

Summary Report from Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting September 8-9, 2008

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The following summary report reflects activities at the September 8th and 9th meeting of the IBMP partners, carried out in Helena (Armory Building) and hosted by the Mondant Division 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 sitting Ryan Clarke (sitting in for Jerry Diemer; APHIS), Mary Erickson (GNF), Pat Flowers (MFWP), Suzanne Lewis (YNP), Christian Mackay (MBoL), Marty Zaluski (MDoL); ~10 staff members present from across organizations each day; ~10 members of the public each day. Note that 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
- SL—Suzanne Lewis
- YNP—Yellowstone National Park



Action items identified

	Who	What	Complete by/for
1	Scott	Multiple meeting logistics: 1) send all files presented at Sep 8,9 meeting to Steve Merrit for posting to IBMP.info; 2) send copy of AM framework shown on flip chart to partners; 3) send ver1.0 draft west side AM plan to partners; 4) send draft agenda for Oct 2,3 meeting to partners	Thursday Sep 11, 5 PM
2	FWP (PF)	breakdown of hunting harvest by sex ratio over the last two years	Will be agenda item at next meeting— (Oct 2,3)
3	YNP (GP)	Update on the EIS status for remote vaccine delivery	ditto
4	GNF (ME)	Utilization at HB, carrying capacity at HB; answer to the questions—does GNF permit to the max value possible; status of the Mum's (now Gallanas) permit	ditto
5	DoL/APHIS	Briefing paper on inventory of vaccination status on the west side and on the north side	ditto
6	DoL/APHIS	Briefing paper on inventory of vaccination status on the west side and on the north side	ditto
7	YNP, APHIS (GP, RC)	Briefing paper on persistence data	ditto
8	All partners	Review draft west side AM plan ver1.0; use track changes to make desired edits; changes to be made anywhere in document but especially recognize that proposed monitoring and metrics are mostly uninformed (out of Scott's brain at 1 AM)	Send to Scott by 5 PM, Friday Sep 26
9	Scott	Compiles all edits from action item 7 into a single file (granted some license to word smith while keeping partner intent clear); create single file with no Track changes showing of draft west side AM plan ver2.0	Return to partners by noon, Tuesday Sep 30th
10	All partners	Review draft west side AM plan ver2.0 and come to meeting #4 prepared to discuss	Oct 2, 3
11	All partners	Using the same document framework as employed to create the west side AM plan ver2.0, create a list of north side adaptive management objectives.	Send to Scott by 5 PM, Friday Sep 26
12	Scott	Compiles all management objectives from action item 11 into a single file. Attempt to lump like items together and create a strawman draft north side AM plan.	Return to partners by noon, Tuesday Sep 30th
13	All partners	Review the strawman draft north side AM plan; come to meeting #4 prepared to discuss; goal for the meeting will be to complete a draft north side AM plan ver1.0.	Oct 2, 3

Meeting summary notes

The notes presented are not comprehensive but hit highlights of partner discussions.

GRAZING ALLOTMENTS

West side

Becky Frye presented three maps showing changes in grazing allotments and activities between the year 2000 and the year 2008. The analysis included names of land owners and those running cattle (not always the same) and date for cattle to be put on and taken off landscape. These maps will be available at www.ibmp.info.

Discussion took place about what is meant by a "vacant" USFS allotment such as those at Horse Butte and Dry Gulch. A vacant allotment means that grazing can still potentially occur, but at the moment no active permit has been issued. Mary Erickson said that the Forest Service has the administrative authority to 1) change permit conditions (e.g., type and number of livestock, time on and off the land) annually; and 2) close allotments based on capability and suitability analysis. Capability deals with landscape, vegetation ability to support livestock; suitability deals with allocation of the resource to livestock, timber, recreation, livestock, and so on. Capability and suitability analyses can be done during forest planning or as a stand alone process.

Mary further stated that for Horse Butte no NEPA process had ever been carried out and thus the GNF is under no obligation to allow livestock there. She also stated that given these powers available to the GNF, a) in general the presence of a grazing allotment does not mean that a conflict exists with a having bison on those allotments under AM; and b) in general public lands should not be a barrier to AM for bison management.

North side

Tom Miner—several operations that have cattle year around. Gardiner basin has had many changes since 2000 leading to fewer cattle operations (only two running cows on the east side of the Yellowstone River). Slip and Slide GNF still in use (i.e., active). Mary restated that permits are reviewed on an annual basis and available for consideration under AM without NEPA review.

BRUCELLOSIS SERO-PREVALENCE

Glenn Plumb provided a briefing paper on bison population sero-prevalence. The major conclusion of the briefing was that "population seroprevalence rates have varied between 40 and 60 % during the past two decades. We have not detected a change in the sero-prevalence under the current IBMP risk management paradigm."

Glenn noted a still outstanding question called out in the 1998 National Academy of Sciences report: how is infection maintained if spontaneous abortions are so low? Also, Glenn noted that the largest tissue study to date, from capture 447 captured animals that were sent to slaughter last year, is currently underway. This study should help in better understanding the relationship between sero-prevalence of brucellosis antibodies and actual bacterial infection of the animals.

The briefing can be found at www.ibmp.info.

COMPILING A LIST OF MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES TO SERVE AS A BASIS FOR AN ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Each partner provided a list of management objectives that were collected by the facilitator and projected onto the screen. As per meeting planning, the partners then went into open round table discussion for the majority of the rest of the meeting (i.e., day one and day two). The open discussions led to a strawman adaptive management plan for the

west side of Yellowstone National Park, as provided in a separate file.

Materials requested/received from partners for Sep 8,9 meeting

The following documents created or presented at the meeting were sent to Steve Merrit at DoL for potential posting to ibmp.info:

- Final meeting agenda for Sep 8,9 meeting
- Pdfs of three ownership maps presented by Becky Frye of APHIS
- Briefing sheet on sero-prevalence presented by Glenn Plumb, YNP
- Draft management objectives presented by MFWP, YNP, GNF, DoL/APHIS.
- Draft IBMP management objectives for the West side (ver 1.0)
- Draft meeting agenda for Oct 2,3 meeting

Selected comments from public

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. Note that there continues to be consternation about the amount of time provided to the public to speak (the partners' request has been for 3 min per speaker, not 30 min as in the schedule regardless of the number of speakers; this has been a point of contention when we have less than 10 speakers with the public desiring to expand each speaker's time so as to fill up the 30 min time slot). Additionally, numerous members of the public (often representing NGOs) continue to state dismay at the public's lack of an "official", at-the-table role in the IBMP discussions.

SEPTEMBER 8TH

- Request the Lemke data showing good bison habitat along the Yellowstone River be considered by the partners
- Request to return bison to the Gallatin National Forest—saw them there in the 1990s
- Request that partners consider burning some habitat to help with migrations paths
- Would like to see bison utilize Horse Butte and other areas like Duck Creek year round (also mention of over Targhee Pass)
- Request that partners need to spend more time focussing on protecting cows rather than confining bison
- Statement that Dome Mountain Ranch folks area is perfect for bison and not a place of conflict; can use fencing to allow bison to reach that area
- Statement that the partner meetings are both encouraging and maddening
- Statement of confusion over why being tested or not is important if there is no chance of co-mingling
- Request that partners strongly consider fencing where warranted
- Request that full discussion and determination of where threats exist be completed
- Belief stated that the tools are in place and screaming out to be used by the partners
- Request that the partners transition from slaughtering bison to managing bison
- Statement that partner discussions show moments of hope but sense that the discussions are highly confined
- Request that this should be a discussion about protecting cows
- Concern that there is no willingness to change the May 15 date to take bison off the landscape outside park despite changed conditions
- Question—if May 15 date is unchangeable, why the concern about testing?

- Statement that brucellosis persistence lasts only 3 weeks. Thus question why can't we use large number of dollars going to testing and management and funnel them instead to compensate cattleman for hay and keeping their cows off the areas of conflict until later?

SEPTEMBER 9TH

- Concern that we don't understand the genetic diversity required to keep a viable bison population (hand out to partners of a paper covering this topic, including technical references)
- Claim that new information since the 2000 IBMP which had declared 2300 animals to be sufficient for genetic integrity
- Belief that there are at least two breeding populations in the Park (North, Central) and that we likely need closer to 4000 bison to assure genetic integrity
- Recommendation for caution in bison numbers based on this uncertainty: no hunting, no management removals
- Statement of frustration over time allowed for public input
- Request that the full 30 min be allowed for public comment, regardless if there are fewer than 10 speakers
- Request that IBMP be replaced completely
- Statement that the current maps are not correct with respect to bison habitat capability and suitability
- Request to increase tolerance for bison on publically owned lands
- Changes have occurred on the Madison (Sun Ranch, others) that are not incorporated in partner discussions
- Statement that only 1 livestock producer and 2 owners are keeping bison from moving out of park
- Statement that we could fence and protect along the Yellowstone River to get to Dome Mountain area
- Statement that Taylor Fork area and other public lands are conflict free now and ready for bison
- Statement that persistence never lasts past June 15
- Challenge to the idea that hunting is an acceptable management option
- Statement that kill quota for hunting will not be well received
- Statement that north side quarantine area should be outside the immediate area of bison travel
- Recommendation to do suitability analysis on north side of park
- Recommendation to not allow conversation "stoppers" into the conversation, instead work toward conversation starters (what is the real issue here? How can we overcome that...)
- Concern that at Mammoth Larry Fisher of the Inst for Conflict Resolution missed a list of eight opportunities for public involvement: 1) meeting with individual stakeholders, 2) putting together traveling teams, 3) institute negotiated rulemaking process, 4) institute traditional NEPA, 5) create expert stakeholder panels, 6) allow stakeholders sitting reps at the table, 7) mediated meetings to bring a broader, richer conversation, 8) create a stakeholder advisory group and allow for roundtable discussions with the partners
- Question of the ecological importance of removing so many bison last year (to grizzlies, grasslands? Likewise genetic consequence?)
- Belief that the meetings have really simplified discussions when this is a complex biological issue

Next meeting agenda

The partners provided the items below to be covered in the Oct 2, 3 meeting in Bozeman. The goals for the meeting will be to further share pertinent information that informs the IBMP and AM planning, to complete ver2.0 of the west side AM plan, and to complete ver1.0 of the draft north side AM plan.

- Welcome; groundrules; meeting goals (0:15 min); may possibly need to set aside time for ITBC representative (wait for SL to inform on this possibility)
- Information sharing; please use briefing paper format (1:15)
 - FWP (10 min): breakdown of hunting harvest by sex ratio over the last two years
 - YNP (30 min): Update on the EIS status for remote vaccine delivery
 - GNF (10 min): utilization at HB, carrying capacity at HB; answer to the questions—does GNF permit to the max value possible; status of the Mum's (now Gallanas) permit
 - DoL/APHIS Vaccination (15 min): Briefing paper on inventory of vaccination status on the west side and on the north side
 - Persistence (10 min): Briefing paper on persistence data (GP, RC)
- Continuation of West side adaptive management plan with goal to arrive at ver2.0 (2:30)
 - Possibly start with Scott presentation on his compilation of the ver1.0 edits presented to him by the partners; focus on areas of disagreement and areas of agreement
 - Partner discussions focussed on resolving areas of disagreement
- [breaks 0:30]
- Beginning of North Side AM plan with goal to arrive at ver 1.0 (2:30)
 - Begin with Pat Flowers briefing on RTR process and current status
 - Partner discussions
- Plan meeting 5 (30 min)
- Public comment (1:00 split over the two days)

Facilitator recommended agendas for future meetings

POSSIBLE OUTLINE OF SEVEN MEETING SERIES

Based on the outcome of meeting three, I provide a possible outline for the remaining four meetings for partner consideration:

- *X Meeting 1*—background information gathering; GAO recommendations 3,4,5 (note that meetings 2-7 deal with GAO recommendations 1,2)
- *X Meeting 2*—Continued to look at what's changed since 2000; adoption of DOI adaptive management model; identified the three "most urgent" action areas for 2008/09; agreed that a joint surveillance & monitoring plan will be necessary
- *X Meeting 3*—information gathering (APHIS land management changes on West side, brucellosis seroprevalence status over 8 years); create draft west side AM plan ver1.0 for 2008-2009 season
- *Meeting 4*—refine west side AM plan to create ver 2.0 including metric and required monitoring needed to support each objective; determine trigger point for actions under each objective defined; create north side AM plan ver 1.0

- *Meeting 5*—complete west side AM plan; refine north side AM plan to create ver 2.0 including metric and required monitoring needed to support each objective; determine trigger point for actions under each objective defined;
- *Meeting 6*— complete north side AM plan; combine final north side and west side AM plans to create a single IBMP AM plan
- *Meeting 7*—complete final deliberations on IBMP AM plan for 2008/09; begin operational discussions planning for 2008/09; plan public forum on plan

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—like Rick Wallen’s report—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) genetics and population #s needed to maintain bison genetic diversity; included could be discussion of how #s differ for wild bison herd and confined cattle herd (possibly Fred Allendorf at UM),
 - 2) ecological impacts of large-scale biomass removal from the GYA via sending bison to slaughter,
 - 3) 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
 - 4) examples from other regions of how adaptive management has been successfully applied
 - 5) brucellosis life history, pathology, understanding multiple brucellosis species and methods of transfer among mammals (esp. cattle, bison)
 - 6) habitat analysis for bison in the GYA
 - 7) status of brucellosis vaccinations—in cattle? In bison?
 - 8) status of remote delivery of brucellosis vaccine
 - 9) brucellosis around the world—are we the only ones with this issue?
 - 10) 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.

	Requester	What
1	Group	Suzanne—is adaptive management possible with respect to tribal hunt and

	following PF report out on FWP hunting	<p>their harvest goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were quotas for tribes determined—Pat: sharing goals modeled after Idaho salmon sharing agreements; FWP currently trying to have MOUs signed • Request that partners review/are informed on status and content of MOUs • Tribes consider that bison they receive from slaughter should not be part of 50/50 harvest agreement • Draft EA on tribal hunt coming out in ?? months
4	SL	Request for partners to review short and long term status of quarantine operations with APHIS/Jerry
5	MZ	Need to revisit idea of ability to test unvaccinated animals (i.e., criteria of animals eligible for vaccination)
6	SL	Consider creating series of science lectures (e.g., minimum population to maintain genetic diversity) either within partner meetings or as adjunct to the meetings
7	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)