

Summary Report from Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting December 17-18, 2008

Presented 12/23/08 by Meeting Facilitator Scott Bischke,
MountainWorks Inc. (scott@eMountainWorks.com)

The following summary report reflects activities at the December 17th and 18th meeting of the IBMP partners, held at Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks in Bozeman and hosted by MFWP. 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; Suzanne was sick on the 18th—Glenn Plumb sits in), Christian Mackay (MBoL), Marty Zaluski (MDoL); ~15 staff members present from across IBMP organizations each day; ~20 members of the public each day. Scanned attendance and speaker sign-up sheets are available from the facilitator.

CONTENTS

Action items identified.....	3
Meeting summary notes.....	4
Selected comments from public.....	6
Parked items.....	8

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



facilitator's draft

Action items identified

Action items developed at the meeting are shown in the following table.

Who	What	By when
Mel/Steve	Send Pdf of AM plan to Steve Merritt for posting on IBMP.info; Steve posts	Dec 17
Glenn	1) Send out strike-through version of Operational Procedures to Partners 2) Send Scott briefing statement on GAO reporting from lead agency	Dec 18
Glenn	Incorporate new on-the-ground map in the Operational Procedures based on field notes from November 20 Partner staff field visit to the North side.	Dec 18
Scott	Collect needs/purpose goals from Partners; combine into a single document; send document to PIOs for further refinement/word smithing	Dec 23
Partners	1) Changes / edits / additions to the Operational Procedures sent to Glenn Plumb 2) Determination of who will sign Operational Procedures for each agency (consider signature at the "responsible level")	Jan 9
PIOs	Create completed purpose and needs statement for design phase of public engagement process; circulate to Partners for review prior to Jan 15 phone conference	Jan 12, 2009
CM	Ask Marty to clarify Parked item list regarding vaccination	Jan 14
JD	Contact other conflict resolution groups as an alternative to the Inst for Environmental Conflict Resolution (group from Harvard mentioned, others...)	Jan 15
Partners	Phone conference for consensus on Operational Procedures (YNP supplies call in #) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Jerry Diemer results of competitive search for conflict resolution groups Review Purpose and Needs statement for design phase of public engagement process as created by PIOs; if ok, send to Larry Fisher or other contractors Review Operational Procedures, obtain consensus Review/decision on signatories for Op. Procedures Discuss method of cost sharing / budgeting for a) design phase, and b) actual process of entering in long-term public engagement process CM—Marty's response to what was meant on the Parked Item list about vaccination 	Jan 15 4 PM
Mary	Update agreement with Larry Fisher (are there still \$s remaining in the budget?)	Post Jan 15
Mary	Request to Larry Fisher for design phase quote for creating new public engagement process based on Partner-agreed-upon Purpose and Needs statement	Post Jan 15
Glenn	Send out consensus Operational Procedures for signature to Partners	Jan 16

	and/or signatories, as appropriate	
Partners	Return signed Operational Procedures to Glenn	Jan 23
Contractor	(Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution or similar) Conclude design phase report in time for Partners to review and incorporate in the annual report to Congress Aug 1.	July 1, 2009

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.

SIGNING THE IBMP AM PLAN

Considerable Partner and staff discussions occurred between last meeting (Nov 5,6) and the current meeting. The Technical Committee, in particular, worked through issues on the North Side with respect to numbers of bison to be tolerated outside the Park. In the end, the plan ended essentially as it had been presented to the public at the Nov 5,6 meeting.

The facilitator made a short presentation on the agreed upon AM plan, followed by short statements by each Partner on the process, their happiness about reaching this point, the challenges ahead, and so on. The public was allowed an opportunity for two minute testimony (see later section).

Following the public testimony, the Partners completed a signing ceremony, followed by a break.

COMMUNICATIONS

Following the signing, a press release regarding the plan was sent to news outlets, elected delegation, multiple tribes, multiple state and federal government offices, IBMP partner mailing lists, and so on.

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Glenn Plumb provided an overview of the past process for the Operations coordination between the Partners. Glenn created a strawman from last year's Operating Procedures while trying to blend in the new guidance from the AM plan (incorporation by reference). This was presented as a Partner deliberative document, not for release.

Glenn noted that the Operating Procedures have a high degree of specificity and thus contain far more information than the AM plan.

Glenn stated that only one section—the hunting section—was not modified.

Glenn requested that Partners consider having the document signed at the level of responsibility by each organization, particularly since Partners have AM plan signed.

Partners are requested to review the strawman and return comments/adds/edits to Glenn (see Action Item list).

INFORMATION GATHERING

Vaccinations

Ryan Clarke provided an updated information sheet on the adult cattle vaccinations on the North and West sides of the Park. The briefing paper can be found at www.IBMP.info.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation meeting

RMEF held a meeting on brucellosis in Billings in early December. Reports from Partners and staff that attended the meeting indicated that the meeting was informative but no real actions or follow-up were proposed. Also, given elk foundation focus on elk, it is unclear if RMEF would be interested in pursuing issues associated with bison and brucellosis.

PARKED ITEM REVIEW

Over the course of the seven meeting series the Partners periodically set aside items into the "parking lot". The Partners pulled this list back out in Bozeman and rated the items for potential inclusion in future Partner meetings. The results of those ratings follow:

1. Tribal/ITBC participation in IBMP.
 2. Method/Process for responding to GAO report. re: IBMP Annual Report. GAO request for improved accounting.
 3. Montana brucellosis management planning to regain class-free status.
 4. Live bison to non-slaughter destinations.
 5. Expanded Montana and tribal bison hunting. RTR-related hunting season. Long term discussion of suitable and/or conflict free habitat.
 6. Bison population abundance range. Meaning of 3000 bison limit. YNP use of 2500 bison as a red flag.
 7. Testing unvaccinated animals.
 8. Horse Butte trap.
-
- A. Possible immunocontraception EA.
 - B. Public engagement strategy

The last two items were added back from the July 2008 Partner exercise as issues they wanted to cover in the seven meeting series (i.e., of that group of items, only these were not covered). Note that items 2 and B were discussed by the Partners on 12/17 and 12/18.

PARTNER TIME PLANNING EXERCISE FOR 2009

- Technical Committee will meet 1x/quarter in a phone call with as part of process to collect data for annual report
 - Lead agency will organize
 - Goal is to share information
 - Use monitoring metrics to report out
 - Lead agency does a rolling report of current status in building to annual report
- Partners will meet quarterly for business meetings following the model of the seven Fall 2008 meeting series:
 - APHIS again willing to travel from Ft. Collins; other agencies expected to act as hosts; meetings will run 12 noon to 12 noon
 - Spring meeting 1,2 April 2009
 - @FWP in Bozeman; FWP host
 - Reasoning for date selection: MT legislature will be winding down, bison counts will be available to talk about, close to the Ap 15 date noted in the North Side portion of AM plan
 - Summer meeting 11,12 Aug 2009
 - In Helena; DOL/BOL host
 - Reasoning for date selection: IBMP annual report due Aug 1; gives Partners 1+ week to consider report, then get together for AM

- discussions; gives 60 days for agreements before hand over lead agency role to a new agency as of Nov 1
- o Fall meeting 9,10 Nov 2009
 - Tentatively in Chico or Gardner with YNP as host (YNP not yet committed to hosting—need to check with SL)
 - Reasoning for timing: AHA meeting is in late October so that time booked for many
 - Bison hunt starts Nov 15
 - Veterans' Day holiday is Nov 11
 - DOL will be the new lead agency as of Nov 1

2009/10 LEAD AGENCY

After short discussion, the Partners agreed on DoL acting as the lead agency for 2009/10. DoL hasn't led previously.

Selected comments from public

The notes on comments are not intended to be complete, but rather representative to the best of the facilitator's ability to capture key statements.

DECEMBER 17TH

Prior to the AM plan signing

- Statement of appreciation for the IBMP but belief that only the land managers should be sitting the table and have a vote on the fate of bison
- Statement of appreciation for all the work that has been done
- Statement that since the beginning of these seven meetings there was a question of, "Will bison be treated as wildlife?" Answer appears to be a cautious yes.
- Statement of agreement with Jerry Diemer that the process is just beginning and we still have a long way to go.
- Hope that the Partners commit to engaging in public process and accountability to the public
- Need to continue the IBMP work
- Need the public to sit at the table; the current process does not work
- I am in the field all the time and I see where the bison want to go on the ground, not just an exercise on paper
- Horse Butte is cattle free and bison should be allowed there year around
- Question—are there any consequences to not following the AM plan?
- The AM plan is not for protecting bison. Where is the responsibility of the cattle industry? We are protecting a non-native species at the expense of a wild animal.
- Livestock inspectors should inspect livestock, not bison.
- Ranchers should foot bill for wildlife proof fencing.
- Back in September we gave you some practical solutions for bison as wildlife and we have made some progress but much work left to be done.
- After signing the AM plan there are additional commitments that need to be made—particularly 1) to work with the public, and 2) find way to protect wildlife.
- Statement of support for FACA idea—key to get public into the discussion.
- Statement of continued disappointment even upon the signing of the AM plan.
- The GAO report said to refine, revise, or replace the plan.
- There is not enough wildlife habitat available to do right by bison.
- We have also provide Partners plans for bison.
- Consider public task force.

- Have posed questions to FWP and never got answers.
- Encouragement to replace the plan.
- Commend Partners on their work, even with all their own pressures, other projects.
- Great hope for future public engagement.
- Have taken steps in the right direction.
- Testing bison for sero+ and forcing a large # of bison with or without brucellosis into close quarters .and slaughtering those with resistance disease seems like a recipe to spread the disease.
- I resent having bison trapped and slaughtered in YNP.
- There is only so much the IBMP can do.
- This AM plan is the first time in 8 years that we have more land and tolerance for bison.
- Agencies need to be aware of genetic diversity especially given large slaughter last year.
- Need to have a supplemental EIS and involve public.
- Places are available for additional bison habitat—for example upper Madison Valley, Horse Butte

At the end of the day's meetings

- Capture, test, slaughter status unclear.
- Need to adapt to elk/brucellosis situation as well.
- Need to focus on eradicating or controlling brucellosis.
- Livestock industry has worked hard to keep herds brucellosis free.
- Everyone wants to see wildlife out there.
- Brucellosis regulations are too stringent—you can eat meat from an animal that is infected with brucellosis.
- IBMP is a failing plan; it is not protecting free ranging, wild bison.
- RTR land deal is a joke. Even if in place last year, all 1600 bison would have died.
- Plan is failed: bison aren't roaming; cattle aren't brucellosis free.
- Horse Butte should have bison year around.
- We have been managing bison for > 100 years
- It is not possible to eliminate brucellosis and is a waste of \$ to attempt to do so.
- The nation is watching us and during winter of 88/89 we slaughtered many and lost much tourism \$s.
- Public engagement must happen. Representatives of each group must be at the table. The only way this is going to work is if you take our ideas seriously.
- We need agreement that Partners will adapt if bison going to conflict free areas even if in Zone 3.
- Madison Valley group worked.
- Expression of thanks to the Partners for patience and civility with each other and with the public.
- We are on the precipice of the next big step with the struggling with the birth of a new idea. Birthing pains right now.
- Important that important ideas lie in the heart of the people who love passion.
- Very unfair that ranchers have to kill their whole herd if there is a single animal infected.
- Request that the Fed govt get together with all three states and DOI, USDA, etc.
- Concern that with the fence they will be treating wildlife as if they are in a zoo. They don't call it Fish, Wildlife, and Zoos.
- Encouraged by the discussion of a public process. Consider working backwards. Start with the ideal goal and work backwards from their to the start.

- ID potential obstacles and figure out how to get around.

DECEMBER 18TH

At the end of the day's meetings

- Citizen group? Yes, and needs to include discussions of elk and brucellosis.
- Handout of potential bill to be introduced at Montana legislature.
- Until we can deal with WY feed grounds we can't deal with brucellosis management.
- Would trend toward FACA for public process as a good way to get folks to invest in the process.
- Want to look at our practical solutions document and cross it with the AM plan. Then will come back with opportunities.
 - What I learned from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation meeting: it's an ecosystem issue, holding motion not an option, brucellosis is a trigger—it indicates a problem but is not a problem.
- Much info to become available on genetics and diversity but not until 2011.
- Partners are in Phase II now but should have been there in 2002/03.
- Recognize that this has been a sincere effort.
- Some progress has been made but still a long way to go.
- It is clear that this process has not been about rewriting IBMP but Partners have been placed in a very constrained box—need to question is the box working or does it need to be restructured?
- In 1967 we went away from active bison management and by 1980 we shot the first two bison on private land after large population growth.
- Problem is that it becomes a state problem after the bison leave the park.
- Should round up bison in the park and eliminate the sero+s.
- Need to manage brucellosis in park.
- If cattlemen put up bison proof fence it has impacts on other wildlife, as well.
- We drop 20 miles of fence every winter for wildlife.
- Eradication of brucellosis should be the focus.
- Thanks for the leadership. It is easy to second guess while standing on the sidelines.
- Proceed with caution as we don't have handle on disease.
- Format of the meetings has been open and we have all learned from the process and been able to see how we fit into the puzzle.
- Thanks to the Partners. Continue to implement the IBMP as written in the plan.
- Reminder that state and fed govt have laws they must follow, along with taking the public input.
- Consider what would happen, how you would react if you had disease free bison moving out into diseased cattle.
- This is an issue that won't go away.
- Happy to be involved.
- Bison are wildlife. Issue is about grazing.
- Only ½ page in the AM plan about cattleman responsibility.
- If cattle are ok to vaccinate, why is it ok to vaccinate bison?
- Progress to date relative to \$s spent is laughable.

Parked items

The following item was parked for potential future Partner discussion:

- Formalize revised Zone 2 map on the North Side as developed by Partner staff on a field visit November 20, 2008. This is to be part of next year's AM plan—i.e., moving Zone 2 line to more reasonable on-the-ground conditions.
- NPS want to create a lecture series for public information sharing (regular, reoccurring)

facilitator's draft