



# NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## Interagency Bison Management Plan

### 2016 Operations

Public Meeting

November 19, 2015

Chico Hot Springs, Montana

# Gardiner Basin Hunting Regulations

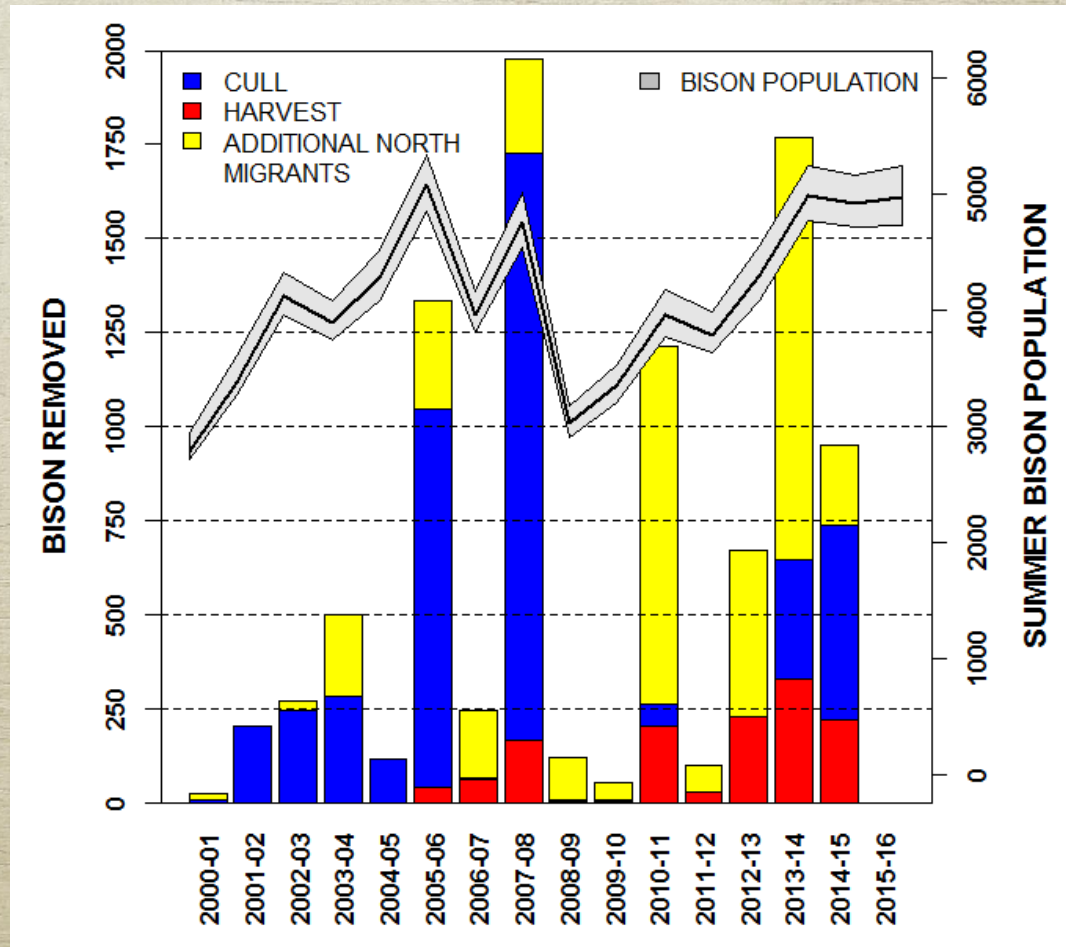
- **Treaty Hunt Tribes' Proposal: No hunting west of the Yellowstone River during Monday—Thursday every other week**
  - **September 15<sup>th</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>, with exceptions for holidays**
- **Implications**
  - **Hunting 19-24 days per month (36% reduction)**
  - **Number of bison in Gardiner basin increases?**

# **Conditions for Implementing Proposed Hunting Regulations**

- NPS keep Stephens Creek trap closed until the last tribal hunt is complete (March 31<sup>st</sup>)**
- NPS and USFS work with tribes on access to retrieve wounded bison (~10 per year?)**
- NPS and USFS work with tribes to evaluate and restore habitat**

# No Captures While Hunts Ongoing

- 2013: No culling; Harvested 148 north (81 west)



# No Captures While Hunts Ongoing

- **What is the social tolerance and feasibility for hunting?**
  - **Certainly not 800 bison at present**
  - **Maximum harvest (322) in 2014 (258 north)**
- **Impact = NPS need to do all shipping of bison during late pregnancy and calving or, more likely, no shipping at all**
- **Result = a growing bison population (5,000+)**
  - **Growth not sustainable without more habitat**
- **Currently, few captures on weekends (Friday—Sunday) or holidays when most hunts occur**
- **What is the real need or request, (1) more bison available for harvest, (2) no capture and shipping, or (3) both?**

# Retrieval of Wounded Bison

- **Lacey Act of 1894**
  - Prohibits hunting and the possession or removal of wildlife from Yellowstone (16 USC 26)
- **Ungulate reduction program (1932-1967)**
  - Native Americans field dressed bison and elk shot by government personnel; Did not hunt in park
- **As necessary, NPS will kill wounded bison, which will provide food for other animals**
- **National Forest System lands: USFS comments?**

# Habitat Enhancement

- **Use prescribed burns and other treatments to attract bison to certain areas**
- **Many fires allowed to burn in interior of park**
  - **Consider prescribed burns near boundary**
- **No shortage of grass in park interior**
  - **Fewer bison and elk in Hayden/Pelican**
  - **Frequent, repeated grazing in Lamar Valley**
- **Need long-range planning regarding bison use of landscape and hunting in more dispersed areas**
  - **NPS: Resource selection function analysis (habitat)**
  - **Habitat Subcommittee**

# Public Hunt

**Sam Sheppard**

**Weekly hunt phone calls**

**Reporting of harvests; on [ibmp.info](http://ibmp.info)?**



# Removal Recommendations, 2016

**NPS: 1,000 bison**

**CSKT: 800-900 bison**

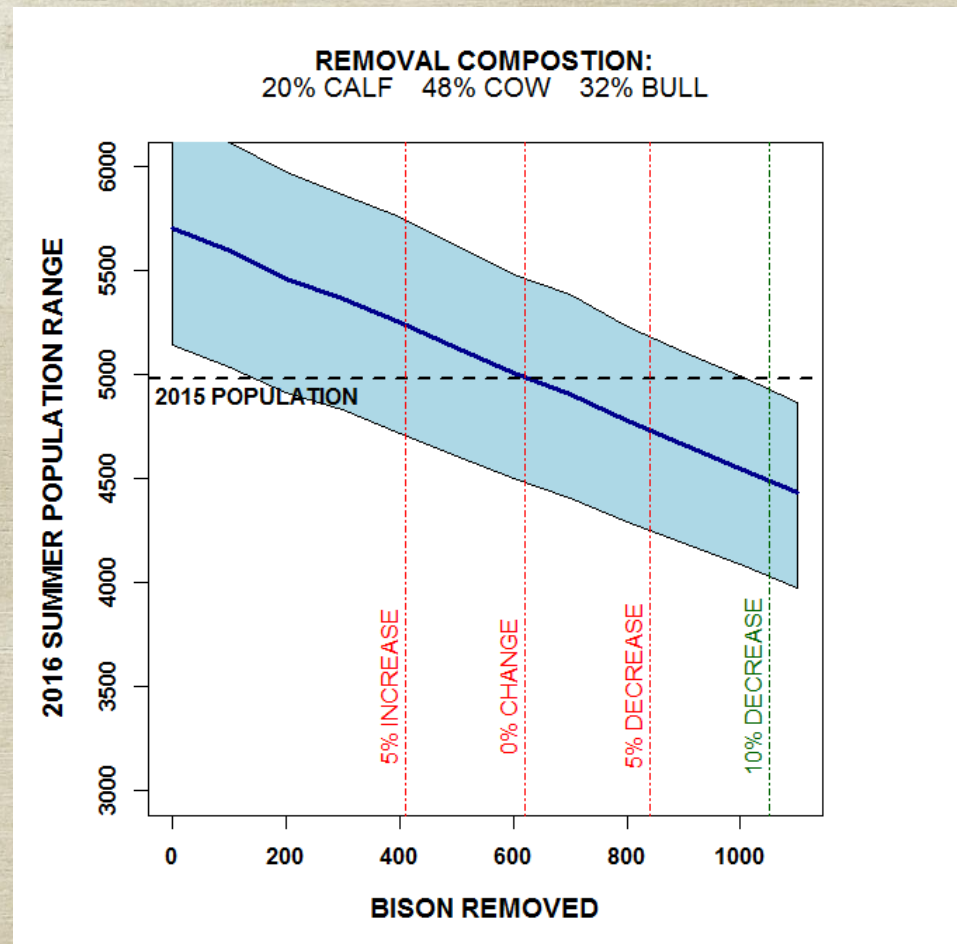
**Removals:**

**1000+ = 10% decrease**

**800+ = 5% decrease**

**600+ = stable**

**<600 = increase**



# **Bison to Processing Facilities**

**CSKT Request: Offer bison to treaty hunt tribes before other tribes, organizations, and agencies**

**NPS: We initially coordinate with CSKT, NPT, and ITBC to offer them available bison for direct transfer to processing facilities**

**If no takers or responses, then look elsewhere**

# **Bison to Research Facilities**

**Drs. Ryan Clarke and Jennifer Barfield**

**Embryo transfer research**

# **Completion of Operations Plan**

**Scott Bischke**

**By December 31<sup>st</sup>; preferably sooner**

# **Treaty Hunt Subcommittee: ITBC Request to Participate**

**Majel Russell, ITBC**

**Treaty Hunt Tribes response**

# **Move Capture Facility**

## **Final Environmental Impact Statement (IBMP)**

### **Alternative 3: Management with Emphasis on Public Hunting (pp. 123-136)**

- **The agencies would use hunting as the primary tool to control bison population size.**
- **The capture facility would be moved to an appropriate location between the park boundary and Yankee Jim Canyon.**

**Intent: Provide more hunting opportunities with less hazing or interference**

# **Reduce Long-Distance Transport to Processing Facilities**

- **Concern: Loss of useable meat due to stress hormones and injuries during transport**
- **Terminal pasture paired with quarantine**
  - **Harvest bison over longer time period; Relocate bison without brucellosis**
- **Mobile meat harvesting unit**
  - **e.g., Wild Idea Buffalo Company**
  - **\$150,000; 6-10 bison per day; 4 people to operate**

# **Transport of Bison Carcasses through Yellowstone**

- **Cannot drive from West Yellowstone to Gardiner during winter; Roads not plowed**
- **Hunters can transport bison carcasses between Beattie Gulch and Gardiner along Highway 89**
- **Permits for transport through park (e.g., Old Yellowstone Trail) available at North Entrance station**



# Haze Bison from North to West Side

- **Difficult; Disruption of park mission/visitors/operations**
- **Cannot haze bison out of park to harvest**
  - **Lacey Act of 1894: “... prevent their [wildlife] being frightened or driven from the park ...”**
- **Willing to consider transferring some bison to suitable areas in Montana (e.g., Taylor Fork) if requested by state officials**
  - **Yellowstone bison cannot be released without adequate protection from premature hunting (*Title 36 CFR: Parks, Forests, and Public Property; Part 10 – Disposal of Certain Wild Animals*)**

# **Avoid Use of Population Numbers**

- **Use management triggers instead**
- **Already done to some extent**
  - **Northern management area: <450 bison**
  - **Western management area: <700 bison**
- **Current IBMP guideline/target is 3,000 bison**
  - **Adaptive management adjustment?**
  - **Topic for new EIS?**

# Questions / Comments



# Bison North of Stephens Creek, 2015

Date	Stephens Creek to Park Boundary	North of Park Boundary	Eagle Creek Management Area	Total	Comments
December 4	0	0	4	4	
December 11	0	0	0	0	
December 15	0	0	0	0	
December 31	0	0	0	0	
January 5	0	11	0	11	Hunting increases in early January
January 9	78	39	0	117	
January 12	17	113	7	137	8 bison harvested by January 13
January 14	105	24	0	129	Capture operations begin
January 20	53	2	21	76	
January 23	25	0	0	25	70 bison harvested by January 22
January 27	50	1	11	62	
January 28	20	0	11	31	
January 30	37	2	10	49	
February 2	25	77	0	102	
February 4	0	1	0	1	Capture operations end on February 5; 145 bison harvested by that date
February 9	0	1	0		Migration wanes in early February due to mild weather and melting snow pack
February 11	0	0	3		
February 18	1	0	0		
March 3	0	1	0		
March 9	0	1	0		
March 20	2	1	0		
April 16	2	1	0		

# Bison Harvests, 2014-2015

## Captures Jan. 14 to Feb. 5

Date	NORTH				WEST			
	Male	Female	Unknown		Male	Female	Unknown	
	Adult	Adult	Unk	Calf	Adult	Adult	Unk	Calf
11/15-11/16					2			
11/17-11/24					1			
11/25-12/1	1							
12/1-12/22	1							
12/23-1/5	6							
1/6-1/13	6							
1/14-1/22	37	16		1				
1/23-2/5	52	8		17				
2/6-2/23	22		3		3	6		
2/24-3/6	3							
3/6-4/13					1			
4/14-4/17	20	5		3				
5/1-5/30					5			
Subtotal	148	29	3	21	12	6	0	0
Total	201				18			