

# Summary Report from Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting August 30, 2012



**Presented 20 Sep 2012 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke**

The following summary report reflects activities at the 30 August 2012 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held at the Holiday Inn in West Yellowstone MT. This report comes from the notes and flip chart records of facilitator Scott Bischke<sup>1</sup>. The report will be marked “Facilitator’s Draft” until formal Partner agreement at the start of their next meeting. The nine Partner attendees were Don Herriott (APHIS), Ron Trahan (CSKT), Earvin Carlson (ITBC), Christian Mackay (MBOL), Marty Zaluski (MDOL), Pat Flowers (MFWP), McCoy Oatman (NP), Dave Hallac (NPS-YNP), and Cavan Fitzsimmons (USFS-GNF). In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~20 staff members from across IBMP organizations and ~20 members of the public were present. Scanned attendance sheets are available from the facilitator.

<b>Action Items Identified .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Agreeing to Previous Meeting Minutes.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Field Trip to the Taylor Fork (Aug 29<sup>th</sup>).....</b>	<b>3</b>
On the Ground.....	3
Meeting with Landowners.....	5
<b>State MEPA Process for Addition of New Lands Open to Bison (Aug 30<sup>th</sup>).....</b>	<b>9</b>
Scoping Meetings for EA.....	9
Debrief of Aug 29 <sup>th</sup> Field Trip to the Taylor Fork .....	9
<b>Summary of Recent Genetics Work and NPS Response.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>*Draft* YNP Bison Management Plan &amp; IBMP Operations Plan, Winter 2013.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Draft Management Plan .....	12
Hunting as a Management Tool .....	13
<b>Status of draft EIS for Remote Vaccination .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Update on Transferring Bison to Native American Tribes.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Update on matrix for CWG recommendations.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Update on Efforts on Developing &amp; Implementing a Factual Education Program about Bison .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Education Program .....	16
Question of CWG Staying Power .....	16
<b>Partner Protocols.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Partner Briefings and Updates .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Action item / Parked Item list .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Public Comment .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>22</b>

<sup>1</sup> MountainWorks Inc.; scott@eMountainWorks.com

## Action Items Identified

**Table 1.—Action items identified during this meeting**

#	Who	What	By when
1	Tom McDonald McCoy Oatman	Can tribes talk about meeting the NPS request for greater hunting focus on the North Side and on harvest of females from the Northern Herd? The concepts could be brought to the Tribal Council for decision. TM said that he would get back to the Partners with this decision by Sep 30; MO said the NP would take the same approach and he would get back to the Partners with their decision in October.	Sep 30 (CSKT) October? (NP)
2	Pat Flowers	In response to the question of if it would be possible to do late season damage hunts, PF said that he would raise with the Director's office and get back to the Partners.	By next IBMP meeting (Nov)
3	PJ White All Partners	PJ committed to having the Draft 2013 IBMP Operations Plan sent out to the Partners by Sep 15. The Partners set a date of Oct 1 for returning their comments to PJ. He will then turn around the revised version to the Partners by Oct 15. Partners, per issues revealed by that time, agree to meet in teleconference or in person in Bozeman to resolve issues. Planned signing at the Nov IBMP meeting.	As shown
4	Scott Bischke	Track and act as final repository for 2x North Side AM documents. Post to <a href="http://ibmp.info">ibmp.info</a> per the draft Partner Protocol under development.	ASAP
5	Mike Lopez, John Harrison, Majel Russell	Tribal attorneys make a presentation at the next Partner meeting regarding the historical context and tribal treaty rights dealing with hunting in YNP (**action item 1)	For next IBMP meeting (Nov)
6	Dave Hallac Dan Wenk	Re action item 1: NPS respond with a discussion of pros and cons of hunting in the Park (** action item 5). DaveH agreed to ask DW to respond in a follow-up message before the next meeting before they took on action item 5.	Before and at next IBMP meeting (Nov)
7	Mike Lopez John Harrison Andrea Jones	MO volunteered the NP (specifically ML) to help with treaty rights information; JH offered on behalf of the CSKT to help	ASAP
8	Jim Stone Andrea Jones	JS volunteered to share an ITBC brochure already produced on brucellosis. Jim will send to AJ.	ASAP
9	Matt Skoglund	Matt offered to send an email to the CWG mailing list to ask for participation in the bison outreach and education program.	ASAP
10	Scott Bischke Partners	Partners assigned SB to create ver3 of the Partner Protocols per the discussion of this meeting, and send them out for Partner review before the next IBMP meeting. Partners have until Oct 1 to review and edit the document and return to SB.	By Sep 5 send out, Partner responses by Oct 1
11	Pat Flowers	(Carryover) Keith Aune about potential to use dogs (or something else?) to work with bison.	Report at Nov IBMP meeting
12	Scott Bischke	Contact Jennifer Madgic of Senator Tester's office to get a copy of the response letter—and post on <a href="http://ibmp.info">ibmp.info</a> if OK'd by the Senator's office—from CDC on removing <i>Brucella abortus</i> from the select agent list.	By Nov IBMP meeting

## Agreeing to Previous Meeting Minutes

---

The facilitator asked if there were any objections or changes to the meeting minutes from the May 2012 IBMP meeting. No objections were put forth. Thus the meeting minutes from the May 2012 IBMP meeting are considered final and may be posted as such to IBMP.info.

## Field Trip to the Taylor Fork (Aug 29<sup>th</sup>)

---

On August 29<sup>th</sup>, a day prior to the regular IBMP meeting, the Partners scheduled a field trip into the Taylor Fork drainage with two purposes: (1) to see on-the-ground a portion of the area being considered for increased tolerance on the NW corner of YELL; and (2) to meet with landowners to discuss with them their thoughts on increasing bison tolerance into landscapes that include their properties. Both portions of the field trip, which was led by Julie Cunningham of MFWP and Cavan Fitzsimmons of USFS-GNF, were open to the public to observe and take part in.

### ON THE GROUND

After meeting at the Sage Creek Trailhead, the assembled group car-pooled up Deadhorse Road to a viewpoint overlooking potential bison habitat in the Albino Basin (Figure 1). Julie and Cavan provided a look over the landscape, pointing out locations of public and private land, the boundaries of the proposed increased tolerance zone (Figure 2), areas of potential summer and winter forage, possible migration pathways, areas of current recreation (motorized summer and winter, hunting, hiking), and so on. After this overview, the discussion was open to any and all in attendance. For the most part, the audience for the field trip was Partners, staff, and general public. Landowners mostly attended the afternoon session, described below. Following are some of the key questions asked and points put forward during the discussion, lumped into common categories.



Figure 1.—Partners, staff, land owners, and members of the public take part in a field trip to the Taylor Fork Basin.

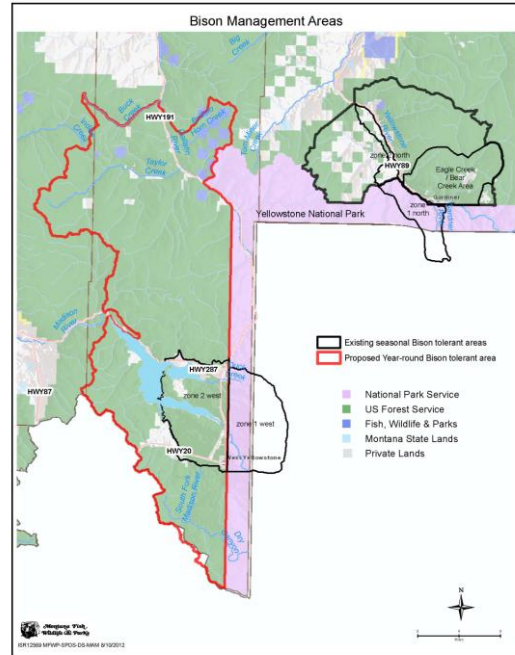
### Summary of Comments from the Public and Agency Representatives

#### Livestock, bison, & forage

- (1) This area is much like Specimen Ridge and the Lamar Valley in YELL.
- (2) While the Taylor Fork uplands may seem dry, there are plenty of wet areas with sedges around Albino Lake & enough moisture in the draws to support green forage through the summer.
- (3) This is a valuable area for using adaptive management to see how the bison use the area and through that experiment determine if it is sustainable bison habitat. It is encouraging that we have an AM plan.
- (4) Concern that in the winter a giant haystack will look good to a hungry bison. No previous issues with elk and eating at the haystack.
- (5) No cattle are kept in the Taylor Fork valley.
- (6) Status of grazing allotments? All cow grazing allotments are now vacant. Much fence has been rolled up.
- (7) In the original IBMP, bison were not allowed in the Taylor Fork due to active cattle grazing allotments. That is not the case anymore, hence the relook at this area for bison tolerance.

**Public & property safety**

- (8) We had a lone bison in the Taylor Fork during the winter of 1996/97. It gored a horse and tried to eat our haystack. When it was killed, it had pine needles in its rumen contents.
- (9) We have bison in and around Gardner and they have caused few if any safety issues. Not on my land. A proactive education program is a key for successful interaction with bison.
- (10) People drive 70 mph on highway 191, even inside YELL. People do not think of bison on the road, inside or outside of YELL. Can we set lower speed limits? Speed limits determined by MT Department of Transportation who Partners have a good relationship with.
- (11) There is so much more land to manage with the proposed increased tolerance area. How will we manage the bison? Will it be left to the landowners? Answer—No not right to put the burden on the landowner. We will have to plan for the \$s and people resources.



**Figure 2.—Current seasonal area of bison tolerance (black line) and potential future year-round area of bison tolerance (red line).**

**Hunting**

- (12) Increased tolerance outside YELL makes hunting a viable management tool.
- (13) My tribe traveled here since seven generations back under Chief Looking Glass. Our ancestors met Lewis and Clark. This looks like a beautiful area that could help alleviate the pressure in YELL. I can clearly see my tribal members here hunting. It would mean a great deal to my people.

**Non-hunting recreation**

- (14) Concern that bison may be a safety hazard to motorized recreationalists. Concern of possible range closures (meaning trail closures).
- (15) Bison will likely follow snowmobile routes, even if not groomed. Potentially up from Red Canyon.

**Bison migration to/from, use of the area**

- (16) How quick will bison come to this area? If allowed to occur naturally, it could take decades. Bulls would be most likely to come first. Also we could bring them via trucking from Hebgen basin, though would lose the advantage of bison knowing how to move back and forth from YELL to this area. Also, quarantined bison could be brought here.
- (17) How will they get to upper Taylor Fork? Many possibilities: Red Canyon, up highway 191, over Fawn and/or Bighorn passes. If they come on their own, expectation is that they would be far more likely to return to, for example, Hayden Valley to rut than if they were trucked here and dropped.
- (18) In 2011, ~1600 bison migrated out of YELL.

- (19) We need to avoid relying on experts to guess what will happen and instead focus on the best mechanism to work with landowners so we can learn as we go.
- (20) Yes, MFWP already met with landowners in April 2012 and agrees with that point.
- (21) This is an issue of over population of bison associated with not enough habitat in Yellowstone. Should they even be in the Taylor Fork? Answer: Our tribal oral history says that the bison have always been here. At one point there were 60 million bison in the USA.
- (22) Bison are extremely adaptable. If allowed they would move up through to the Madison to Ennis and be perfectly happy.

**Other**

- (23) Increased tolerance meets one of the CWG recommendations.
- (24) Thought that elk #s are way down in this area due to increase of predators. Poor recruitment over recent years.
- (25) Taylor Fork road has been improved leading to more traffic and also more weeds.
- (26) Management will largely fall on MFWP due to the intersection of wildlife and safety issues. Ultimately, the state legislature controls funding and thus the possible people and resources that will be available to work in the Taylor Fork.

**MEETING WITH LANDOWNERS**

Following a picnic lunch, the group was invited to the Nine Quarter Circle Ranch for an afternoon meeting with landowners planned as an open discussion regarding the possibility of expanded bison tolerance in and outside the NW corner of YELL, including the Taylor Fork. While some landowners had been on the morning tour, a considerably greater number arrived for the discussion, including representatives from the Black Butte Ranch, Nine Quarter Circle Ranch, Elkhorn Ranch, 320 Ranch, and others. The meeting was held in the inside shade of the Nine Quarter Circle Ranch dining hall where staff from the Ranch provided cookies, coffee, and cold drinks. All present expressed their gratitude to Kim and Kameron Kelsey and their staff for their hospitality!



(a)



(b)

**Figure 3—(a) Kameron Kelsey (black cowboy hat) of the Nine Quarter Circle Ranch addresses field trip attendees. (b) Partners, staff, land owners, and members of the public meet for open discussion at the Nine Quarter Circle Ranch to consider potential expanded bison tolerance outside the NW corner of YELL, including the Taylor Fork.**

While the meeting was open to everyone in the room to participate, the facilitator made three requests: (a) that the group engage in open, honest, and respectful discussion; (b) that folks realize this was not a place to jump on a soap box, but instead a place to exchange information; and (c) that the group focus most strongly on the landowners and their questions. In a number of instances issues brought forth mirrored those during the morning tour, in part because many of the landowners did not take part in that tour.

Current Lead Partner Pat Flowers provided opening remarks to set the stage: about the IBMP and its makeup and purpose; about how the Taylor Fork fit into the original ROD and what had changed since then; about recent events in YELL bison (population increase, quarantine efforts, winters of much or little out migration, and so on); about the desire to increase the use of hunting as a management tool; about the Citizens' Working Group recommendations, including for increased bison tolerance outside YELL, including into the Taylor Fork; about the current EA looking at expanding that tolerance; and more. Pat noted that there were surely more details not worked out about the potential expanded tolerance than worked out. The Partners were here, he said, to listen to the landowners and provide them any answers currently available, recognizing that those answers, as of today, would often be, "We just don't know yet." He did answer, preemptively, the question of "Why bison in the Taylor Fork now?" citing a minimum of four events or changes since Partner signing of the ROD:

- the CWG recommendation for increased tolerance;
- the change that there are no longer any active USFS grazing allotments in the area;
- the addition of hunting to the management tool set; and
- the change in APHIS rules making the Yellowstone area a Designated Surveillance Zone

Everyone in the room introduced themselves, and then the group moved into ~3 hours of open, lightly moderated discussion. Following are some of the key questions asked and points put forward, again lumped into common categories.

### **Summary of Comments from the Public and Agency Representatives**

#### **Livestock, bison, & forage**

(27) I wonder if bison could over winter in the Taylor Fork—is there sufficient forage?

(28) Is it true that there are no cattle in this area? Yes.

(29) Most ranchers overwinter away from the Taylor Fork. Only Pattens and Kelseys retain livestock (horses), which they feed on hay, not forage. A key concern is whether the bison are year-round or migrate since there is no winter forage here. Counterpoint—in years past 100s of elk wintered in this valley so there must be some forage.

(30) Does the Park have experience with bison being in with grazing horses? Response—(a) No not in YELL but they do co-exist in Theodore Roosevelt National Park; (b) The National Bison Refuge moves bison with horses all the time—there the incidence of bison/horse conflict is extremely rare; (c) MDOL does report some bison/horse issues, especially during tough winters when bison are struggling to find food; (d) in Grand Teton National Park they have lots of private land and horse wrangling—we could poll them with respect to interactions with bison (and elk, bears, wolves).

(31) Would property owners have to gather their horses daily to ensure they don't mix with bison overnight?

#### **Public & property safety**

(32) We would like to see a management plan that describes do's and don'ts, as well as who is responsible for what. Likewise, we want to see a specific proposal for the Taylor Fork.

(33) Concern about the possibility of bison rubbing against cabins or scaring/approaching people and kids.

(34) We are concerned about fence damage.

(35) I don't want bison to come out of the upper Taylor Fork and drop over into the Madison drainage, particularly through where we live in the Lightning Creek drainage. What would happen if they went into the Madison? Answer—My opinion is that we would lethally remove them.

(36) A big issue, perhaps the biggest issue, is what are the #s of bison we are expecting to come north out of the Heben Basin? One hundred bison intermingling with our horses would be bad. That said, we do need to put our heads together to create a workable solution because ship and slaughter is just not acceptable.

- (37) For the landowners, what do you think might be an appropriate starting number of bison to come north out of YELL? Response--(a) the bigger the group the bigger the concern; (b) we can't allow 500 right away, even if a migration that large started right away, which is unlikely; (c) 20 to 30 might be good; (d) depends on if they stay clumped or spread out; (e) suggest we start small, not 500—could we radio collar them so we can observe what they are doing?
- (38) For the landowners, is there anyone who has the answer to what is an appropriate # of bison to start with? Answer—no landowners think it should be zero. Several statements again that bison numbers allowed north of the Hebgen Basin should start small and increase incrementally so that we can learn as we go. One landowner comment—we are running a business and trying to protect those concerns, but I don't think any of us are against bison.
- (39) We turn horses out at night. We want to ensure our wranglers' safety when they bring the horse back in the morning. We should start with 5 or 10 bison. It is important for us to know that it could go back to 0 if things don't work out.
- (40) In 1997, there was a single bison up the Taylor Fork that could not be hazed. It gored our horse, ripped it open.
- (41) Will landowners have a right-to-shoot option for trouble making bison? If not, what is our recourse when problem arises? Who do we call? Response—We don't know at this time with respect to the right-to-shoot question. MFWP will be responsive to safety issues and property damage. MDOL will respond to livestock issues. We will get you the right person to address your needs. We will give you our cell phone and office phone #s and you will be able to call us 24/7, just like they can in the Gardner Basin. What would the typical response time be? Answer—As rapidly as possible.
- (42) MFWP can provide some help with game damage, up to limits set by the F&W Commission. For example, we already help folks in the Madison with elk damage. Is the help with dollars or manpower because we are often short of manpower? The help is with \$s, not manpower. Up to \$2000 in the Madison Valley. The program is reactive, not proactive. In some cases NGOs have led proactive wildlife programs. Bill Hoppe in the Gardiner Basin has shown that a 5-foot visual barrier can be quite helpful.
- (43) In the past, NGOs have sometimes provided manpower help. Landowner—yes but aren't those for residential fences, not livestock fences miles long? NGO response—yes usually smaller lengths. One program provides 50% of costs up to \$1000. The CWG does not want to see bison up against people's houses. At NRDC we think this is a great opportunity and we want to help following an adaptive management approach.
- (44) Bison damage mitigation will likely be different than elk and require F&W Commission input.
- (45) What if the bison come down highway 191? Will you push them up Beaver Creek, Red Canyon, or similar? Answer—we already deal with that issue. We try to get them to places where they are not a risk to public or property safety. If they park on the highway, we would have to move them.
- (46) If bison take out fencing and some horses got out and a driver was killed, say on highway 191, who would be liable? Answer—Partners work with MDOT and have an excellent working relationship. We could talk with MDOT about reducing speed limit in this area (landowner request—while you are doing that, can you ask them to get semis off of highway 191, as well?).

### Hunting

- (47) MFWP has a goal of managing bison with hunting like other wildlife. The most recent State hunt started in 2005; the tribal hunt in 2007.
- (48) Will hunting impact potential of bison/human interaction? Expectation is that once hunted, bison will try to avoid people (example given of a hunted herd in Canada).
- (49) Am I correct that there would be no hunting until a sustainable population was established in the Taylor Fork? Answer—No that decision has not been made. We don't know what a sustainable population would be at this point. But also, we are hunting on the North Side of YELL already,

without having a sustainable population outside the Park, so it can be done. Most likely hunting would be instituted in a step-wise process, starting small.

- (50) Will added bison drive elk out of the area? No, this is not expected; they co-exist on the same range in YELL. Also, #s of bison to start are expected to be small.

#### **Non-hunting recreation**

- (51) Trail rides in YELL are led by contractors. Anecdotally, at least, they run year after year with no bison/horse/trail rider safety issues. Additionally, clients greatly enjoy seeing bison in the wild.
- (52) Example given of huge bull (3000 #) in Custer State Park SD that became a big tourist attraction.
- (53) Landowner concern—what if a bunch of people come up the Taylor Fork to see the bison causing traffic issues and litter, etc? Answer—the response agencies will be the same as today, MWFP and GNF.

#### **Bison migration to/from, use of the area**

- (54) There is no plan or understanding, only educated guesses, about how the bison will use the landscape while getting to or once in the Taylor Fork.
- (55) In response to a direct question, no landowner present expressed support of trucking bison as a way to get them into the Taylor Fork.
- (56) Highway 191 was a migration corridor in the 1990s—5 bison came north one year, 2 another year. We are the first ones they see coming out of YELL. Safety is #1 concern, fencing #2. But I am an ecologist and believe in natural migration. We simply have to take on such challenges if we are going to allow natural migration patterns. So we are keenly interested in what migration route they will take.
- (57) Timing and seasonality are key. Is the hope that a portion of the YELL herd will establish itself outside the Park and not migrate back? Has anyone yet considered seasonal migration patterns? Answer—yes that will be an important part of our analysis under the EA.
- (58) What stops bison from moving on beyond the Taylor Fork to the Madison, or further north up the Gallatin River toward Porcupine Creek, Big Sky, etc beyond the area suggested for expanded tolerance? Answer—Partners would use same tools as in the Gardner Basin, including haze back and lethal removal.
- (59) Why aren't we talking about Upper Gallatin, Specimen, Daly Creeks as locations for bison? Why only here in the Taylor Fork? Answer—our goal is to allow bison to go where they want, when they want within the confines of the IBMP. To date, we haven't had discussions about bison coming over Fawn Pass, Bighorn Pass, etc. Response—I am not for forcing bison to move into any of these areas, but they should be included in the list of possible places bison will end up.
- (60) Currently we haze them back before they come up 191 out of the Hebgen Basin. One possibility is that we move incrementally. Perhaps we let 10 bison go through the first year but haze the rest back. Landowner—why not do an experiment in YELL where we push them up Teepee Creek or similar?

#### **Other**

- (61) Gardner Basin landowner—We have bison every year. Not once have they rubbed up against the cabin or caused problems. They are looking for grass, plain and simple. Tourism is our largest business. The bison are our treasures and bring revenue into the state. I have to turn down people that want to stay with me, and they are coming largely to see bison.
- (62) We all need to recognize this is a big experiment; it could be a disaster or a great success.
- (63) What is the status of the EA for this expanded tolerance area? Answer—Scoping is complete. The next step is the draft EA.
- (64) There is lots of public land here. I want my concerns as a member of the public addressed, too.
- (65) Is this a method to grow the population of bison in YELL? No, we do not envision this change as a way to change the IBMP target number of bison in YELL (3000). The increased tolerance up the Taylor Fork is an experiment. If successful, it will be added to the toolset (includes hunting,



- quarantine, hazing, etc) that we have for successful bison management. In this case, the tool is increasing the habitat available to the bison.
- (66) Is the EA part of the statewide bison management plan? No, this is a separate issue as the Taylor Fork was addressed as part of the original ROD.
- (67) Gardiner landowner—“What are the landowners rights? Folks in the Taylor Fork need to know that MDOL can just come on their property anytime.” Answer—there is a big difference in the Taylor Fork; that can’t happen as there are no livestock here. MDOL is allowed to do that because of livestock disease control. With no livestock, there is no disease concern and hence MDOL does not have that ability.
- (68) MFWP—we understand that far in the future people forget what was promised. What MFWP can do is put in the EA that this is not intending to increase the carrying capacity of Yellowstone bison.
- (69) In summation: (1) Landowner—We need to know that any change such as being proposed needs to be adaptable to the end. (2) MFWP—We have months of analysis ahead of us. Please feel free to call the state people at any time. Thank you for your time and willingness to share your thoughts and concerns. It doesn’t end today. This is the beginning of a conversation.

## **State MEPA Process for Addition of New Lands Open to Bison (Aug 30<sup>th</sup>)**

---

### **SCOPING MEETINGS FOR EA**

PF provided an update on the current MEPA process for adding new areas of tolerance for bison outside the northwest boundary of YELL (Figure 2). Public scoping meetings were held recently in West Yellowstone (8/20) and Gardner (8/21). These worked well as ways to collect input from the public. MFWP collected as many comments as possible from the roughly 45-50 people that showed up at each meeting. Their comments are already compiled and available at <http://fwp.mt.gov/fwpDoc.html?id=56896>.

PF stated that the timeline for the EA included: (a) draft scoping document to be available around the end of October; (b) 30-day review period; (c) decision likely in December 2012.

### **DEBRIEF OF AUG 29<sup>TH</sup> FIELD TRIP TO THE TAYLOR FORK**

The Partners shared their thoughts on the previous day’s trip to visit the Taylor Fork to both see some of the land under consideration for increased tolerance and hear landowners’ thoughts on the EA. A summary of the Partner comments about the day follows:

- It was important, as always, to get out on the ground and see what we are really talking about. You can’t get the same information or feel for the situation sitting in a conference room.
- Great to meet and talk with landowners, even when we had to tell them we didn’t know the answer to some of their questions. Also great for the public to be able to have that same opportunity.
- It is useful to pull up Google Earth and look at pathways where bison might naturally migrate through (the group did this [Figure 4] and reviewed a number of possible pathways, including Highway 191 along the NW corner of YELL and from there into the Taylor Fork).
  - There is no documentation of how bison in the 1990s made it up into the Taylor Fork. The obvious routes include Highway 191, or via Red Canyon, Bighorn Pass, Fawn Pass, Grayling Creek, Duck Creek, Upper Gallatin River.
  - There is precedence for bison migrating out of Hayden Valley and over high elevation country.
  - It was interesting to consider Specimen Creek and Big Horn Pass areas. Both are known to have had bison historically. Mary Meagher (NPS) wrote a report describing historical bison range in and around the GYE based on, for example, unearthed skulls. RW expects that historically bison were all through the area, including in the Madison valley, focusing in on big open valleys but also pioneering the high elevations.
  - The easiest pathway appears right up Highway 191. Agreed, but there are many possibilities—what if bison get up to the cemetery exiting the Hebgen Basin, and we just let some of them keep on going?

## Final

- CM—Once they move up Highway 191 or however they get there, could we encourage them to use Specimen Creek or other YELL basins without going outside the Park? RW—this corner of the Park has a historic corridor of bison moving out to the Taylor Fork. If bison find these corridors, yes I would expect them to find pathways into Specimen and Big Horn. And note that the amount of habitat up Big Horn is greater than Specimen or the Taylor Fork.
- Google Earth shows that the lowest route out of the Taylor Fork to the Madison Basin is via Shedhorn to Indian Creek.
- Being on the ground, seeing the suitable habitat, reaffirmed the importance of this place. I could readily envision my tribal members hunting there.

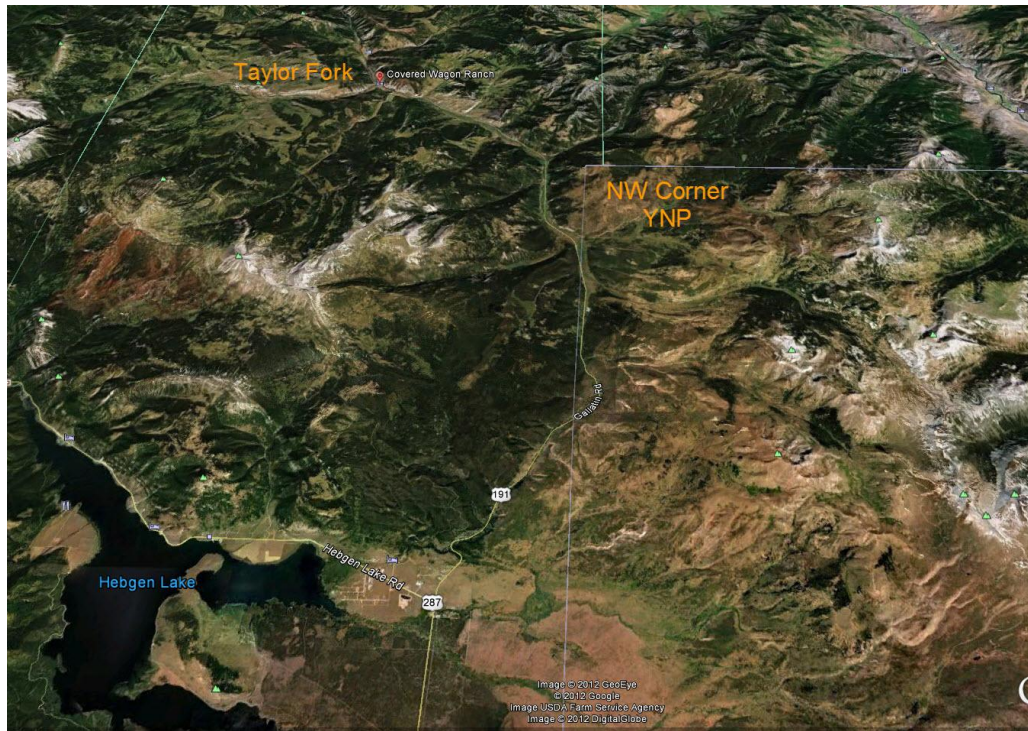


Figure 4—Google Earth image showing the relationship of the Hebgen Basin, the NW Corner of Yellowstone National Park, and the Taylor Fork drainage.

- Great to see so many people on the field trip. That really shows the interest in this topic.
- I learned much that was informative and have three big questions: (a) Is this year-round habitat; is there really suitable winter forage? (b) How will bison get there and once there, how will they utilize the area? (c) How will the landowners interact with the bison?
- Happy that the Partners are working toward year-round habitat. It was great to be out on the ground. I have a concern about how bison will get to the Taylor Fork.
- Excellent visit. I appreciated the pre-work. Shocked in a positive way about the number of landowners and how open they were to discussion. I appreciated what I learned from them. I think this situation is ripe for collaboration. I think it is clear that we should start small and move incrementally. There will be many challenges and new responsibilities.
- Great thanks to the Landowners. It is largely because of these landowners that the land has been preserved to even have this opportunity. Bison planning efforts must continue this legacy. Real concerns exist, yes, but these are small in the big picture. The public is willing to make this work with manpower and \$\$\$. I am hopeful that MDOL can see this effort as a positive, not as a threat.

- Key to realize that we used to winter 600-800 head of elk in the Taylor Fork, so the idea that it is not good winter habitat does not hold up. Especially the south facing slopes. Counterpoint—elk are not bison. And the concern about winter forage comes from two anecdotal sources: (a) the story of the malnourished bison in the Taylor Fork in the mid-1990s, and (b) none of the landowners keep stock there in the winter. I am also concerned about potential interactions between bison and snowmobilers.
- There are many wetlands on the way up to Albino Lake. Lots of grasses, sedges means lots of forage and habitat. The challenge might come if the animals get stuck in the bottomlands. We may need to push them up the drainages to teach them where the food is. This activity could be carried out under AM.

## Summary of Recent Genetics Work and NPS Response

---

RW provided a list of papers that he would refer to during his talk. Links to abstracts for those papers were posted on [ibmp.info](http://ibmp.info) prior to the meeting, and can still be found with the documentation of this meeting (see <http://ibmp.info/Library/20120829/20120830.php>). The slides for RW's talk can be found on the same webpage, thus RW's talk will not be reproduced here. Instead following are key takeaways from RW's talk and the NPS position on the papers under discussion:

### **Pringle 2011**

- Pringle's reference to the double mutation in haplotype 6 bison is a fact to consider. Our work with the University of Montana shows that there are more bison in the central herd that exhibit the haplotype 6 genotype.
- Pringle's conclusions that oxidative phosphorylation functions are impaired in haplotype 6 bison and thus they are less likely to survive hard winters and the effects of predation are not substantiated.
- Genetic mutation does not automatically equal genetic disease.
- If the mutations were as deleterious as claimed, they would have been eliminated by natural selection.

### **Andrés Pérez-Figueroa, Rick L. Wallen, Tiago Antao, Jason A. Coombs, Michael K. Schwartz, P.J. White, and Gordon Luikart. *Biological Conservation* 150 (2012): 159–166**

- Conclusions: Fluctuations in population size are unlikely to greatly accelerate the loss of genetic variation, at least for the relatively large populations with positive population growth rates.
- Recommendation = 3000-3500 bison on a decadal scale
- Focus harvest on young age classes or randomly

### **Natalie D. Halbert, Peter J. P. Gogan, Philip W. Hedrick, Jacquelyn M. Wahl, and James N. Derr. *Journal of Heredity* 103(3): 360-370.**

- Conclusion: The identification of genetic subpopulations in this study raises serious concerns for the management and long-term conservation of Yellowstone bison.
- The continued practice of culling bison without regard to possible subpopulation structure has the potentially negative long-term consequences of reducing genetic diversity and permanently changing the genetic constitution within subpopulations and across the Yellowstone metapopulation.

### **P. J. White and Rick L. Wallen. *Journal of Heredity Advance Access. Published August 23, 2012.***

- White and Wallen agreed with Halbert et al. that bison removals should be carefully managed to prevent unintended consequences. However, they questioned whether the NPS should actively manage to preserve the genetic distinctiveness of each breeding herd because history indicates humans likely facilitated the creation and maintenance of this population substructure. Instead, they recommended that the NPS continue to allow ecological processes such as natural selection, migration, and dispersal to prevail and influence how population and genetic substructure is maintained in the future rather than actively managing to perpetuate an artificially created substructure.

**Draft manuscript near submission: Population substructure in Yellowstone bison by R. Wallen, F. Gardipee, G. Luikart, P. J. White.**

- Conclusion... Yellowstone bison can be characterized as a single population with genetically similar, yet distinguishable, breeding groups on the northern and central ranges.
- Effective emigration among the two breeding groups is occurring
- Recommendations
  - Preserve a near equal sex ratio
  - Manage for breeding groups of about 1500 bison on the northern and central ranges
  - Monitor diversity indices every one to two generations

**\*Draft\* YNP Bison Management Plan & IBMP Operations Plan, Winter 2013**

---

PJ presented the YNP draft management and operations for the upcoming winter. Both the presentation and draft plan are available at <http://ibmp.info/Library/20120829/20120830.php>. PJ made a strong point that the Operations Plan needs to be updated to reflect adaptive management changes that have happened in recent times.

**DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

A summary of the draft plan, as pulled from PJ's presentation, follows:

**Winter 2012**

- 3,700 bison (2,300 north; 1,400 central)
- Recommended removal of 330 bison
- Mild winter; little migration out of park
- Hunters removed <30 bison; no shipping
- Little wolf predation (prefer elk)
- Little winter-kill (starvation)

**Current Situation**

- 4,200 bison (2,600 northern; 1,600 central)
- Forecast : Average winter
- Developed population and migration models
- Predicted migration:
  - Average snow: >300 north and 400 west
  - Above-average snow: >1,400 north and west

**Management Plan**

- Manage abundance and composition
  - Progress towards ~3,000-3,500 bison
  - Equal sex ratio and herd numbers
  - If possible, avoid large-scale removals
- Hunting/selective culls of infectious bison
  - Annual culls of ~400 bison for 5 years

**Plan for Winter 2013**

- Remove ~450 bison
  - Primarily females from northern herd
- Initially use hunting in Montana
- After hunting, ship infectious bison to slaughter up to removal objectives
  - American Indian Tribes
- Use quarantine/research if feasible

**Issues**

- Governor's Executive Order
  - If no reduction in 2013 → ~4,800 bison in 2014
- Contingency plans – mass migration

- Increased tolerance; Haze/hold bison; Increased removals?
- Harvest considerations
  - Hunt west of Yellowstone River
  - Cow/calf hunts
  - Late season hunts
- Start planning at the end of winter

**Revised Operations Plan**

- Outlines actions to implement IBMP
- Proposes desired population conditions based on IBMP and NPS mission
- Incorporates 2005-2012 adaptive adjustments

**HUNTING AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL**

Much discussion ensued after PJ’s presentation, most surrounding the hunt as a management tool.

**Looking ahead to next year’s hunt, including status of North Side EA**

A question was asked: Can tribes consider meeting the NPS request for greater hunting focus on the North Side and on harvest of females from the Northern Herd? TM said that the CSKT have a policy of not hunting cow bison after February 1 out of concern for shooting pregnant females. He said that for the CSKT the concepts could be brought to the Tribal Council and, if accepted, would most likely be brought to tribal hunters through hunter orientation, but not be made requirements. TM said that he would get back to the Partners with this decision by Sep 30; MO said the NP would take the same approach and he would get back to the Partners with their decision in October (\*\*action item 1).

TM said the hunt could be extended until beyond Feb 1 for bulls (currently the season is for either sex and ends Feb 1), but cited three concerns:

- (1) Hunters misidentifying bull and cow
- (2) Animals are in worse condition (for example, hide deteriorates) as winter progresses
- (3) A fear of wasting meat

TM also noted two opportunities for greater tribal hunting: possibly providing each hunter with more than one tag, and creating more habitat (e.g., Taylor Fork to the west of YELL, Cutler Meadow to the north) would get more hunters from the tribes interested in participating. On the latter point, he said that some hunters have safety and aesthetic concerns about the current situation of all being wedged into small available lands for hunting. PF noted that Cutler Meadows would be included in the hunting-allowed zone this year.

PF stated that for Montana hunters (not tribal) there are 44 either-sex permits (22 on North Side, 22 on West Side). MFWP has the option of adding 100 more permits depending on cow/calf outmigration after Feb 15. Montana hunters have the same concern already stated about shooting pregnant females. Most hunters using the 44 permits seek bulls.

Regarding the North Side lawsuit, PF said that the August trial closed prior to completion and was rescheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup> with a final decision in December. Thus it is possible that if there is early out migration of bison, hunters could be on-the-ground before the decision is rendered. Additionally, it is possible that the plaintiff will seek a temporary restraining order prior to December. Given no certainty in the final outcome, PF suggested the Partners plan that the situation will remain as is, and that both tribal and MT hunters will be able to hunt in the newly expanded North Side tolerance area. He reminded the Partners that even assuming hunting can go ahead on the North Side, they still need to plan for hazing and other management efforts.

PF proposed a new concept for Partner consideration for bison coming out of YELL (Table 2):

**Table 2.—Possible strategy to consider for management of bison coming out of YNP**

<i>Brucellosis Sero status</i>	<i>Pre-hunt (say up until Feb 15)</i>	<i>Post-hunt</i>
Sero-positive	Release for hunting	(1) Hold for ship and slaughter (2) Release back into YNP

MZ agreed that this seemed like a reasonable approach. He also said that he thought population management should take precedence over decreasing brucellosis prevalence for the simple reason that if we keep the population in check, we have far fewer issues with potential brucellosis transfer.

In response to the question of if it would be possible to do late season damage hunts, PF said that he would raise with the Director's office and get back to the Partners (\*\* action item 2).

(\*\* action item 3) PJ committed to having the Draft 2013 IBMP Operations Plan sent out to the Partners by Sep 15. The Partners set a date of Oct 1 for returning their comments to PJ. He will then turn around the revised version to the Partners by Oct 15. Partners, per issues revealed by that time, agree to meet in teleconference or in person in Bozeman to resolve issues. Planned signing at the Nov IBMP meeting.

### ***Signing of North Side AM changes***

MZ explained that he alone of the Partners had not signed the North Side AM changes because he realized he had two other AM changes he wanted to add. Both of these changes dealt with monitoring, not active management and will be available at <http://ibmp.info/adaptivemgmt.php>. Upon short discussion, the Partners agreed that the newly requested AM changes were not controversial (DaveH requested simply a relook to determine if he had been the APHIS signatory, or Dr. McCluskey before him). Given the logistics of signing, the Partners agreed to the following process: (a) MZ to sign the original North Side AM changes that all other Partners had already signed; (b) a new document be circulated and signed for the two new AM monitoring changes requested by MZ (done immediately, with the need for signing by tribal entities and the supervisor of the GNF); and (c) both documents be posted to IBMP.info per the draft Partner Protocol under development (\*\* action item 4).

### ***Possible tribal hunting in YNP***

Saying that he recognized the difficulties, but also that the Partners job was to at least consider all options, MZ asked if it would possible to have a tribal hunt inside YNP. Such a hunt could provide greater opportunity for fair chase and allow for better population control. PJ responded such a change would require Congressional authorization, and also an EIS to determine the impacts on other wildlife, as well as tourists.

MO noted that a professor at Utah State (MO was not certain of the professor's name) had recommended tribal hunting inside YNP; that tribes value the bison spiritually and culturally; and that they see bison meat as a path to battle prevalent diabetes in the community. RT said that the tribes were not part of creating YNP, have had many changes forced on them that they did not want, and at least wanted the conversation started. EC noted that he would like to see a review of treaties to see what they say about tribal hunting rights within the park. We would only work toward this concept, he said, in a slow, thoughtful way always respectful of the animal.

TM stated that to use hunting as a management tool, hunters need access to the animals. Clearly some people would not like such hunting within YNP, but we must remember they don't like capture, ship, and slaughter either. The CSKT would be willing to consider hunting within the Park as an AM tool. KL noted that treaty rights on public lands are critically important to understand. Setting the "where" of the hunt aside, he hoped the group would recognize the fundamental goal of moving from a ship and slaughter paradigm to using hunting as a principal means of management in the future. A key question that the group should be considering is this—how do we best facilitate hunter friendly experiences on the north and west?

DaveH stated appreciation for the discussion about potential hunting in YNP, but warned that hunting bison would be highly unpopular with the 3 million visitors each year; that such a change would require changing the enabling legislation of the world's first national park; and that opening up the idea would lead to an endless quagmire of Congressional hearings and public outcry, all with effectively zero chance of acceptance. Thus the concept, in his opinion, would send the IBMP on a fruitless tangent that would detract from the group's principal goals. RW stated that a focus on hunting inside the Park is a step toward dropping the IBMP goal of reducing seroprevalence, a request of the CWG. Hunting, DaveH noted, doesn't target sero+ animals the way capture-test-slaughter does, so a hunt in YNP would not aid the IBMP goal of decreasing sero-prevalence.

An idea was put forth that we must start somewhere, even if likelihood of success is small, similar to writing a letter in the effort have *Brucella abortus* removed from the select agent list. PF responded that this

discussion was fundamentally different because in this case a possible Partner push for hunting inside YNP would be a direct effort to change the management of one of the Partners. This is an important distinction that we can't do, as called out in the draft Partner Protocols. (KL stated agreement to PF's reinforcement that this is a consensus-driven group.) PF requested putting off any formal action on the concept of hunting in YNP until a future meeting. As Lead Partner, PF asked to close the discussion on the potential of tribal hunting within with two requests:

- that tribal attorneys make a presentation at the next Partner meeting regarding the historical context and tribal treaty rights dealing with potential hunting in YNP (\*\*action item 5); and
- that NPS respond with a discussion of pros and cons of hunting in the Park (\*\* action item 6). DaveH stated that without attorneys present, NPS might not be able to respond. He agreed to ask DW to respond in a follow-up message before the next meeting before they took on action item 2.

## Status of draft EIS for Remote Vaccination

---

DaveH reported that the EIS process for the remote vaccination of bison is currently on hold. In the draft EIS, NPS received a large number of comments from a large segment of the public about multiple issues associated with remote vaccination: (a) low likelihood of success, (b) cost, (c) decreased visitor experience.

In response, NPS has decided to convene a science review panel regarding disease ecology whose goal will be to answer the question, "Is this the right time to institute a remote vaccination program for Yellowstone bison?" They envision a 3-day workshop in November or December with Day 1 being presentations (including expected request for CWG presentation), Day 2 being closed door deliberations, Day 3 being results presentations. DaveH noted that NPS does not guarantee that it will take the recommendation of the panel. They have no date set for decision on proceeding with or completing the EIS.

## Update on Transferring Bison to Native American Tribes

---

DaveH said the NPS provided letters to the CSKT, ITBC, NP, as well as the Ft Belknap Tribe offering to send each group bison that would otherwise be shipped to slaughter. The Tribal entities would be responsible for bison pick up and transport. Responses have been forthcoming from the Ft Belknap Tribe and the Park is in discussion with the ITBC. No responses have been received from the CSKT or NP.

DaveH noted that the NPS endorsed the hunt as the preeminent tool, above and before shipment, whether to tribes or to slaughter. KL cautioned that we don't want to make ship and slaughter too easy.

Several requests for clarifications were made:

- Does the transfer being discussed only apply to animals to be shipped to slaughter. Response = yes.
- If these animals are available in late season, will the tribes be interested given earlier stated concerns about hides and animals being in poorer shape? Response = none recorded.
- What happens if there were more requests for bison than bison available? Response = This is not to date a problem, but could be handled in many ways, for example on first come, first served basis, or perhaps with a lottery.
- Does the agency operating the handling facility have the right to decide the disposition of the animals? Response = This is a consensus IBMP Partners plan covered under the adaptive management and as signified by consensus signing of the Winter Operations Plan.

PF pointed out that transferring bison to tribal entities is simply another tool that the Partners have. He reiterated that in the Winter Ops plan PJ had asked for a more consistent harvest and that seemed a key question. He asked if the Partners had consensus on that part of the Winter Ops Plan. Numerous comments and agreements were put forth that (a) large removals should be avoided, (b) ship and slaughter was not preferred, and (c) yes, the stable harvest seemed reasonable.

DaveH took a comment from the public: "With much unoccupied area, why not consider repopulation as an option for the bison before transfer to tribes or ship and slaughter?" Response = recall that we have a goal to decrease brucellosis prevalence. Thus the NPS idea is to select brucellosis positive animals and those animals we don't want to move elsewhere.

DaveH also provided comments regarding two guiding documents for NPS:

- *The Secretary's Directive on the placement of Yellowstone bison (May 2012).*—The purpose of the directive is to develop solutions (both short and long term) to issues associated with migrating bison. Included is the directive to multiple DOI agencies to examine the feasibility of relocating bison to suitable tribal or federal lands. The Directive has four parts: (1) helping find homes for bison from the quarantine studies, including a call for the USFWS to study if YELL origin bison can be relocated to the National Bison Range; (2) Potential relocation of bison to other federal lands; (3) Considering a new quarantine facility that could support transfer of bison across the country; and (4) Working with tribes to develop new quarantine facilities and/or take quarantined animals. A final report is expected at the end of 2012.
- *The NPS Call to Action (Aug 2011).*—A part of this document includes a call to return the bison to the nation's landscape by restoring and sustaining three wild bison populations across the central and western United States. The work is to be done in collaboration with tribes, private landowners, and other public land management agencies.

## Update on matrix for CWG recommendations

---

PF and the facilitator reported that they had now assigned Partners under each Partner-accepted Citizen Working Group recommendation. The Partners discussed how to best document their progress on the CWG recommendations and decided to add them as another section of the annual report with the lead for each recommendation responsible for writing an update for that recommendation. The facilitator noted that at this time many recommendations have more than one lead, and at some point the Partners will likely want to choose one responsible party for each recommendation. First reporting will begin with the 2012 annual report. Members of the CWG were asked to comment on this plan and their feedback was positive, that the reporting process would force transparency and accountability on the Partners.

## Update on Efforts on Developing & Implementing a Factual Education Program about Bison

---

### EDUCATION PROGRAM

AJ reported that three meetings had been held of the education group started under CWG recommendations. She said that the group size decreased each time they met. The group is not diverse; it does not contain all interests of the CWG. The goal of the group is to present facts about bison, but those are not always easy to agree on. They would like to create information tools based on those facts (e.g., brochures) that can be shared with the public. AJ requested input from the Partners, which they provided as such:

- This has lots of potential. What about three brochures—facts about bison, treaty rights, brucellosis. Then from these develop three podcasts, videos, etc. The key is common information.
- MO volunteered the NP (specifically ML) to help with treaty rights information; John Harrison offered on behalf of the CSKT to help (\*\*action item 7).
- JS volunteered to share an ITBC brochure already produced on brucellosis (\*\*action item 8).
- When the floor was open to the public, Mark Pearson offered that GYC has in-house design capabilities and could help.

### QUESTION OF CWG STAYING POWER

Partners stated that the education workgroup did not need to seek Partner signoff for their work, that the brochures for example could say "Produce by a Citizens' Working Group with support of the IBMP Partners". Some members of the CWG in the audience thought it should be a Partner-led effort. PF suggested that this is the perfect place for citizen involvement, that public and landowners might be more receptive to a group of citizens bringing information to them than MFWP. PF asked (a) how important this



education effort was to the CWG, and (b) if the CWG was committed for the long haul. Members of the CWG responded:

- Yes, education is very important but there had been an evolution in the group that has been tough.
- The CWG does not meet anymore.
- With the consensus recommendations out there, it is now up to the Partners to move forward.
- Suggest that MFWP put the bison work under their Living with Wildlife program.

PF said he understood that the CWG had completed their task and they had uncertainty about what's next. In my mind this education program is what's next, he said. PF suggested that the CWG members still engaged could create a public information plan and then develop a budget and present to the Partners for consideration. The CWG has a mailing list of engaged people, plus they have the ability to get out and talk to people about the potential of what year-round habitat outside of YELL might mean. Becky Weed said yes, this could be step 1. We can try to get input from all of the CWG but need to recognize some won't participate—it might not be OK to call the group the "CWG" anymore. Ariel Overstreet stated agreement to that thought. Matt Skoglund offered to send an email to the CWG mailing list to ask for participation in the bison outreach and education program (\*\*action item 9).

## Partner Protocols

---

The facilitator reviewed the current version of the Partner Protocols, moving stepwise through the document and asking for input at each step from the Partners. Changes to the document were debated and made, including the process by which the Partners make and document AM changes. One point of extended debate centered on the section describing the role of tribal entities in participating in the Winter Ops plan. At the end of the discussion, the facilitator was charged with taking the input from the Partners, producing the next version of the Partner Protocols, and sending them out for review before the next IBMP meeting (\*\*action item 10). PF said he hoped the Protocols could be signed off at the November IBMP meeting.

## Partner Briefings and Updates

---

### ***PF—update on signing of 2011 Adaptive Management changes***

Covered previously in meeting. See section titled, "Looking ahead to next year's hunt, including status of North Side EA".

### ***PF—use of dogs for bison, report on discussion with Keith Aune***

PF did call Keith but received no call back. Will follow up for next meeting (\*\*action item 11).

### ***PF—status of Feb 24<sup>th</sup> commitment by Partners to write a letter to representatives stating their support for removing the significant barriers that exist for Brucella abortus research because of the select agent listing***

The letter was sent and the Senators sent the letter to the CDC. Jennifer Madgic of Senator Tester's office told PF that they did receive a response from the CDC. Scott to contact Jennifer to get a copy of the letter and post on ibmp.info if OK'd by the Senator's office (\*\*action item 12).

### ***PF—status of relocation of quarantined bison from YNP***

It is currently unclear whether the herd will be moved from Turner, and if so when.

### ***PF—status of EA for additional bison habitat in Hebgen Basin***

Covered previously in meeting. See section titled, "Looking ahead to next year's hunt, including status of North Side EA".

**PF—status of current litigation by Park County and Park County Stockgrowers on North Side AM changes (trial last week)**

The trial was not completed in Aug2012. Defendants have two more witnesses to call. Rescheduled for continuation in early Nov2012. Also, closing arguments are still to be heard. The judge retires at the end of 2012 and vows to have the trial closed before he retires.

**CF, PJ, PF—status of other pending lawsuits**

Western Watershed lawsuit against the NPS and USFS went to the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit. The court ruled in favor of the federal entities—they are not required to do a supplemental EIS on the IBMP.

The Alliance for the Wild Rockies lawsuit regarding helicopter (for bison hazing) impact on bears—briefs were filed at the beginning of September.

**EC, RT, MO—Status of tribal groups acting as single funding body**

The ITBC, CSKT, and NP responded that they have talked and agree to take on the financial responsibility of the lead group as a single funding body. The three groups said they were not ready to take on this responsibility this year, but would be ready to do so in Jan2014.

**DaveH—update on the Secretary’s Directive on the placement of Yellowstone bison**

Covered previously in meeting. See section titled, “Update on Transferring Bison to Native American Tribes”.

**RC—Update on GonaCon Immuno-contraception study**

**APHIS Report.**—RC reported that the draft and final EA for the use of GonaCon are both on [ibmp.info](http://ibmp.info) and on the APHIS website. GonaCon is a contraceptive vaccine that in bison forms antibodies that bind to gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) in the animal. The anti-GnRH antibodies interfere with the ability of GnRH to signal production of sex hormones resulting in temporary infertility. GonaCon prevents the animal from going into heat, removing the urge for coitus, and thus eliminating pregnancy and the ability to abort a brucellosis positive fetus.

Discussions for this program began ~2 years ago between APHIS, MDOL, and YNP. An APHIS environmental review came back with a finding of no significant impact. The first animals enrolled in the study are now in quarantined paddocks in the Gardner Basin. There are two treatments housed in different penned areas:

~15 sero+ 4-5 sero-, 3-4 yr old females Treated with GonaCon (A)	~15 sero+ 4-5 sero-, 3-4 yr old females Controls = No GonaCon treatment (B)
--	---

Both groups are currently with bulls. The goals of the study are (1) to investigate GonaCon in bison and determine its effect, duration of effect, and potential side/ill effects; (2) to determine how infertility would impact brucellosis shedding in female bison.

Most infectious bison are known to be 3-4 year old pregnant females. RC said that if GonaCon performs the way they postulate it might, they could stop this age class from becoming pregnant during those highly infectious years. Thus they won’t shed *Brucella abortus*. They should also have better body condition because they aren’t going through the stress of pregnancy, and therefore better able to mount an appreciable immune response during those years while under GonaCon treatment. The overall hope is to reduce herd seroprevalence of brucellosis and break the cycle of disease.

Next spring, assuming the GonaCon treatment works, the cows in the (A) treatment group above should not be pregnant.

**Broader discussion.**—RC’s report led to a broader discussion, in part spurred by citizen concern, about whether this was a sanctioned IBMP project or not. That led to the question of how Partner research is determined with the response being that some was declared in the ROD. Immuno-contraception was not in the ROD, quarantine feasibility and persistence were, and hence why a discussion for consensus did not come

before the Partners. There was some debate about this statement—some thought that immuno-contraception was called out in the ROD, but given a low priority.

Regardless, RC noted that in 2000, when the ROD was signed, a different contraceptive was used (PZP; GonaCon was not available). PZP did not stop estrous and thus bison continued to breed. GonaCon importantly stops this large expenditure of energy.

After some discussion, the Partners agreed that they are not in the business of setting research agendas, with the only exception being those items dictated by the ROD. Otherwise, the Partners are running a bison *management* plan, and thus consumers of research information brought to them, but not directors of research programs. In particular Partners said that they while they will rely on outside and individual Partner research (where Partners follow their own internal review process), they don't want to be in the business of directing or deciding the subject matter of that research, which would only slow progress.

PF drew a clear distinction: while much research has the potential of impacting bison in Montana, the only research subject to review by and consensus decision making from the Partners are those items directly set forth in the ROD (remote vaccination, quarantine, and persistence).

One thought put forward but not discussed was that the Partners could have a science group for review of potential research. It was not postulated if this group would have any power. This idea was added to the Parked Item List.

### **SB—updates on IBMP.info**

There will be an upcoming revamp of ibmp.info library to include meeting notes. The AM section will be updated per the Partner Protocols, once they are ratified (expected update Dec2012).

## **Action item / Parked Item list**

---

**Action items.**—The following action items were described pre-meeting and discussed briefly at the meeting:

- Annual report planning as shown in Partner Protocols. SB set forth the plan for preparation of the Annual Report:
  - Report built on current AM Plan. Each Partner responsible to report on management actions in AM Plan where they are the lead agency.
  - Partner input to Lead Partner and Facilitator by Sep 30. Partners may include ideas for recommended adaptive management changes at this time—to be compiled by facilitator for Nov meeting.
  - The lead Partner will then compile the responses into a final report, plus add discussion/review of the year. DRAFT document sent to Partners by Nov1.
  - Partners provide final comments in written form (and discuss, as needed) at the November IBMP meeting. Give Lead Partner OK to post per requested changes being completed. No signatures needed.
- By Dec 31, annual report posted to IBMP.info
- Partner lead changeover (1 Jan 2013)
  - APHIS accepted the leadership role for 2013.
- Nov meeting planning
  - Nov 27/28, CMon Inn, host MFWP
  - Partners discussed having enforcement personnel lead a field trip about the challenges associated with the new North Side tolerance zone. This idea was dismissed for this season but the facilitator added it to the Parked item list for future consideration.

**Parked item list.**—The following parked items list is to be considered as a possible source of agenda topics for future meetings. The list is carried forward to, and updated after, each IBMP meeting.

- (1) NPS to share experience in managing bison interactions with traffic along roadways. Partners to engage with Montana Department of Transportation to initiate a discussion regarding traffic safety in the bison conservation area. A request was also made to include the CWG and/or Buffalo Field

Campaign in the presentation with a topic area of “living with bison”. Some discussion that this item should be led by MFWP.

- (2) A request was made by MFWP that the Partners begin talking about conservation easement funding. A statement was also made that the CWG could be helpful in this realm.
- (3) The Partners need a public relations campaign to explain the benefits of transferring bison away from YNP as an integral part of achieving the goals of the IBMP.
- (4) Consider having a meeting (field trip, open house) in the Gardner Basin due to large interest there, particularly after the adaptive management changes made in Mar/Apr 2011. Desired outcome of the field trip would include review of public infrastructure and boundary adaptive management changes; looking at future challenges; showing work done to prepare for new North perimeter; challenges and opportunities associated with Mar/Apr 2011 adaptive management changes. This field trip could be led by enforcement personnel who could highlight the challenges associated with the new North Side tolerance zone.
- (5) Request to move to 1-day format to minimize travel for NP (others?) who drive to IBMP meetings.
- (6) CWG/Partners linkage via Tech Committee. This could be the same or different than another recommendation from Aug2012 meeting in W YELL that the Partners create a science group for review of potential research, ongoing, or completed research.
- (7) A thought put forward on the Taylor Fork field trip: In Grand Teton National Park they have lots of private land and horse wrangling—we could poll them with respect to interactions with bison (and elk, bears, wolves).

## Public Comment

---

The following notes on public comment to the IBMP Partners are not intended to be complete, but rather reflect the facilitator’s best effort to capture key statements. The facilitator has especially attempted to capture those comments from the public that appeared to be solution oriented and have the potential for inclusion in AM planning and/or process improvement. These items, as well as other potentially actionable items, are called out with a “\*\*” in the listings that follow.

Names associated with comments are available from the facilitator. They are not included here, however, in an effort to focus on the comment rather than the speaker. Line breaks in the bullets indicate a new speaker.

- \*\* We asked the IBMP to allow Halbert or others to present their findings. Instead we get a rebuttal of their work from YNP. Bison genetics diversity is not well understood. It is important to hear the theories of the authors of these papers, not just rebuttals to their work. They found that there is disproportionate killing that impacts bison genetic diversity and recommend a population variability analysis. We need a more thorough review for potential use in AM efforts. There are distinct groups worth taking a hard look at.
- A key point is that if Montana will restrict bison migration, then we must make sure genetics are addressed.
- Part of the process is to hear from outside scientists, especially when there are differences of opinion.
- \*\* This issue is worth another look and I suggest inviting Peter Gogan who is in Bozeman.
  
- I want to touch on hunting by tribes in YNP. This was an unfortunate diversion into a tough eddy. There is no way the Partners could ever come to consensus on this issue. NPS could never allow a tribal hunt in YNP.
- The idea of a tribal hunt in the Park is a solution to a concocted problem—bison population numbers growing in the Park. No, instead let’s make more habitat outside the national park and then use hunting as an AM tool.
- If the tribes feel they have treaty rights to hunt in YNP, they can surely pursue those. But society won’t support hunting in YNP even though they greatly support the tribes.

*Final*

- The NPS Lacey Act of 1894 said no hunting in national parks, and was developed largely to protect bison in YNP (speaker reads a portion of the Act).
- Regarding GonaCon scoping to APHIS—we think that the research should have been discussed by Partners prior to being undertaken because the work is pertinent to IBMP goals. Some of the study group—Yellowstone bison—will be lethally put down.
- The Sierra Club requests a revisit of this issue and also whether research impacting bison should be vetted by the Partners. We need this issue better explained to the public.
- \*\* Why not relocate sero- bison from testing facilities into the upper Gallatin? Those bison that move outside of YNP would then be available for tribal hunt.
  
- I ask that we not lose sight of the concept of increasing habitat. We need to keep focusing on increasing habitat as the key.
- In the draft Partner Protocols, regarding the limited role of tribes—that the tribes might be used by MDOL to manage populations in YELL is a great irony. For the tribes, I say, be careful what you ask for—re hunting in the park. For DOL—it is not appropriate to protect cattle by killing elk in the Park.
- The question we need to ask to understand motivations is this: Is hunting in the Park good for the beef industry?
  
- Regarding GonaCon—if the research is effective, I am concerned about the age-class loss. Would the Partners adopt the use of GonaCon as a tool?
- I also wonder if GonaCon worked, would it be tried on elk, as well. I assume so.
- Are the tribal entities OK with GonaCon? Will they have a say if it is implemented?
  
- The following written comment was provided to the facilitator after the meeting by a member of the public who was present at the entire meeting: “First, I would like to thank Andrea for sticking with the facilitation of our dwindling education group, and putting together our brochure. At a CWG meeting, concerns were raised about expanding bison habitat, and increased tolerance while at the same time killing all of them that go out onto this expanded habitat. That is exactly what I heard discussed this morning. It does not sound like increased tolerance or providing habitat when you agree to culling 400 bison over a 5-year period to get to the minimum allowed number of bison in the Park, while expanding habitat for the sole purpose of hunting. Repeatedly, there were concerns about enough buffalo coming out of the Park to have an adequate hunt to decrease the population, so much so, you want to still capture and slaughter, and yet in the same discussion you speak of increased tolerance and expanded habitat. Buffalo need to live outside the Park in the habitat for this to be reality. We all know winter migration is largely dependent on the harshness of winter, and still you agreed to a 5-year culling action, again, while discussing increased tolerance outside the Park. At what point is there going to be increased tolerance for live buffalo on the expanded habitat? Thank you for allowing this public comment.”

-----  
After hearing public comment, two Partners made final comments before the meeting closed:

- MZ: MDOL does not advocate hunting in YNP. We do recognize it as a technique or pursuit that can meet several Partner goals and match tribal interests.
- PF: Sometimes we hear frustration in the voices of the Public. We are all tackling really tough issues with enormous complexities. That complexity results in emotional disagreement at times. I think that this is a great forum for discussing the issues. And the complexity and the emotions involved do not diminish the real and positive steps this group has made and continues to make.

*\*\* Meeting adjourned \*\**

## Abbreviations

---

- AJ—Andrea Jones
- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BB—Brooklyn Baptiste
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- CM—Christian Mackay
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- CWG—Citizens’ Working Group
- DaveH—David Hallac
- DH—Don Herriot
- DSA—Designated Surveillance Zone
- DW—Dan Wenk
- EA—Environmental Assessment
- EC—Earvin Carlson
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GNF—Gallatin National Forest
- GWA—Gallatin Wildlife Association
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- ITBC— Inter Tribal Buffalo Council
- JH—John Harrison
- JS—Jim Stone
- KL—Keith Lawrence
- LG—Larry Greene
- MBOL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MD—Marna Daley
- MDOL—Montana Department of Livestock
- MDOT—Montana Department of Transportation
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MEPA—Montana Environmental Policy Act
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- MK—Michael Keator
- ML—Mike Lopez
- MO—McCoy Oatman
- MOU—Memorandum of Understanding
- MSGA—Montana Stockgrowers Association
- MSU—Montana State University
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- NGO—Non-governmental organizations
- NP—Nez Perce
- NPS—National Park Service
- NPCA—National Parks Conservation Alliance
- NRDC—Natural Resources Defense Council
- Park—Yellowstone National Park
- PF—Pat Flowers
- PIOs—Public Information Officers
- PJ—PJ White
- RC—Ryan Clarke
- ROD—Record of Decision
- RFP—Request for proposals
- RT—Ron Trahan
- RobT—Rob Tierney
- RTR—Royal Teton Ranch
- RW—Rick Wallen
- SB—Scott Bischke
- SEIS—Supplemental EIS
- SK—Salish Kootenai
- SS— Sam Sheppard
- TM—Tom McDonald
- USFWS—US Fish and Wildlife Service
- USGS—US Geological Survey
- WMA—state of MT wildlife management areas
- YELL—Yellowstone National Park
- YNP—Yellowstone National Park