Management Plan for Yellowstone Bison

Winter 2014-2015

Winter 2013-2014

- 4,600-4,900 bison (3,400 north; 1,500 central)
  - 14% annual growth rate (driven by northern herd)
- Recommended removal of 600-800 bison
  - At least 300 females; 165 males; 135 calves
- Hunters and culls removed 640 bison
  - 284 adult females; 200 adult males; 152 calves; 4unk
- Less winter-kill and predation (~200) than expected (~450); Population growth rate = 0.99

Current Situation

- 4,860 bison counted in June/July
  - 4,120 adults; 740 calves
  - 3,420 northern; 1,440 central
- Predicted migration:
  - Average snow: >500 north and 500 west
  - Above-average: >1,500 north; >700 west
- Heavy cropping of summer range

Removal Scenarios

- Remove 600 bison: 300 females; 165 males; 135 calves
  - 4,020 bison at end of winter
- Remove 800 bison: 375 females, 225 males; 200 calves
  - 3,840 bison at end of winter
- Remove 1,000 bison: 500 females; 250 males; 250 calves
  - 3,650 bison at end of winter

Recommendations

- Remove ~900 bison this winter
  - 360 adult females; 100 juvenile females; 200 calves; and 240 males (primarily north area)
  - Primarily bulls in western area
- Hunting in Montana (400+ bison)
- Shipments to Meat Processing Facilities
- Shipments to Research
- Complete Quarantine/Terminal Pasture EA

Considerations

- Cow/calf removals – resistance?
  - Late season – pregnant bison
- Logistics of shipments and distribution of bison meat in a short time frame
- Contingency plans for mass or minimal migration
  - Increased tolerance; Haze/hold bison; Increased removals; Haze to capture facility?
- Long-term: 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000 bison
  - Impacts magnitude of migration
  - Trade-offs: hunting; culling; social issues

Comments / Questions?