

IBMP Briefing Statement

Agency: USDA Forest Service, Gallatin National Forest

Issue: 2007-2008 West Side of Yellowstone National Park Bison Management Synopsis

Date: August 6, 2008

Background:

- The Gallatin National Forest provides and maintains habitat for wildlife species and coordinates management of these resources with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and other resource management agencies and organizations.
- USFS provides law enforcement on National Forest System lands.
- USFS administers permits for the capture facility at Horse Butte.
- USFS administers grazing permits on National Forest System lands, including those located in the Taylor Fork area.

Current Status:

- The Forest Service began environmental analysis, including public scoping, to determine whether or not to re-issue the Horse Butte Capture Facility special use permit as requested by Montana Department of Livestock. Public scoping and content analysis of comments received are complete. A decision is expected this fall.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Gallatin National Forest are jointly scoping to determine if the agencies should purchase the grazing rights from the Royal Teton Ranch for a 30-year period, and authorize, install, and maintain fencing and cattle-guards necessary to keep bison in acceptable areas as described in the IBMP.
- The Forest Service assisted, as requested by Gallatin County, with law enforcement needs associated with hazing and capture operations. This included assisting with traffic control, assuring human safety protocols were met, and that the Bison Operation Plan was implemented.
- Forest Service law enforcement assisted with at least two incidents of interference during hazing and capture operations.
- The Forest Service participated in a public open house hosted by the Interagency Bison Management Partners in Bozeman, Montana in December 2007.
- The USDA Forest Service and Animal Plant Health Inspection Service jointly responded to the 2008 GAO audit findings.
- The Forest Service hosted members of the Nez Perce Tribe interested in bison management and exercising tribal hunting rights on the national forest.

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