
Agency: Gallatin National Forest, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Yellowstone National Park, Montana Department of Livestock, USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service
Issue: Citizens' Working Group Concept Paper
Date: August 11, 2009

Background:

- Prior to 2008, two open houses were held by the IBMP Partners for discussion with the public.
- In 2008, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended in their Final Report GAO-08-291, that the agencies work to “enhance interagency collaboration, promote transparency, and strengthen the agencies’ accountability to the American public.” In 2008, the IBMP Partners and the public identified a need to involve people in the bison management discussion in a different way. With the help of U.S Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution agency representatives and people involved in bison management began researching and discussing options for a public engagement strategy.
- In April 2009, the IBMP Partners heard from members of the public that they were interested and willing to participate in an inclusive working group of some type. The public also expressed their desire for a) a process where people could self appoint themselves to a working group rather than being chosen by the agencies, and b) a process with clear and concise goals, expectations, and timeframes.
- Since April 2009, the IBMP Partners, again with assistance from U.S Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, have developed a Citizens’ Working Group concept to help further this discussion and solicit additional public input and feedback.

The Concept:

- The Citizens’ Working Group could be chartered by the State of Montana. Such a charter would allow a flexible, inclusive, and open public process without the rigid structures required from a federally designated committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). (*Important:* This Citizens’ Working Group is conceptual; it is *not* currently approved nor chartered by the State or through FACA.)
- Working within the scope of the two goals of the IBMP, the desired outcomes from the Citizens’ Working Group would be the generation of new, good ideas; building consensus and community from shared solutions; development of realistic, attainable solutions to inform and make recommendations to the State of Montana for adaptive management process for 2011-2012, with a final product completed by the spring/summer of 2011.
- Membership would be open to all citizens having an interest but may be limited to about 20 people. It would follow an open nomination process and consultation with the stakeholder groups. Efforts would potentially be required to ensure that the working group as a whole is balanced, diverse, and comprised of stakeholders with a demonstrated interest in the IBMP.

- The working group, working with a facilitator, would make decisions about meeting procedures, standards of conduct, and their decision-making process.
 - The working group would be asked to develop and implement a process to communicate its deliberations to the public. Individual members serving as representatives of established constituencies would be expected to serve as the communication link with the stakeholders they represent, including keeping their constituency's informed about the working group's deliberations and actively seeking their constituency's input.
 - Working group meetings would be open and public notice of each meeting would be provided.
 - Funding for meeting facilitation and other needs would be provided by the IBMP agencies.
 - The IBMP Partners would ask the working group to inform and provide recommendations towards the development of the 2010-2011 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan. The IBMP Partners would also determine if the group had additional roles beyond 2010-2011.
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