

IBMP Briefing Statement

Agency: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Gallatin National Forest
Issue: Available Habitat Expansion Areas
Date: August 11- 12, 2009

Background:

- Currently bison management areas and habitat available to bison are guided by the mapped conservations zones in the IBMP and the 2009 Adaptive Management Plan.
- As a continuation of the adaptive management process, a sub-group of the Technical Committee was asked to look at potential available habitat expansion areas.
- The task assigned to this group was to assess the habitat areas adjacent to Yellowstone National Park that may be available, because of changed conditions, new information or adaptive changes, to bison both spatially and temporally.
- These additional habitat areas could potentially lead to adjustments in the conservation zones originally mapped in the IBMP.
- These additional habitat areas could lead to increased state and treaty hunting opportunities.
- Both short and long terms habitat changes could be evaluated.

Opportunities Available:

- The Maiden Basin area, immediately northwest of the Eagle Creek/Bear Creek year-round bison area, is available as bison habitat year-round.
- A temporal expansion, to May 1 or beyond, of the bison tolerance date in the northern bison management area, Zone 2, could provide additional late winter habitat.
- There is potential for additional habitat, outside the current zone 2 boundary, in the northern bison management area, south of Yankee Jim Canyon and Tom Miner Basin. Tolerance for bulls may be different than mixed groups.
- There is potential year-round habitat for bulls or mixed groups in the western bison management area on Horse Butte and the Flats east of the South Fork of the Madison.
- A temporal expansion, to May 31 or beyond, of the bison tolerance date in the western bison management area, Zone 2, could provide additional late winter habitat.
- Year-round bull habitat to the north of Duck Creek (south of Highway 287 and east of Highway 191) or (south of Grayling Creek) is potentially available.

Discussion:

- Biological and operational feasibility of the opportunities
- Technical aspects of implementation, including updates to the Adaptive Management Plan
- Potential implications for state or tribal hunting
- Timing and prioritization of actions

Contacts: Tom Lemke, Montana FWP, tomlemke@mt.gov, (406)
Julie Cunningham, Montana FWP, juliecunningham@mt.gov, (406)994-6341
Lisa Stoeffler, Gallatin National Forest, lstoefler@fs.fed.us, (406)587-6705