductions, meeting logistics; review of last meeting including action item list and level of completion
- *Hour 0.5-1.5*—Science and/or policy review; these discussions can be used to get the creative juices flowing, and (if placed at the beginning of the meeting) to bring people back into the shared space and challenges of IBMP planning. These talks will require guest speakers either from within or outside partner staff. Possible topics that have been mentioned by partners, staff, and public include discussions on:
  - 1) ecological impacts of large-scale biomass removal from the GYA via sending bison to slaughter,
  - 2) current state of tribal relations, historical/spiritual/cultural meaning of bison to tribes, and potential to use tribal hunts as a tool of population control
  - 3) examples from other regions of how adaptive management has been successfully applied
  - 4) brucellosis life history, pathology, understanding multiple brucellosis species and methods of transfer among mammals (esp. cattle, bison)
  - 5) habitat analysis for bison in the GYA
  - 6) brucellosis around the world—are we the only ones with this issue?
  - 7) Review of status of quarantine facility including results to date and potential for expansion
- *Hour 1.5-2.5*—Partner briefing sheet on some aspect (e.g., performance, measures, constituencies, agency's driving objectives) of their work to engender better understanding between partners
- *Hour 3.5-8.5*—discussion on adaptive management for 2008-2009 operating season
- *Hour 8.5-9.5*—Public comment, split over two days

## Issues identified as potential topics for future meetings

The following items have been tabled but may be fruitful areas for future discussions. A number of items that have come onto this list over the course of the meeting series have already become action items and agenda items and thus have been removed from the list below. This list is updated after each meeting.

	Requester	What
1	Group following PF report out on FWP hunting	<p>Suzanne—is adaptive management possible with respect to tribal hunt and their harvest goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How were quotas for tribes determined—Pat: sharing goals modeled after Idaho salmon sharing agreements; FWP currently trying to have MOUs signed</li> <li>• Request that partners review/are informed on status and content of MOUs</li> <li>• Tribes consider that bison they receive from slaughter should not be part of 50/50 harvest agreement</li> <li>• Draft EA on tribal hunt coming out in ?? months</li> </ul>
2	MZ	Need to revisit idea of ability to test unvaccinated animals (i.e., criteria of animals eligible for vaccination)
3	ME, SL	Following completion of series of 7 meetings, partners need to determine method of responding to GAO request for improved accounting (i.e., expenditure tracking that captures essence of outcomes achieved per public \$s spent)
4	PF	Consider an EA for the state of Montana regarding immunocontraception
5	Partners	Come prepared for a conceptual discussion about the opportunities and challenges of the concept of shipping bison to isolated destinations
6	public	Request for update on potential split state status based on end of Oct meetings