Summary Report from
Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting
November 5-6, 2008

**Presented 11/12/08 by Meeting Facilitator Scott Bischke,
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The following summary report reflects activities at the November 5th and 6th meeting of the IBMP partners, held at Chico Hot Springs and hosted by APHIS. 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; ~15 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
- MBOL: Montana Board of Livestock
- MDOL: Montana Department of Livestock
- 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	Multipe meeting logistics: 1) send all files presented at Nov 5, 6 to Steve Merritt for posting to IBMP.info; 2) send draft ver3.0 West AM plan to Tech Comm; 3) send North side Management Action 1.1.a to Tech Comm; 3) send draft agenda for Dec 17, 18 meeting to partners and staff; 4) send Nov 5, 6 meeting summary to partners and staff; 5) Link to DOI concept on bison management concept	Wednesday Nov 12, 5 PM
2		Pull parking lot items out separate from Nov 5/6 report and ask partners to prioritize; present prioritized list at Dec 17, 18 meeting	Wednesday Nov 12, 5 PM
3	Technical committee (Becky F, PJW co-chairs)	Provide a single, clean, draft ver3.0 (near-completed) IBMP AM plan to Partners for signing. The document should include one section each dealing with the West side and North side, plus it should include an Executive Summary. The Technical Committee is requested to identify responsible parties for all required activities.	By Dec 5 close of business
4	Partners	Send Scott prioritization of Parked items list (see Scott's 11/12 email)	By Dec 5
5	Partners	Partners review draft ver3.0 (near-completed) IBMP AM plan in preparation for Dec 10 phone conference	Dec 6- 10
6		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.	Dec 8?
7		Partner phone conference. YNP will provide conference call-in number (866-500-8741 ; Pass code = 9544358#). Discussion to center on (a) critical changes (if any) remaining; (b) enumeration of "what is left before we can sign draft ver3.0 (near-completed) IBMP AM plan and make it 'final'?" (c) Discussion on future engagement of the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. Changes resulting from the phone call that impact Dec 17, 18 should be forwarded to the facilitator for agenda modification, as needed.	2 PM; Dec 10
8	Partners (esp. MFWP –PF)	Determine who will be signing the final AM plan	For Dec 10 phone conference
9	All Partner PIOs (Marna, Steve, Al, Mel, Lindsey)	Develop strawman of communications plan based on near-completed AM plan released Dec 5	Dec 10
10	YNP	Develop strawman of 2008/09 operational procedures based on near-completed AM plan released Dec 5; mail to Partners and Operations contacts	
11	Glenn Plumb	Update operations contact list based on spreadsheet based around during Nov 5/6 meeting; share with Partners and Operations contacts	
12	DoL (MZ)	Update status of adult cow vaccinations in Zone 2 briefing sheet	
13	Technical committee (Becky F, PJW co-chairs)	Reset the North side boundaries to match reasonable on-the-ground conditions (e.g., watersheds, topography, parcels), including as assessment for possible change to Eagle Cr. boundary around Maiden Basin. To help accomplish this task, meet on the ground (include Lemke, Anderson)	For Dec 17 meeting
14	Partners	Sign completed, first ever IBMP Adaptive Management plan for the North and West sides of Yellowstone National Park	By meeting adjournment, Dec 18

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 (www.ibmp.info) where briefings and other documents created at this meeting are posted.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Department of Interior bison management proposal

A short discussion was held regarding the bison conservation initiative recently announced by DOI Secretary Kempthorne. The initiative speaks to bison nationwide, as well as in Canada and Mexico, and not simply in the Yellowstone area. Major focuses of the program are bison health and the maintenance of genetic diversity. Invitees to an interagency working group expected to lead the initiative include US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Indian Affairs, representatives of states within whose borders bison are found, APHIS, USDA, US Forest Service, and the Department of Defense. Secretary Kempthorne's 28 October 2008 press release can be found at http://www.doi.gov/news/08_News_Releases/102808.html ; a pdf of the same press release is posted at www.ibmp.info.

2000 ROD maps

PJ White provided maps of the north and west boundaries from the 2000 ROD, based on Partner request. These maps are available at www.IBMP.info .

YNP briefing statement on reasoning for Park setting its suggested bison population ranges

Glenn Plumb provided a briefing paper describing how Yellowstone National Park determines the range of bison it considers necessary to maintain a viable population. Included is a conceptual model that describes conservation and disease management relationships for Yellowstone bison. This briefing paper can be found at www.IBMP.info .

Larry Fisher: Summary findings and recommendations on opportunities for public engagement

Larry Fisher of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution completed over 30 interviews with stakeholder representatives including members of NGOs, cattle producers, tribal members, agency leads, and landowners affected by the IBMP. Larry noted some fatigue on the part of those he talked with. He related that, in part, to the fact that enthusiasm is often determined by the opportunity, which in turn is related to the negotiation space available.

Larry provided the following themes from the interviews:

- The GAO got it right
- Divergent agency mandates, constituencies and perspectives – a major source of the conflict
- Depending on your perspective – the plan is biased in the other direction
- Changed (-ing) circumstances (land use, demographics, Brucellosis status, science, new agency leads) offer a new opportunity for creative solutions - vs. "nothing's changed, and there's no way out"
- IBMP may not be able to address broader Brucellosis and landscape-scale ecosystem management issues
- Tribal involvement critical, but lacks structure and consistency
- Open meeting laws – benefits and concerns; problems with a "minimalist" interpretation
- Public frustration with constrained format – want more of a dialogue
- Structure/format reinforces sense of frustration and polarization
- Deep skepticism tempered by cautious optimism
- People are entrenched/polarized, and have stopped listening - vs. sense of opportunity (optimism) and value of sitting down in a structured conversation
- Unrealistic expectations – of process, outcomes

Larry reviewed eight basic questions to be answered affirmatively before a collaborative process can really move forward. He flagged three of these as question marks in the current IBMP effort:

- Are key parties committed to the process? (and are they willing to suspend other/outside forms of pressure and influence?)
- Is there reasonable "negotiation space"?
- Do participants have reasonable expectations, and clear/common views of goals and indicators of success?

Larry went on to provide some design principles for a collaborative process having formal structure and balanced, inclusive representation. An important aspect is to set expectations for all parties, including recognition that the problem isn't going to go away, that there are important opportunities for mutual learning and creative problem-solving, that trade-offs are inevitable, and that it will take (lots of) time, commitment, and resources to come to any resolution.

Larry provided a number of process options for the Partners to consider including a) continued interagency public meetings and open houses; b) localized working groups (north and west); c) independently convened roundtable/s; d) broad-based GYA working group. The latter working group might be structured as a mediation, under negotiated rulemaking, as a federally chartered advisory committee (FACA), and as a hybrid state/federal sponsored working group. Larry made no recommendation, saying that the Partners would need to decide how to proceed. Most of the public Q&A period centered on the FACA process. He did, however, note that for all options tribal input is essential. He also described that each process has inherent strengths and weaknesses, plus require more or less time commitment and have more or less potential for long-term viable outcomes.

Slides from Larry's talk are available at www.ibmp.info .

PROGRESSING TOWARD THE FINAL VERSION OF THE IBMP AM PLAN

The major goals for this meeting were to 1) gain agreement on Management action 1.1.a of the North side ver2.0 AM plan, and 2) to completely review the West side ver2.0 AM plan, moving it to the draft ver3.0 level.

Management action 1.1.a of the North side ver2.0 AM plan

Partners submitted their goals for Mgmt Action 1.1a to the facilitator, who attempted to fully blend these goals into a single, cohesive management action. Partners came to the meeting prepared to discuss this "blended" document. Discussion and debate centered around numerous issues including assurance that Zone 2 boundaries are understood, need to test bulls and calves, possibility of vaginal transmitter use, telemetry of individuals (most importantly adult females as they leave the group and others follow), use of dye to mark individuals, status of Royal Teton Ranch fencing (still unclear if it will be in place for this winter), and so on. Statements were made that due to safety concerns big bulls cannot be handled at Stephens Creek. Partners recognized that risk and hence tolerance numbers allowed on North side (steppe, dry/windswept) is different than West side (lodgepole, deep snow) because of different vegetation and climatic conditions.

Partners and staff provided guidance on a rewrite of the blended Mngmt Action 1.1.a, then sent that reworked document to the Technical Committee to complete and incorporate into the draft ver3.0 (final) IBMP AM plan to be presented to the Partners on Dec 5 (see action item section).

Moving West Side ver2.0 AM plan to draft ver3.0

In the days leading up to the Nov 5/6 meeting, the Technical Committee provided the Partners with the completed ver2.0 West side AM plan for review. Partners came to the Nov 5/6 meeting prepared to discuss, deliberate, and potentially modify the ver2.0 plan. Much discussion centered on allowable population range for bison in the Park. Marty Zaluski asked about how issues such as numbers of out-migrants, reproductive rate, and genetic diversity lead to development of an allowable range. Glenn Plumb provided a briefing paper describing how the Park determines the range of bison it considers necessary to maintain a viable population.

The Partners decided to take the West side ver2.0 plan and give themselves overnight homework to further review the document and be ready to call out concerns regarding any Management Action, monitoring metric, or management threshold, as defined under the agreed upon AM document framework (Figure 1).

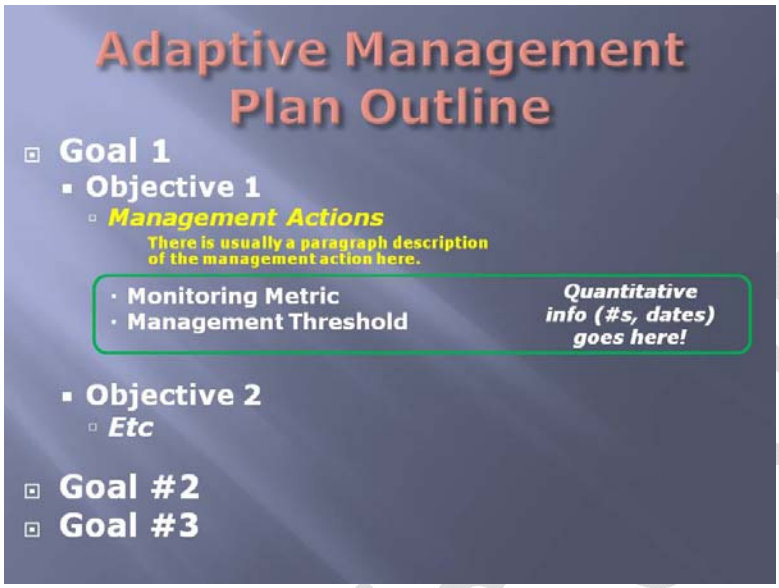

Figure 1. Structure of IBMP Adaptive Management Plan.

On Nov 6th the Partners returned to the table and marched step-wise through the entire ver2.0 West side plan. Partners attempted to—and largely did—reach agreement on each Monitoring Metric and Management Threshold for Management Action (at earlier meetings Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions had already been agreed upon). The exercise was completed with the ver2.0 documents projected on the screen. In some instances items were lined out and rewritten. In other instances direction was provided to the Technical Committee for the requested modification. At conclusion of the meeting, the Partners provided the Technical Committee a charge to complete those few remaining items in contention and move the results of the West side ver2.0 into the draft ver3.0 (final) IBMP AM plan, along with the North side plan. The Technical Committee is to present this draft ver3.0 (final) IBMP AM plan to the Partners on Dec 5 (see action item section).

Looking ahead

Table 2 shows a simplified timeline of the status of the IBMP 2008/09 AM plan, including expected outcome for meeting #7.

Table 2.—Status of adaptive management planning for IBMP partners. The next meeting of the Partners is meeting #7.

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 recommend-ations 3,4,5	1) Adopted DOI AM model 2) Selected 3 most urgent action areas	Completed West side AM plan ver1.0	Completed 1) West side AM plan ver2.0 2) North side AM plan ver1.0	Completed North side AM plan ver2.0 with 1 exception (see next meeting)	Agreement on North side Mgmt Obj 1.1.a; West Side draft ver3.0—handed off to Tech Comm	Goal: 1) Agreement on West side and North side final (ver3.0) 2) Schedule operational meetings winter 2008/09

Selected comments from public

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

NOVEMBER 5TH

- Belief that they bison issue should be regionalized
- Statement of support for the FACA process
- Belief that negative behavior can be handled by strong facilitation and clear ground rules
- Statement that tribes need to be more incvolved
- Stated desire that public be more accountable
- Request for Partners to look at Larry Fishers 3 conflict questions and try to address them
- Applause for the commitment to introducing science into the IBMP process but concern that decisions are not being based on science
- Can't understand Ap 15 deadline given our knowledge ofpersistence
- Why not provide flexibility for bison to come back on the landscape in July?
- Concern that on the North side so much handling might cause artificial movement negating our learned knowledge on natural migration patterns
- Concern that the West side plan lost its call to 300 or 350 bison and request that we need to be sure that it is not still 100
- Request that we not use motorized techniques
- Statement of belief that lots of information has been provided to support population range numbers provided by the Park

NOVEMBER 6TH

- Thanks for the hard work
- We may be moving forward just inches, but at least we are moving—not expecting to solve everything here and now
- Statement of support for getting all people together, including FACA idea
- Request that Partners consider increased tolerance for bison in Zone 2 and possible tools and incentives to landowners for increased tolerance outside Zone 2

- Request that Partners identify sideboards that strangulate discussion
- Regarding Mgmt Action 1.2.a—Partners need to work with livestock producers
  - Request to remove turn off dates under metrics
  - Statement that the producer has all the responsibility for separation; request to change wording to show Partners responsible for temporal separation
- Running yearlings is not an easy changeover and thus not necessarily doable
- Statement that cattle producers need partners, can't do all the work by themselves
- Solutions should be site specific
- Request that Partners follow-up on Larry Fisher's report on the need to get more stakeholders at the table

Next meeting

The meeting is scheduled for Dec 17/18 at MFWP in Bozeman. A draft meeting agenda has been posted at www.ibmp.info. The major focus of this meeting will be signing the IBMP Adaptive Management Plan.

Issues identified as potential topics for future meetings ("Parked" items)

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	Suzanne—is adaptive management possible with respect to tribal hunt and their harvest goals • 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
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
7	Partners	Keep walking through management action scenarios as they play out during operations
8	MZ	Return to the limit of 3000 animals as presented in the ROD—what does this population limit mean?
9	ME	Similarly, discuss how population management objectives are set for bison in the GYA. Discussion of YNP step-wise process for setting acceptable the population range.
10	SL	Explanation/detail on why YNP will use 2500 as an "orange flag" to warn of need for management action modification (briefing paper).
11	PF	Discussion of mid-May RTR-related hunting season
12	SL	Recognizing that YNP is the lead agency for the first year per GAO recommendation, begin convening a monthly Tech Comm call as a basis for collecting information on the yearly report to Congress (report to be completed Au 1 yearly; see notes of meeting #1)
13	ME	Horse Butte trap decision in December; 10 year authorization expected in 2009
14	Partners	Request ITBC meeting which will include a request from the IBMP partners to the tribes (NP. SK) for harvest information