

RTR IMPLEMENTATION CHECK LIST

FWP

11/23/09

- ◆ Fences and Infrastructure
 - Fence tested (electric) prior to bison arrival. Second and top wire are electrified. Fence inspected prior to bison arrival.
 - Fence dropped or partially dropped **when not in use**.
 - Warning signs included.
 - Fence Monitored throughout the season for vandalism and working order.

- ◆ RTR Communication Strategy
 - Develop call list for RTR response.
 - Meet with RTR representative to go over the list individual agency responsibilities. Property damage and public safety list is FWP
 - Jim Miller (406) 223-3918
 - Joe Knarr (406) 994-7019, (406) 581-4277
 - Sam Sheppard (406) 994-3540, (406) 581-2462
 - IBMP hazing management list DOL
 - Jeff Mount
 - Rob Tierney
 - Mark Anderson
 - Shane Grube

- ◆ Law Enforcement meet with Park County, MHP
 - Staff meeting to discuss civil disruption procedures.
 - Follow protocol set up on the West Yellowstone side.
 - Meet with Park County Sheriff's Office, Park County Attorney, Montana Highway Patrol, YNP, USFS, and FWP, Gallatin
 - mid December meeting (Rob Tierney will organize this meeting)

- ◆ Stephen's Creek Trap Operational
 - Stephen's Creek will be the capture facility for RTR implementation

◆ Herd Component

- No adult bulls. Adult female with or without calves/yearlings at heel or young bulls. All attempts will be made to keep mothers with calves. Yearlings will be allowed in cow/calf pairs .
- Young bull is defined as a bull bison that is two years of age or less
- Young bull is defined as a bull bison that is three years of age or less with an emphasis on social cohort make up.

◆ Collared, Vaginal Implants

- All adult females and young bull bison released into RTR will need to be collared. Calves and yearlings will be fitted with an electronic ear tag. These will be purchased by DOL along with a reader.
- All bison will be returned to Stephen's Creek in the spring for testing and collar removal.
- Collars at FWP are black with with a white background different tape color combinations to delineate frequencies.
- All bison will be fitted with a brown metal ear tag provided by YNP to track success and sero-conversion over time.
- Most Collars are radio collars.
- YNP has roughly 6 GPS collars that will be used to track and collect movement information.
- Photo's of collars for field staff, identification purposes.
- Vaginal implants are on hand (USDA APHIS). Vaginal implants will be placed in all pregnant females.
- Vaginal implants will be removed at Stephen's Creek prior to return to YNP.

◆ Release Strategies

- Preference would be to have a large enough group to require only one Stephen's Creek capture operation to create the RTR cohort.
 - Dependent upon real time conditions around Stephen's Creek Trap.
 - How many bison make up the test group in Stephen's Creek.
 - Are there more bison on hand or migrating to the area also.
 - All available options for movement and strategic hazing will be utilized as necessary for a safe and successful transition from Stephen's Creek to Cutler Meadows.
 - **Scenario #1:** (Preferred strategy YNP) Soft release with limited additional push. Cohort open gates soft release with a directional haze component . Walk them through the boundary into the RTR and let them go. Monitor movement through transition area to Cuttler Meadows. Desired outcome is bison transition from the bottom, up the slope, to meadows use area.
 - Patrol YNP boundary behind test cohort to ensure no backside comingling.

- **Scenario #2:** Soft release with passable directional hazing north past the transition zone past Cinnebar basin road in RTR and let them go or walk them up into the meadows use area. (DOL preferred alternative).
 - **Scenario #3:** Truck cohort from Stephen's Creek through transition area to northern use area. This option would eliminate some of the concerns with scent trailing of other bison to the project area. Technical Committee fully understands the downside to this option. Down side of trucking is that there are implications for trucking bison to resolve other management conflicts. Trucking bison back in to the park does not resolve problems of managing boundary area abundance and may exacerbate the issues of protecting migratory behavior while preventing dispersal to areas outside of the conservation area. Any trucking option should be considered a last resort measure.
 - Do not want them to camp out on the country road in the corridor. The lane effect of the fencing makes this a reality; especially since highly productive habitat patches are excluded from use by bison along the path they must travel to find Cutler Meadow.
 - Do not want them to linger or reside for long periods in the transition corridor or near RTR headquarters. Exclusion fences on all private property (Judy Jensen) need to be addressed in all hazing/release scenario's.
 - Partners will contact and address horse security needs on Jensen property prior to release operations.
 - Ultimate release scenario and strategy will be dependant upon current conditions relating to numbers and proximity of bison in and around the Gardiner Basin.
- ◆ **Monitoring**
 - ◆ Goal is to have two firm count sightings a week on these animals by DOL, with the caveat of requesting assistance if we can't get it done. A plane count of the animals would meet these expectations. Twice a week is a benchmark or a goal. Also, by monitoring Zone 3 as a measure of success.
 - All agencies have committed to assist with monitoring. Need confirmation to what extent and resources are available from other agencies to assist with telemetry and monitoring. DOL will make the request to YNP for help and assistance in monitoring.
 - Daily monitoring during the season, page 26 of agreement.
 - Adaptive monitoring strategy, based on location and field circumstances.
 - Partners have committed to utilize available wildlife flight monitoring in the Gardiner area to assist with bison monitoring.
 - Suggestion has been made to have a central record-keeping repository for daily observation reports. There was some discussion that it might be possible to utilize DOL fax number as a central point. (406) 444-1929.
 - Each agency will be responsible for getting the information to the DOL repository. (Potential of using YNP com center for part of it).
 - The Partners will create a written form that works for all monitoring needs.
Brian Helms, Jim Miller, Jeff Mount
 - D.O.L has the option of putting up a plane to address concerns of not knowing location of all or a portion of the cohort at any given time as necessary.

◆ Breach Protocol

- All partners notified. Whatever agency is first to know will immediately notify all primary partners. Partners have a call out list associated with the monitoring. Any river breach public/personnel safety is the priority. . Private landowner contacts need to have been made prior to season to get advanced hazing permission.
- The preferred course action would be to return the RTR Cohort to Zone 2; there may instances and circumstances that dictate other management actions. If circumstances allow bison may be hazed back to Zone 1 or Zone 2. The management actions may include lethal removal and are ultimately at the discretion of the Montana State Veterinarian.
- Establish trigger points that would result in intensive monitoring and discussion/actions related to management actions. Prior to a potential breach event, strategic - hazing may be initiated depending on bison behavior.

◆ Loss of Test Animals

- Loss of a few animals in the cohort. Suggestion is that we move forward with the project without adding more animals. (IBMP Partners will address decisions on study group). This will depend upon the numbers lost.
- Catastrophic loss of the cohort. In case of major breaches, lethal removal, accident or return to other areas such as YNP or Eagle Creek area. (IBMP Partners will address decisions on study group).

◆ Spring Return to YNP by a target date of April 15.

- Utilize strategic soft hazing to move bison south through the corridor to Stephen's Creek facility for removal of collars, tags, implants and further testing. Release back into YNP.

◆ Public Safety and Property Damage

- FWP is the lead agency on matters related to Public Safety and Property Damage.
 - FWP will provide a list of emergency contact phone numbers to the RTR and Park County Sheriff's Office to address public safety and property damage concerns.

◆ Birthing Material Protocol

- In the case of a birth or abortion event, first to know will contact USDA APHIS.
- USDA APHIS will attempt to collect samples from event site.

◆ Lethal Removal Protocol

- Lethal removal will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IBMP.
- Lethal removal will be avoided on the RTR private lands if at all possible.
- All attempts will be made to salvage the bison, which have been lethally removed.

Questions: Where is the power source for turn off located. There are three separate power sources fence. Locations will be provided.

What is the definition of a young bull as it pertains to the make-up of the RTR cohort?

- Young bull is defined as a bull bison that is two years of age or less
 - OR
- Young bull is defined as a bull bison that is three years of age or less with an emphasis on social cohort make up.

What and where is the primary use area outlined in the agreement?

- Do not want them to linger or reside for long periods in the transition corridor or near RTR headquarters. The primary use area is the Northern end at Cutler Meadows. The other areas are considered transition areas.
- Will FWP be conducting flight surveys during the winter of 2009 –2010 in the Gardiner area? Yes, FWP will be conducting their normal flights and will assist during those flights with bison monitoring.

Need to clarify what the daily observation reports will actually be used for once forwarded to DOL. Rob indicated he does not need the information beyond being notified of potential breach situations. If this is the case does it make sense to keep a repository of this information?

What/where are the trigger points on the RTR that would initiate management actions?

- Establish trigger points that would result in intensive monitoring and discussion/actions related to management actions. Prior to a potential breach event, strategic hazing may be initiated depending on bison behavior.

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