

Summary Report from the Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting April 10, 2014



First draft presented 18 April 2014 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke

The following summary report reflects activities at the April 10, 2014 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held at the Homewood Inn in Bozeman MT. This report comes from the notes and flip chart records of facilitator Scott Bischke¹. The report will be marked “Draft” until formal Partner agreement at the start of their next meeting. The eight Partner attendees were Don Herriott (APHIS), Leonard Gray (CSKT), Ervin Carlson (ITBC), Christian Mackay (MBOL), Pat Flowers (MFWP), Brooklyn Baptist (NPT), Daniel Wenk (NPS-YNP), and Mary Erickson (USFS-GNF). In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~25 staff members from across IBMP organizations and ~60 members of the public were present (attendance sheets are available from the facilitator).

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Action items identified

Table 1.— Action items identified during this meeting

#	Who	What	By when
1	SB	Post Nov13 meeting notes to IBMP.info as final	ASAP
2	Pat Flowers, Tom McDonald, Angela Sondanaa, Carl Scheeler, Claudio Broncho	Rick Wallen asked for demographic information from all hunting Partners and Treaty Tribes on bison harvest (MFWP, CSKT, NPT, CTUIR, SBT).	For next IBMP meeting
3	Majel Russell, Christian McKay	CM and MR agreed to talk post-meeting about the issue of who pays for the armed accompaniment to the bison shipments	Before next IBMP meeting
4	Dan Wenk, Pat Flowers, Christian McKay	NPS, MDOL, and MFWP agreed to meet with the IBMP Tribal entities post-meeting regarding their potential involvement in the new EIS.	Before next IBMP meeting
5	Scott Bischke	Create the consolidate 2014 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan, send it to the Partners showing the markup changes, and send to their staffs to review and comment, if needed.	Before next IBMP meeting
6	NPS, MDOL, MFWP	Scoping for the NOI of the new EIS to be done over the next month and we will engage Partners in that scoping process.	By May 10
7	Scott Bischke	The facilitator offered to connect Germaine with Matt Skoglund, former lead of the Citizens' Working Group, so that Matt could provide an email list to that group for possible input on the brochure.	Before next IBMP meeting
8	Tom McDonald	Field trip time, topic, and meeting location to be determined by Tom McDonald of CSKT and forwarded to the facilitator for communication with Partners, staff, and public .	Before next IBMP meeting

Invocation

Claudio Broncho of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, provided an opening invocation for the meeting.

Agreeing to previous meeting minutes

The facilitator asked if there were any objections or changes to the draft meeting report from the November 2013 IBMP meeting. No objections were brought forth; thus the facilitator, per Partner Protocols, is to post the November 2013 meeting notes to IBMP.info as "final" (** Action item 1).

Status of State of Montana Programs

UPDATE ON QUARANTINE BISON AT TURNER RANCHES

Quarantine animals were sent to Turner Ranch for soft release and further prove that they are brucellosis free. PF noted that a request for proposals for final disposition of the animals is open until April

25th. Proposals received will be evaluated in late May. These animals are expected to be moved by November 2014. CM said that there will be a final brucellosis test before the animals are shipped to their final location.

UPDATE ON STATE OF MONTANA BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN

Work on the State of Montana Bison Management Plan is on-going. PF noted that the State's plan exists separately from the IBMP. It focuses on the rest of the state away from the areas covered by the IBMP. A two-day meeting of state and community leaders, and the general public, was held in Lewistown in September 2013. The meeting was in part to re-start the process of work toward the Bison Management Plan, which had stalled slightly for several reasons, including the election of a new governor and with that the seating of a new director of MFWP. A second meeting of the "Lewistown Bison Group" is planned for April 15-16, 2014 with a goal of discussing issues as Montana moves ahead to evaluate potential alternatives to be included in an environmental impact statement (MEPA analysis) for bison conservation and management.

UPDATE ON WEST SIDE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

No decision document has been issued as of this point. The Board of Livestock is one of two decision entities regarding the MEPA analysis. At their January 2014, the BOL had questions and delayed decision on the MEPA analysis pending having those questions addressed. At their March 2014 meeting, the BOL received answers to their questions, but deferred their decision again. The next BOL meeting will be in May 19-20, 2014.

(The Partners further discussed the MEPA process during their session on potential adaptive management changes. Those discussions are reported here for report continuity.) Partners wanted to know if the MEPA process is signed off, would the State then bring associated adaptive management changes to the IBMP. PF responded yes. If the final MEPA decision was for no action, then the state would notify the Partners. If the final decision entailed some change outside the Park, the State would share that with the Partners, and, as applicable, bring it to the Partners as an adaptive management change. But what if one or more Partners opposed the direction the state was taking—what would be the net effect on the IBMP Adaptive Management Plan. PF responded that it would depend on the nature of the disagreement and if the area of disagreement fell within the scope of the MEPA decision.

Discussion and update on 2014 Winter IBMP Operations

HUNTING

Nez Perce Tribe

Season: November 8, 2013 – March 18, 2014.

The NPT reported 1 animal harvested in November and December, two animals in December and January. For February and March, the Tribe reported 150 animals harvested.

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

CSKT hunters must go through an orientation. They reported 328 bison tags with a harvest of 70 animals (52 at West Yellowstone, 18 at Gardiner). The season went from early November 2013 through the end of January 2014. The CSKT were the first on and first off the hunting grounds. They reported one violation. Violators of CSKT hunting regulations lose their hunting privileges for one year to life, depending on the seriousness of the violation.

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)

Carl Scheeler, Wildlife Program Manager, said that the CTUIR took 63 bison this year. The CTUIR requires team hunts, with a hunt leader and at least three team members. They had 11 hunt teams this year, which included over 50 people. The hunters must go through an orientation. The season ran from January 1 – March 30, 2014. The hunt was closed at that time to protect calving. Carl said that the sensitivity for closing the hunt centered on concern of bison with fetuses, not for decreasing the ratio of cow to bull bison.

The CTUIR changed their hunt process this year, focusing on three areas: (1) safety (including idea that hunters are often too close to other hunters); (2) sensitivity to landowner issues (e.g., gut piles); (3) distribution of bison on landscape, as well as habitat improvement. The CTUIR report 100% compliance with their gut pile regulations (removal or dispersal away from roads). They have GPS and photo documentation of this compliance for each gut pile.

Carl noted that hunters from the CTUIR hunters travel a long distance for the hunt. Thus they have timing and expense issues for how long they can stay on the land to hunt. Also, he said that consistent with other landscape goals, Partners should consider the need to allow limited vehicle access to retrieve bison as the carcasses are incredibly heavy to move, and by allowing hunters limited vehicle access it might help them begin to hunt further away from roads.

The CTUIR reported two violations for this season, both of which were addressed. Carl concluded that the CTUIR looked forward to future opportunities to improve their hunting program.

Shosohone-Bannock Tribes (SBT)

Claudio Broncho, Policy Representative for the Fish and Wildlife Department of the SBT, stated that the SBT harvested the most bison they've taken in the last 50 years. They hunt year-round. He said that bison are very smart, and that they know where the park boundary is and will move back inside of it when they sense hunting pressure.

The Tribes use all parts of the bison (including for Sun Dances, sweat lodges, and similar). The SBT recognizes the gut pile issues and that they received letters of complaint. Claudio said that the Tribes need to work together and with private landowners.

Claudio noted that the SBT want to be a part of the bison management process. The Tribes use bison for subsistence; they don't think of them as an "objective". Instead the SBT's desire is to carry on its culture. The SBT, Claudio said, don't really want to be part of the IBMP, but feel somewhat compelled to be part of it to better have a voice in Yellowstone bison management.

Ship and Slaughter

DW said that YNP removed 318 bison this year, comprised of cow (138 adults, 21 yearlings, 91 calves) and bulls (19 adults, 41 yearlings or calves).

RW said that the goal for the year had been a removal of 600 animals for the year: 300 through the hunt, 300 through management culling via Stephens Creek, so those goals were well met. The removals came within a dozen animals of the objective for adult males. Rick asked for demographic information from all hunting Partners and Treaty Tribes on bison harvest (****Action item 2**).

JS noted that the ITBC Tribes manage between 15,000 and 20,000 bison, and do not generally harvest calves or pregnant females. Some of the animals sent for slaughter are brokered through the ITBC. Though ITBC is opposed to ship and slaughter as a long-term management practice, they do participate because they respect the animal and don't want it to go to waste. JS noted that they did surveys of the animals they received that were sent for slaughter, and found them to be very healthy here at the end of a very long, hard winter.

JS said that per ITBC interviews, the process they are going through now has improved efficiencies, meaning less wasted meat. There was some disagreement with this concept though it seemed to come down to processing techniques: under the current method bison go to processing plants after pickup from YNP; under the past methods, in part due to lack of funds, bison were picked up as carcasses by those who would take them and thus more likely have meat spoilage or other waste.

TM said the CSKT also received bison from NPS. The bison go to elderly, sick, or low income Tribal members, and also to unsuccessful hunters. The priority is to supply people who would not have access to the bison except through friends or family who are hunters. The CSKT is happy how the process worked this year. Still, their participation occurs on a year-by-year basis, dependent on the vote of the Tribal Council.

MR asked who can participate in the ship and slaughter program. DW responded that it started with the Treaty Tribes, and then also the associated tribes. A listing of those tribes, it was pointed out, can be

found on the YNP website². The associated tribes have a long-term affiliation with the Park. If the ship and slaughter program were to become over-subscribed, DaveH noted, the Park might move to a lottery for bison. To date that has not been an issue.

MR also asked about the need to have an armed accompany the bison from point of pickup to the processing plant since it was unclear if Tribal police or similar can discharge a gun on non-tribal, state lands. CM said that the need for such personnel is to ensure someone licensed would be available should any animals needed to be put down in case of an accident during transport. TM suggested the armed guard mandate might be found under state law dealing with salvaging road kill.

At one time, APHIS contracted with Wildlife Services for this activity. Should the state pay for the armed personnel now, MR asked, since it is a state concern? CM responded that yes, while under state order that made sense, but that now the shipments are being done under federal order so it no longer makes sense. Both RT and SS stated that they did not believe that it would be a problem for properly licensed Tribal personnel to act as the armed escort for bison being shipped to slaughter. JH also noted that there may be an ex-officio warden statute that might be applicable to this situation. CM and MR agreed to talk post-meeting about the issue of who pays for the armed accompaniment to the bison shipments (****Action item 3**).

Safety discussion

The Partners recognized that to date in this Operational season multiple members have received correspondence or complaints about bison gut piles resulting from hunting. To date, MFWP expressed that there have not been substantial safety concerns and that as an agency it is prepared to deal with these issues. Last year MFWP and the treaty Tribes, along with the USFS, met to improve safety and aesthetics associated with gut piles. A statement was made that things have improved this year, though still more improvement is possible.

BB noted that the NPT received letters from landowners. One issue is that the area of concern is the area with the greatest opportunity for hunting. The result is a higher concentration of hunters and gut piles. Changes were made for this year that did help the situation. The NPT helped pay for gut pile removal this year. The NPT remains committed to helping solve this problem.

ME asked for next steps given that (a) the group is learning as it goes, and (b) recalling that the issue includes resource management, not just issues of bison. Partners recognized that the yearly hunt managers' meeting (usually in May) will address planning for next year's hunt, including addressing the safety issues described here. ME noted with the concerns of resource management, invasive weeds, limited landscape, and more, that the USFS should be involved (as they have been previously) in the hunt managers' meeting. Others concurred.

Possible quarantine EA by the NPS

DaveH noted a three factors leading NPS to consider a possible environmental assessment for bison quarantine. That consideration is driven, at least in part, by a 2011 directive from then Secretary of Interior Salazar. The Secretary provided "A Call to Action" for NPS that included a goal of restoring and sustaining "three wild bison populations across the central and western United States in collaboration with tribes, private landowners, and other public land management agencies."³

DaveH further noted that two recent events make NPS's ability to pursue achieving the Secretary's goal more likely at this time:

- A peer-reviewed paper on quarantine procedures has just been released that shows that by following a prescribed protocol, bison can be proven brucellosis-free. The paper's authors include APHIS scientists Ryan Clark and Rebecca Frye. The works was a result of APHIS's quarantine feasibility study completed over the last few years.

² See, for example, http://www.greateryellowstonescience.org/download_product/569/0.

³ Though the following website reference was not called out in the meeting, the facilitator provides it here for interested readers: www.nps.gov/calltoaction/PDF/Directors_Call_to_Action_Report.pdf.

- A translocation process is now in place to move bison to Native American tribes and that the 26 traditional Tribes working with the Park are seeking disease-free bison.

DaveH said that the EA is currently under consideration, with no timeframe set for possible initiation. DW noted that if an operational quarantine was to be created (location possibilities mentioned included inside the Park, outside the Park, on public, private, or Tribal lands), it would likely get animals opportunistically, and likely use those that tested disease-free. He also said that the new quarantine effort, if undertaken, would be expected to use the APHIS-proven protocol. DaveH noted the possibility that more animals might need to be captured to supply the program.

Announcement of new EIS to evaluate bison management

DaveH announced that NPS, MDOL, and MFWP have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a new environmental impact statement for bison management (Figure 1). This agreement would require MEPA analysis by the State, NEPA analysis by NPS. The underlying reason for the new EIS is the on-the-ground changes that have occurred in bison management since the signing of the last EIS in 2000.

The EIS has not been announced in the Federal Register as of the IBMP meeting. Dave noted that the expectation is that IBMP Partners sitting at the table will be invited to be cooperators on the EIS. In response to a question, NPS said that as of this moment they had not been considering the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as a cooperator. TM noted that it might be easier to get funding if BIA is brought in; similarly MR said that ITBC gets fund from BIA and thus coordinating with them might be advantageous. NPS, MDOL, and MFWP agreed to meet with the IBMP Tribal entities post-meeting regarding their potential involvement in the new EIS (**Action item 4).

PF said that the Governor signed off on the MOU and is hoping for a consensus plan. He also said that he thought the group was well ahead of where they had been when the first EIS was initiated in 1990.

DW said that no firm dates had been set yet for the EIS. However, he thought the notice of intent for the new EIS might be out by July 1, 2014 and that Partners could engage before that. He further noted that agency leads and co-leads are under discussion, that the EIS provides a big opportunity for large engagement of people focused on bison management.

ME stated that the USFS has been considering its part in the new EIS. The USFS recognizes that it has a big role and opportunity for landscape protection and restoration in the affected area. However, in 14 years under the current EIS, the USFS has not found (for itself) a NEPA-required federal action associated with the IBMP. As such, the USFS is considering that it might come into the new EIS as a cooperator rather than as a signatory. ME noted that they do not see such a change necessarily as a decrease in involvement. She also asked, effectively, What does it mean to be a Partner? and proposed that a Partner is not just the signatories to the EIS but instead interests that should be represented at the deliberative table. In response to a question, ME agreed that USFS lands would almost surely be involved in any bison habitat expansion efforts, but again that they did not see any USFS NEPA action to be undertaken, similar to the West Side (state of MT) EA.

DW said that the group would operate under the current IBMP until a new decision is put in place. Likewise, there could be new adaptive management changes made while the new EIS is under development. Carl Scheeler asked if the non-IBMP Partner treaty Tribes could be considered as cooperator on the new EIS. DW responded that they can ask, yes, and will be considered but that he could not say the answer would be a guaranteed yes.

(Note that further discussion about the new EIS occurred during the session titled "Potential new mandate for brucellosis control in wildlife").



Figure 1.—David Hallac describes the memorandum of understanding for a new environmental impact statement that has been signed by NPS, MDOL, and MFWP.

The linnii Initiative

Lead Partner Ervin Carlson introduced a Blackfeet Nation grassroots program called the “linnii Initiative”, which was started four or five years ago. The goal of the initiative is to restore buffalo to the landscape as a key basis for Blackfeet culture, spirituality, and social interactions. The discussion included presentations from multiple speakers including Leroy Little Bear, Paulette Fox, Sheldon Carlson, and Helen Carlson, as well as ITBC representatives Majel Russell and Jim Stone.

Leroy Little Bear provided a description of the linnii Initiative (Figure 2). linnii is the name the Blackfoot Confederacy uses for bison. Among many points, Leroy noted (here paraphrased):

- We are not a reductionist people. Rather we are always talking about the big picture.
- Creation requires renewal. Renewal is so very important—if things are not renewed, they are forgotten. Our sacred societies, for example are renewed.
- A part of the linnii Initiative creation was bringing elders and youngsters together to talk about the importance of bison to our people. We talked all day in circles; talking about the importance of bison restoration to our people.
- The buffalo never left us. Instead, it was we the people who left the bison.
- Whenever we talk in circles, we always have an empty chair in the circle for the bison.
- But we must wonder, when we invite the buffalo back, will he say, “Is it just going to be the same? Why should I come back?”
- So then the linnii Initiative is really about we humans changing. In its essence, the linnii Initiative is about culture and conservation. We need to follow the advice of our elders to use the bison as a portal to teaching us who we, the Blackfeet, are as a people and to renew all the knowledge that the buffalo has brought to us. When we move toward the goals of conservation and culture, other things—for example education and economics—will evolve. But our goal is not economics.
- We will work with any group having an interest in the buffalo.



Figure 2.—Leroy Little Bear of the Blackfeet describes the linnii Initiative to Partners, staff, and public.

Helen Carlson described an outdoor field program curriculum that they've developed at the Blackfeet Community College built around the concepts of identification, inventory, and monitoring. One goal is for people to be able to identify their own places. This program, in part, matches with the respect for the land inherent in the linnii Initiative, as well as the idea that we need to slow down and listen.

Sheldon Carlson described caring for bison, in particular a lone calf, and how the kids come to marvel at it and touch it and how it has been used in tribal ceremonies.

Paulette Fox noted that the linnii Initiative includes aspects of collaboration—of understanding what is underlying issues and bringing out that understanding through difficult conversation that can be structured in a constructive way. She also noted that bringing students into the realm of scientific understanding is an important part of the linnii Initiative. Finally, Paulette said that language is big—that retaining and building language is important as is telling stories. The linnii Initiative is not just about the Blackfeet, she said, it is about all of us.

Majel Russell noted that the tribes were once on the outside of the IBMP and its impact on bison. Through a lot of hard work, the Tribes have taken a place at the decision making table. We think, she said, that it is important that everyone knows about us, and that is part of the linnii Initiative. Now we can all look forward to a new EIS.

Jim Stone noted that the presentation shows that tribal groups have a process similar to adaptive management, though perhaps not quite so formal. The key component, Jim noted, is getting people together.

Ervin Carlson reflected on Leroy's comment that we left the bison, not the other way around. Our people are now trying to reconnect, he said. Ervin concluded the presentation with thanks to all the presenters, and with thanks to the Partners, staff, and public for allowing this information on the Blackfeet culture, and on the linnii Initiative to be shared.

A video, viewed as part of the meeting, provides a ~10 min overview of the linnii Initiative and can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LJfPMoGMAg>

Lunch

Partners, staff, and public all enjoyed bison fajitas for lunch as generously provided by Lead Partner and meeting host ITBC (Figure 3). The meal was catered by Doug Hert of the Bountiful Table.



Figure 3.—Bison lunch provided by ITBC at the Homewood Inn meeting location.

Potential economics study

Drs. Randal R. Rucker and Myles J. Watts of the Agricultural Economics and Economics Department of Montana State University described their proposal titled, “An Evaluation of the Costs Associated with Implementing Management Strategies for Control of *Brucella abortus* in Yellowstone Bison and Elk.” The talk can be found on the IBMP website (see <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20140410/20140410.php>). A short summary is provided here.

In seeking to model these costs, the economists noted that

- This science is complex and not perfectly understood.
- There are many studies and papers in professional journals.
- Interaction with science experts will be essential.
- In the present context, obtaining defensible estimates of costs will require learning about analogous details related to the science of Brucellosis.

Brucellosis has a real impact on the cattle industry, including economic losses to producers that arise from:

- Reduced reproductive efficiency
- Reduced marketability
- Whole herd depopulation
- Test and removal with quarantine
- Development of a management plan

They noted the number of cases of brucellosis outbreaks in livestock, regulations that cover those outbreaks, and both methods being attempted to control the disease and known efficacy for those methods.

The objectives of the proposed economic study are to evaluate the costs associated with:

- I. Responding to a brucellosis outbreak in Montana cattle herds under the APHIS 2010 interim rule
- II. Disease management strategies
 - Eradicating brucellosis in bison (and elk?)
 - Reducing brucellosis prevalence in bison (and elk?)

- Reducing transmission of brucellosis from bison and/or elk to cattle
- III. Developing a new domestic livestock and wildlife vaccine



Figure 4.—Dr. Miles Wiley of Montana State University addresses the IBMP Partners about a potential bison/brucellosis economic study.

The economists described their plan to use the Markov Chain Model of infection for their work, which:

- is a stochastic dynamic discrete model;
- is used to forecast changes in brucellosis infection;
- requires transition probabilities which are the probabilities of moving from the current infection state to the state one period hence;
- transition probabilities are used to calculate the infection probabilities in any future period; and
- forecasted infection rates are used to calculate expected costs

Drs. Rucker and Watts concluded their presentation with these points:

- Cost estimates to be developed may aid decision makers in choosing among management strategies that result in different levels of infection over time. These estimates include cattle outbreak costs, as well as reduction/eradication in wildlife.
- The model will be updatable as better information becomes available
- Potential and cost for development of a new vaccine will be identified and estimated

Opportunity for introducing potential adaptive management changes

(The first item listed on the agenda in this section was deemed unnecessary, and thus not discussed.)

The facilitator asked if any Partner had any potential adaptive management change to be put forth, as described in the Partner Protocols, and none was forthcoming.

Instead then, the facilitator requested that the Partners use the time for this section to consider the consolidation of recent adaptive changes into a single document, to be called the “2014 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan”. As of this meeting, the group was governed by, and based their 2013 Annual report on, five documents (these documents can be found at <http://ibmp.info/adaptivemgmt.php>):

- (1) 2013—An adaptive management change to support hazing of bison within Zone 2
- (2) 2013—New map incorporating recent North Side AM Adjustment into Zone 2
- (3) 2012—(August) Two adaptive management additions to Management Action 1.1b
- (4) 2012—2011 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan
- (5) 2011—(April) Gardiner Basin adaptive management changes

The facilitator asked if the Partners would empower him to incorporate items (1), (2), (3), and (5) into the current adaptive management plan, (4). The facilitator noted that this work was relatively straight-forward and had in fact already been done with one exception. Partner feedback was positive, that yes this seemed simply like a house keeping chore and that yes, it made sense to once again consolidate to a single document, as was done in 2011 based on the 2008 Adaptive Management Plan.

The single exception noted by the facilitator was in the AM change labeled as “2011 (April) Gardiner Basin adaptive management changes”. The second item on this document says:

2. As necessary, trailer up to 300 female and calf bison testing negative for brucellosis from the Stephens Creek capture facility to a double-fenced quarantine facility in Corwin Springs for holding until release back into the park in spring. The quarantine facility in Corwin Springs is leased by APHIS and the State of Montana and APHIS have collaborated to complete environmental analyses for use of the facility.

Discussion ensued as to whether this second item was meant to be a one-time, one-year commitment, or on-going commitment. DH and Rebecca Frye said that this second item should have been part of that year’s Winter Operations Plan, not shown as an adaptive management change. Further, the facilities are no longer available. After short discussion the Partners agreed this second item was an annual change, not meant to be on on-going one.

The Partners instructed the Facilitator to (1) record in the meeting notes their agreement that item number 2, as shown above, was meant to be a one-year, not on-going adaptive management change, and (2) as such not incorporate it into the consolidation of recent adaptive changes into a single document.

The Partners also stated, with no objection, that the newly created 2014 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan did not, as a largely housekeeping chore, require their signature. Instead, they requested that the facilitator make the consolidate plan, send it to them showing the markup changes, and provide time for their staffs to review and comment, if needed (****Action item 5**). Once the comments, if any, are received and modifications made, the facilitator can post the 2014 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan to ibmp.info as the adaptive management plan controlling the IBMP.

Seroprevalence

The Lead Partner requested a discussion on seroprevalence, as carried out over recent IBMP meetings, be continued, even if for discussion of its removal from IBMP consideration. Previous Lead Partner (APHIS) had also asked that it be kept on the agenda. It was noted that over time, seroprevalence has seemingly become less and less of a Partner priority. One suggestion was made that seroprevalence reduction be taken off of the agenda for future IBMP meetings, with the recognition that it might come back more strongly during development of the new EIS.

POTENTIAL NEW MANDATE FOR BRUCELLOSIS CONTROL IN WILDLIFE (APHIS)

DH asked that in light of the new EIS and Park’s decision for no remote vaccination, will seroprevalence reduction continue to be on the table? In particular, is it possible that the new EIS can or will include a more holistic approach to brucellosis, including both elk and bison? It seems clear that we need to bring in more than bison to avoid being in the same place the group was 15 years ago.

Response from NPS: currently the MOU between the state of Montana and NPS is just about bison and does not include elk. The MOU does include the same two goals as drive the current IBMP. The scope of

the new EIS is currently open, and that currently NPS was not planning to seek decreasing seroprevalence in bison as a goal.

Partner question: Is this a new EIS, then, or is it a Supplementary EIS? Response: A new EIS.

Partner question: If APHIS were to look at elk, wouldn't that greatly broaden the EIS? Response from APHIS: With a new EIS the box could be open and we could possibly go down new avenues for decreasing seroprevalence in bison by addressing elk, as well. Could the EIS perhaps, then, be called the Interagency Brucellosis Management Plan?

NPS: We are worried that adding elk would make the EIS more complicated and difficult. Partner question: But didn't the last one take 10 years? Response: Yes, but here we have a three-year goal.

Partners: Seems like bringing elk into the new EIS would be fundamentally different scoping leading up to the notice of intent (NOI) announcement for this new EIS. When is the scoping for the NOI going to be done and will Partners be involved? NPS: We (NPS, MDOL, MFWP) expect the scoping to be done over the next month and we will engage Partners in that scoping process (**Action item 6).

POTENTIAL MDOL RAMP UP ON BISON VACCINATION (MDOL)

MDOL is drafting an EA for vaccination of bison on the west side of YNP. The MEPA process is moving slowly. It is possible that the public participation aspect of the MEPA process will begin in summer or early fall.

STATUS OF BISON REMOTE VACCINATION EIS (NPS)

The NPS regional director signed a Record of Decision to not implement a remote vaccination program. The decision continues the currently authorized syringe vaccination of bison calves and yearlings periodically captured at the northern boundary of the park.

Partner briefings and updates

Rebecca—update on Gonacon trials

Gonacon causes temporary infertility. It is not a method of sterilization. The goal of working with Gonacon is to determine if it can be a tool in decreasing brucellosis transmission, not in decreasing population. RF reported that four of five bison in the non-treated-with-Gonacon group have seroconverted to being seropositive for brucellosis. None of the bison that were treated with Gonacon have seroconverted. This year APHIS took in 16 more animal from the Park and will start work on a second cohort in May.

Cavan—North Hebgen habitat restoration efforts

CF noted that the GNF is moving forward with their habitat restoration projects, moving now from the assessment phase into the planning phase. The implementation phase is expected to begin in 2017. Funding was released in March and some work is starting in April. This is not a bison project per se, but includes aspects that much impact the work of the IBMP. The forest's goals for the work include improving wildlife habitat, forest health and resiliency, and public safety.

The area of work encompasses ~95,000 acres, of which ~130,000 acres is lake. The tools that they are looking at for restoration work range from prescribed burns to commercial harvest. Cost estimates have been made of \$350 per acre.

Cavan noted that the room included lots of expertise and he invited everyone to get out on the ground with his people and provide input. The invitation was extended to all in the room, not just Partners and staff.

Sam—update on bison coexistence/fencing project

Sam noted that the bison co-existence project continues, with funds available to help landowners purchase and erect fences. Sam noted that interested parties should contact him at MFWP.

Germaine—status of continuing efforts on bison education brochures

Germaine White, CSKT Information and Education Specialist, shared progress toward creating an informational bison education brochure centered on Native American cultural ties to bison. She noted that

the brochure seeks to capture the fundamental importance of bison to tribes. It includes discussions of traditional uses, bison management, and treaty rights (e.g., affirmation of tribal sovereignty, obligation between nations, reserved rights to fish and hunt) (Figure 5).

As the project is working toward completion and eventual publication, Germaine invited anyone, particularly Tribal entities, to contact her and provide input. The facilitator offered to connect Germaine with Matt Skoglund, former lead of the Citizens' Working Group, so that Matt could provide an email list to that group for possible input on the brochure (****Action item 7**).



Figure 5.—Draft brochure, as described by Germaine White, regarding Bison and Tribal Peoples.

Pat, Christian—Lawsuit regarding expanded bison tolerance on North Side/Gardiner Basin

The Montana State District Court decision to uphold the adaptive change for expanded bison tolerance on the north side of YELL was appealed to the State Supreme Court. There was a cross appeal. The parties almost reached an agreement, which fell through. Park County is the only remaining plaintiff from the original 2011 lawsuit. The Supreme Court found in favor of the state and there is no appeal pending.

This item can be removed from future agendas.

Christian—status of lawsuit against deviation from IBMP on the West Side of YELL

This ruling occurred in 2010 and has been reported on in past IBMP meetings. The item can be removed from future agendas.

Dan—status of lawsuit against helicopter hazing

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has the case and is currently waiting. CM noted that the plaintiffs in the case did inform the Ninth Circuit that MDOL conducted helicopter hazing in the Gardiner Basin recently.

Scott—updates on IBMP.info

This item was moved to the adaptive management section of this report, as described previously.

Future activity planning

THANKS AND LEAD PARTNER CHANGE

All Partners joined in thanking Ervin Carlson of ITBC for his, Jim Stone's, and the rest of the ITBC's efforts for running the first meeting of 2014.

Per agreement at the November 2013 meeting, the Lead Partner now changes to Leonard Gray (and second Tom McDonald) of the CSKT for the second IBMP meeting of 2014.

2014 MEETING SCHEDULING

Meeting scheduling for the remainder of 2014 is shown below. The Partners decided at this meeting that they will meet on July 29th in Pablo for a half day field trip associated with CSKT conservation programs (fire and restoration was discussed, as well as a possible boat ride onto Flathead Lake to discuss many topics, including the interplay of native fish and Lake trout).

- **July 29**—One half day (afternoon) field trip. Field trip time, topic, and meeting location to be determined by Tom McDonald of CSKT and forwarded to the facilitator for communication with Partners, staff, and public (**Action item 8).
 - *Location:* CSKT lands near Pablo, MT.
- **July 30**—Normal IBMP meeting (8 AM to 5 PM).
 - *Location:* CSKT Tribal Chambers; Pablo, MT.
 - *Host and Lead Partner for this meeting:* Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.
- **November 20**—Normal IBMP meeting (8 AM to 5 PM).
 - *Location:* Clearwater River Casino; Lewiston, ID.
 - *Host and Lead Partner for this meeting:* Nez Perce Tribe.

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 public input, 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.

Public comment was taken during the middle of the day in reaction to numerous past public comments about public input being of less value at the end of the day.

- I am a local resident in the Gardiner Basin. Locals should be part of the decision making for management decisions that impact us.
- Not a single agency will take responsibility for the gut piles left near where we live.
- These have become the Killing Fields of Beattie Gulch.
- Hunting traffic can be bad.
- ** Pregnant bison should not be shot.
- ** The Tribes need to make their hunting guidelines public.
- We are all part of the web of life.
- We should both respect bison and consider the homeowners.

- Does anyone know where 100s of bison are being slaughtered?

Final

- If I were a tribal hunter I would say I have a treaty right. If I were from MDOL I might say that brucellosis is a great public health threat. If I was from MFWP I might say we have no money for cleanup—why don't you go ask the tribes? If I was the USFS I would say we are not involved.
- This killing is happening over a few hundred yards, over say 5 acres.
- We want a solution that makes common sense. Something must change.

- *(Note the following comments were read and later provide to the facilitator electronically. What follows is those electronic notes without interpretation by the facilitator)*
- My comments concern the management of Bison leaving the Park and traveling outside the agreed area as described in the current management plan. I am not criticizing the individuals who work for the various agencies but the system.
- The fencing provided by FWP moves additional bison on the state and county right of way. This has resulted in a number of vehicle accidents. Lately there has been an effort to move these animals back to the West side of the river. Unfortunately there is very little forage on that side of the river. The Park Service and the Forest Service has have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars since the early 50's to provide winter forage within the Park north of Gardiner. Unfortunately due to restrictions placed on these two agencies, the rangelands, in my unscientific opinion, has been destroyed by overgrazing.
- The Forest Service purchased the Cutler Flat area which was a very productive irrigated property. Following bureaucratic protocol, the productive meadow was sprayed to kill all the productive grass, the irrigation system removed and reseeded with approved seed. Now the animals have been left with a nothing to graze but a large acreage full of weeds.
- There is no wonder these animals are on private lands, there is nothing for these animals to eat on the federally managed lands. **This situation will not improve unless these two agencies are allowed to modify the protocol for range improvement.
- There has been considerable conversation today about learning. It is real simple, these animals need to consume 3 percent of the body weight in dry forage every day. If your plan is to follow procedure you need to have a forage base or purchase it, not take it from private individuals who may not approve of such actions.
- As this committee addresses changes to the IBMP, it is important to address where the foundation of this natural environment starts. It starts with the soil and with the plants on the soil. It does not start with the animals that graze the plants.
- ** The State of Montana has not officially communicated with local Government with all the adaptive management changes. Our law enforcement agency has not been involved with the decision to open the gate. The County Commission has not been briefed. After the second call to the FWP Director, FWP has finally agreed to begin communication.
- This committee has continually refused to allow official local Government input prior to making a decision to change the approved management guidelines which is unfortunate because we are directly impacted at the ground level by these decisions in our operational management across the county.
- ** When will local government be included in these conversations? The EIS and NEPA law require that the human environment be considered and local government be included as an agency and not ignored by the current IBMP.

- I appreciate the NPS leading a new EIS.
- The new EIS provides an opportunity to reexamine who the cooperating agencies should be.
- I believe the USFWS should be considered a Partner. They already manage bison on the CMR Wildlife Refuge.

Final

- I would like to see the USFS remain as a full Partner. It makes sense that Forest Planning should run concurrently with the IBMP and new EIS. We must look at the overall area as an ecosystem, and that includes Forest Service lands.
- I believe the BIA should also be considered as a Partner in the new EIS.
- I believe MDOL and APHIS should be coordinating agencies in the new EIS, but not full Partners to the EIS.

- Our group, BFC, stands with the buffalo and works to defend them. We want to work with people, as well.
- Thanks today for the linnii Initiative presentation, which showed the incredible respect the Blackfeet have for bison. This was the best presentation ever made at an IBMP meeting. I am sad that it doesn't match with what is happening on the ground.
- ITBC and CSKT ship bison to slaughter.
- We can come together, as those who spoke of the linnii Initiative said, and work for bison.
- Please take the words spoken today as true, and make them work.
- ** BFC requests a seat at the table as a Partner in the new EIS.

- I am encouraged by how the Partners seem to be looking to be more proactive.
- I am in favor of looking into quarantine as a way that bison can be relocated to other locations, including to tribes and as wildlife.

- *(The next speaker provided handouts to the Partners. His testimony was loud and difficult to decipher. As such the facilitator provides a brief summary of the handouts, not the testimony, here.)*
- The speaker presented two forms (scans available from the facilitator), neither of which were mentioned in the speaker's testimony:
 - a form saying that James St. Goddard sit at the table during the new EIS signed by two members of the Blackfeet identified as Chief Earl Old Person, and Chair and Chief of Elder Council Al Potts;
 - an endorsement from Eloise Cobell.
- The speaker presented a copy of the Joint Resolution on American Indian Religious Freedom (identified as Public Law 95-341—Aug. 11, 1978. 92 STAT. 469, 95th Congress [S.J. Res. 102]).

- Bison need to be preserved and protected.
- The bison are important culturally.
- We need to have the quarantine facility—it will help us find places for these animals outside the GYE.

- This is my first IBMP meeting and I am taking in all that is being said.
- We all deal with buffalo differently but I think there is common ground that we can find.
- I hope to be part of finding a common solution.
- **Even though bison are the focal point of these discussions, we need to consider all animals.
- Thank you to all speakers. But know that we are grown adults. There is no reason to point fingers.

- This is surely "The Winter of the Bison". It has been wonderful. I am ever amazed that I live in a place that others come to visit.
- We need to keep bison wild and roaming.

- Thanks for all that was said and to all who spoke about the linnii Initiative.
- I have been here 35 years and have a real respect for bison.
- I want bison to be able to expand their range out into National Forest lands—natural lands deserve to have wild animals.

Final

- The Stephens Creek facility should be open for public review, not kept a secret.
 - Inhumane treatment of bison, especially by hazing and especially to calves, is bad.
 - Considering bison as livestock is a betrayal of the public trust.
 - Tourists spend \$3.2 billion coming to Montana to see wildlife, including bison. They do not come to see hazing.
 - The population goal of 3000 animals in YNP is based on politics, not science.
 - Bison should be allowed to expand their range to Dome Mountain.
-
- I live 10.5 miles north of Gardiner.
 - I worry about safety. I drive a school bus and have had to move elk so that kids could walk freely away from the bus. It's a lot different if you have a herd of bison than a herd of buffalo.
 - Daily I chase buffalo out of my yard.
 - I have a vacation rental. Bulls have ripped up the landscaping I put in. How many other people here have out of pocket damage? I'm willing to take money from anyone who wants to help.
 - *(The speaker reads a short current piece about bison issues and damage in the Grand Canyon area)* That's what happens in my yard every day. I didn't build my fences to be strong enough to keep out bison.
-
- Thanks to the ITBC for supplying lunch.
 - Thanks to the ITBC for bringing such great bison awareness to this group.
 - I appreciate the spiritual essence of what was discussed.
 - I have never been so confident that we are moving onto a better path.
 - I was in the Gardiner Basin with all the bison outside the Park and it was so wonderful. There is just something special about this animal.
 - And we can do better.
 - I appreciate the Park initiating the new EIS. I hope that the USFS stays involved, and also believe that the USFWS would be a good partner.
 - I hope that the BOL comes to a West Side agreement. Bison should be allowed on the upper Taylor Fork.
-
- *(The next speaker provided handouts to the Partners. These included letter from a person who had been involved in a car accident with a bison, and a two-page hard copy letter from the speaker. The first document was not referred to; a few points from the second document were provided in the speaker's testimony that follows. Scans of the two letters are available from the facilitator.)*
 - This country was founded on property rights.
 - If we are going to introduce large animals onto the landscape, we have to have the resources.
 - We must also consider human safety.
 - We can't let the rangelands of the Gardiner Basin go the way the Park Service has let YNP go.
-
- NRDC, GYC, and others have run a fencing project for the past couple of years. We provide matching funds to those who need to build funds.
 - We received multiple calls from people this year in need of fencing.
 - Please call NRDC or Sam Sheppard at MFWP if you want further information.
-
- I have lived in Gardiner and West Yellowstone the last 4 years.
 - I am pro bison but not anti-rancher.
 - Just being here has given me respect for different perspectives.
 - Regarding safety, I wonder why live in a wild place if you are afraid of wild animals?
 - Cattle have done a lot of damage to the landscape, as well.

Final

- I am a rancher and I don't think that I am not compassionate. I have been caring for calves all week.
 - It is totally not right to say that we don't care.
 - I like the idea of quarantine facilities.
 - People worry—about disease, about what if the volcano comes.
 - Look at the comparison of this bison situation with the BLM and wild horses.
 - ** The brucellosis science panel said that culling should be random. I heard discussion hear about managing sex ratio—isn't that counter to random culling?
-
- We all own the weather and we all own the bison.
 - ** Here's a new idea. We heard lots today about calculating the costs associated with bison and brucellosis. Why not forget all this work and instead have insurance against infection and the damage it might cause?

*** Meeting adjourned ***

Abbreviations

- AJ—Andrea Jones
- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BB—Brooklyn Baptiste
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- CF—Cavan Fitzsimmons
- CM—Christian Mackay
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- CTUIR—Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- CWG—Citizens’ Working Group
- DaveH—David Hallac
- DH—Don Herriot
- DSA—Designated Surveillance Zone
- DW—Dan Wenk
- EA—Environmental Assessment
- EC—Ervin 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
- LG—Leonard Gray
- 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
- ML—Mike Lopez
- MO—McCoy Oatman
- MOU—Memorandum of Understanding
- MR—Majel Russell
- 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
- 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
- RF—Rebecca Frye
- RFP—Request for proposals
- RT—Rob Tierney
- RTR—Royal Teton Ranch
- RW—Rick Wallen
- SB—Scott Bischke
- SEIS—Supplemental EIS
- SK—Salish Kootenai
- SS—Sam Sheppard
- TM—Tom McDonald
- TR—Tim Reid
- 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