

CWG 2017 PROGRESS REPORT ON 2011 CITIZENS' WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Categories Used:

A. Solid progress

- Completed or substantially complete
- Ongoing (i.e., action taken but needs to go on year after year, no discrete endpoint or goal)

B. In progress or partial progress

- Some action taken but either incomplete or started then stopped.

C. No Action

Grey Highlighting = CWG 2017 Priority Recommendation going forward

2011 CWG RECOMMENDATION	2017 STATUS	STATUS NOTES
<p>Habitat Recommendation 1: Identify public lands that could/should be open to bison year-round in accordance with state and federal law. (Lead = MFWP/USFS) <i>Note: It was decided that this work would be carried out under the State of MT Bison Management Plan which at the time was in progress and expected to be complete by 2013.</i></p>	<p>Partial progress (started then stopped).</p>	<p><i>The State of MT Bison Management Plan is still "in process", and appears to be stuck with no decision expected anytime soon. Furthermore, the state-wide plan EIS did not look at site specific locations – i.e. it was programmatic rather than site specific. Therefore, it will not identify public lands that could/should be open to bison year-round. This would require additional site specific EAs following a decision on the programmatic EIS.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 2: Systematically identify suitable, available habitat outside Yellowstone National Park in the Greater Yellowstone Area (i.e., Federal, State and Private lands). (Lead = MFWP, USFS)</p>	<p>Partial progress</p>	<p><i>Areas identified on GNF lands were included in the State MEPA analysis for potential expansion west of YNP. Governor's Dec. 2015 decision opens up more than 250,000 acres to limited numbers of bison year-round on the west-side. Consideration of Dome Mountain WMA (and other state, private lands where bison are welcome) was also part of the original recommendation which has not come to fruition. CWG still wants consideration of state and private lands (where bison are welcome), including outside Gardiner Basin.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 3ai: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: a) <u>Hebgen Basin</u> - i. Designate Horse Butte Peninsula and the Flats as year-round bison habitat by May 2012 following an adequate public process for this management change. (Lead = MFWP/MDOL).</p>	<p>Solid Progress</p>	<p><i>Solid Progress for limited numbers of bison. CWG wants to see consideration of bison on public lands in general outside of Hebgen Basin.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 3aii: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: a) <u>Hebgen Basin</u> - ii. By the end of 2012, interview and map landowners to identify where bison are welcome, unwelcome, which landowners are on the fence and what their reservations are.</p>	<p>NA (Partners Rejected)</p>	<p><i>CWG would like reconsideration of this recommendation.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 3aiii: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: a) <u>Hebgen Basin</u> iii. Investigate and come to conclusion on feasibility of fencing or acceptable alternatives on the Flats to prevent co-mingling with private livestock. (Lead = MFWP/MDOL)</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>This was Partially Rejected due to concerns over impediments to other wildlife and because snow levels in the area would reduce the effectiveness of deterring bison during winter months. This is ongoing on a small scale with the Bison Coexistence Fencing Program.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 3bi: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: b) <u>Gardiner Basin</u> - i. By the end of 2012, interview and map landowners to identify where bison are welcome, unwelcome, which landowners are on the fence and what their reservations are. (NGOs with MFWP support).</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p><i>Subcommittees stated this work was Already Complete. NGO effort shifted to working with individual landowners interested in strategic fencing. NGOs are continuing their work with interested landowners. CWG would like this effort to be updated.</i></p>

<p>Habitat Recommendation 3bii: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: b) <u>Gardiner Basin</u></p> <p>- ii. By the end of 2013, implement adequate fencing or acceptable alternatives. (NGOs with MFWP support). Subcommittee accepted this but considered it low priority.</p>	<p>Solid Progress</p>	<p><i>Ongoing. Bison Coexistence Fencing Program.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 3biii: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: b) <u>Gardiner Basin</u></p> <p>- iii. Following the interview process and implementation of fencing/alternative strategies, consider designating the Gardiner Basin year-round habitat using an adequate public process.</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>Partial Progress with the Governor's decision on the EA. Only allows bull bison to use the Gardiner Basin year-round.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 3di: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: d) <u>Upper Gallatin/Taylor Fork/Cabin Creek/Porcupine/Buffalo Horn Creek, etc.</u></p> <p>- i. Begin a public process to evaluate opportunities for reintroduction and management of bison in this area, including within Yellowstone National Park. (Lead = MFWP, USFS, MDOL).</p>	<p>No Action</p>	<p><i>Potential focus area for the new iteration of the CWG. What would a public process look like? What would it take in order to approve and implement a plan to move bison in to the Upper Gallatin, etc.? Bison are already allowed in there according to the Governor's EA decision. However, there needs to be a plan for how to get them there and how to manage them once they are there.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 3dii: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: d) <u>Upper Gallatin/Taylor Fork/Cabin Creek/Porcupine/Buffalo Horn Creek, etc.</u></p> <p>- ii. Start work to amend/alter State and Federal Management Plans and other decisions to account for the presence of bison on the landscape and take responsibility/be accountable for successfully implementing those plans regarding bison. (Lead = MFWP).</p>	<p>Partial Progress.</p>	<p><i>The Governor's year-round habitat decision has been formally adopted into the IBMP. However we assume new plans would have to be adopted if translocation or reintroduction of bison into the Upper Gallatin/Taylor Fork is accepted.</i></p>
<p>Habitat Recommendation 3e: Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically:</p> <p>- i. Additional Habitat Areas: Immediately initiate and complete by the end of 2013 the statewide bison management plan to restore wild bison to additional biologically suitable, socially acceptable areas.</p>	<p>Partial Progress (started then stopped)</p>	<p><i>See Habitat Recommendation 1. This would be accomplished through completion of the State-wide Bison Management Plan.</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 1: Modify the Interagency Bison Management Plan Zones 1, 2, and 3 with an eye to finding better habitat solutions particularly in light of changes that have occurred since zones were designated in 2000. Identify habitat that can alleviate population pressure, including available public and private lands, and potential habitat acquisition as well as potential funding sources.</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>This would be addressed through the new EIS/IBMP process, as well as identifying additional lands (both public and private) for bison to use and implementing strategies to help with dispersal in to these areas. Also related to Habitat Recommendation 2, 3d, 3e, Population Management Recommendation 5.</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 2: Strive to manage bison as wildlife, and complete, implement, and support a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks management plan that includes setting bison population objectives and hunting strategies as a priority population management tool.</p>	<p>Partial progress</p>	<p><i>Would be accomplished through completion of the State-wide Bison Management Plan.</i></p>

<p>Population Management Recommendation 3*(a): Make hunting a bigger component of bison management and consider different seasons or other opportunities to increase the impact of hunting. (Lead = MFWP, NPT, CSKT)</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>This is constrained by the limited footprint for hunting to take place especially in the Gardiner Basin. Also affected by firing line situation at Beattie Gulch. This was a priority concern for the CWG which feels this is a new issue that needs to be resolved asap. In general, citizens are not happy with the type of hunting that is currently taking place and certainly don't want to push for more of it until there is more habitat available and agreed upon hunt restrictions to allow for broader dispersal. Notes: MFWP increased the number of state hunters in 2014 from 50 total guaranteed licenses to 80. MFWP also increased its flexibility to utilize a roster of 200+ additional hunters in order to address large out-migrations or tolerance-area breaches.</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 3*(b): Outside the Park, the main means for controlling bison abundance and distribution should be state-administered and tribal hunting. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should test new methods for dispersing hunting in time and space. (Lead = MFWP, NPT, CSKT)</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>See above. This is limited due to the small footprint and firing line at Beattie Gulch. The CWG agrees that this is a significant problem, and one that IBMP Partners must prioritize in solving. The issue of better dispersal of bison on the landscape in space & time must be addressed by all who share this resource.</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 3*C: A late-winter hunt for yearlings only should be tested for hunter interest and public acceptance. (Lead = MFWP, NPT, CSKT)</p>	<p>No Action</p>	<p><i>This was formerly under consideration and possible under the flexibility of the bison roster implementation. Unsure if any progress was made.</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 3*(d): "Depredation" hunts should be available throughout the year and used to manage bison distribution. (Lead = MFWP, NPT, CSKT)</p>	<p>Solid Progress</p>	
<p>Population Management Recommendation 3*e: Other means of population control should include fencing bison out of areas where they are not welcome (Lead = MDOL), and</p>	<p>No Action?</p>	
<p>Population Management Recommendation 3*(f): using fire, fertilizers or other habitat management to attract bison to areas where they are welcome (Lead = USFS).</p>	<p>No Action?</p>	
<p>Population Management Recommendation 4: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Tribes hunting Yellowstone bison should work more closely together to set collective hunt targets and to document the hunting success numbers. (Lead = MFWP, NPT, CSKT)</p> <p><i>Notes: Previous discussion amongst partners: Recognized hesitancy on behalf of tribes to commit to an absolute hunting limit—would they commit to one? Response—yes but should be based on population, population goals, and what is available to tribal hunters. CWG requested that 1) Partners switch emphasis from how many do we take to how many do we leave, and 2) recognition that hunting changes behavior (e.g., migration patterns, where new groups might establish themselves).</i></p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>CWG: Priority Issue, needs to be addressed. MFWP has continually worked to collaborate with treaty hunting tribes on this. However, the CWG is very concerned about the current hunt and feels there is tremendous room for improvement as far as public safety, public perception of the hunt (many feel it is unethical), and allowing bison to disperse farther out on the landscape (i.e. commit to leaving some bison on the landscape). It seems there is a good handle on the number of bison harvested through public and tribal hunts.</i></p>

<p>Population Management Recommendation 5a-5f*: Agree on and establish a target population range that is biologically and ecologically acceptable and accounts for a variety of public interests. As Interagency Bison Management Partners, agree on criteria for evaluating and determining a population range and appropriate management tools, such as: (Lead = Partners)</p> <p>a). Winter range outside the Park (target population range could change to reflect changes in habitat availability),</p> <p>b). Risk factors</p> <p>c). Individual agency management mandates, constraints and responsibilities (such as the National Park Service’s mandate to manage its resources unimpaired for future generation and its natural regulation policy),</p> <p>d). Genetic diversity, population structure and demographics, reproduction, and distribution,</p> <p>e.) Realistic opportunity for addressing private land owners’ concerns, and</p> <p>f). Hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p>Assume this would be tackled through the new EIS/IBMP process. NPS did complete scoping but the process appears to be held up. Some of these have been looked at but no collective decision on what the population range should be has been determined. The CWG is concerned and feels strongly that an appropriate population range that is based on biological and social carrying capacity must be defined and implemented in order to shift the current model for how these bison are managed. Would like to see population objectives developed for areas outside of the park where bison are tolerated. For example, consider managing bison numbers based on biological and social carrying capacity of different areas outside the park rather than a set total population target.</p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 6a-6d: When bison have to be removed because of high migration numbers, management constraints, safety, etc., the priorities should be (in order):</p> <p>a). Hunting outside the park, (Lead = MFWP)</p> <p>b). Moving them to nearby appropriate available lands,</p> <p>c). Translocation from the Yellowstone area (capture, quarantine, transport and release), and (Lead = NPS, MDOL, APHIS).</p> <p>d). Lethal removal by managing agencies. (Lead = MDOL)</p>	<p>No Action</p>	<p>a). <u>Hunting outside the park</u>, MFWP has continued to look for every opportunity to increase the appropriate fair chase use of hunters as a management tool. Various scenarios have been attempted to maximize hunting opportunity (for example: an agreement between NPS and the tribes to implement hunt rest days in exchange for NPS agreeing to not open the trap until mid-Feb) but no real effective solution has been found. The situation appears to be getting worse.</p> <p>b). <u>Moving them to nearby appropriate available lands</u>, Note: Partner’s Rejected - Moving (hazing) and translocation (capture and move) are recognized to not be effective tools for long-term population management. However, it was recognized as a valuable short-term tool. CWG would like the Partners to reconsider this now as it pertains to getting bison in to the Upper Gallatin/Taylor Fork.</p> <p>c). <u>Translocation from the Yellowstone area</u>. Note: Partner’s accepted for post-quarantined bison only. Though a lot of effort has gone in to developing a quarantine and translocation program including the development of an EA and building of a quarantine facility on the Fort Peck reservation, the whole process appears politically stuck with no clear path forward. With the exception of the feasibility study animals, no bison have been translocated from the Yellowstone area to anywhere other than to a slaughter or research facility. CWG wants to see this resolved.</p> <p>d). <u>Lethal removal by managing agencies</u>. Lethal removal (i.e. slaughter) still seems to be one of the (if not, the) “primary” means to control bison numbers.</p> <p>2017 Status Overall: No Action. This “order” has not been implemented.</p>

<p>Population Management Recommendation 8: In order to relocate bison to lands elsewhere, Montana should develop and implement a translocation process for bison leaving quarantine. The quarantine process should use the minimum containment infrastructure necessary for places receiving bison. (Lead = MFWP, MDOL, APHIS, NPS)</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>Though a lot of effort has gone in to developing a quarantine and translocation program including the development of an EA and building of a quarantine facility on the Fort Peck reservation, it appears we are back to the drawing board with this. With the exception of the feasibility study animals, no bison have been translocated from the Yellowstone area to anywhere other than to a slaughter or research facility.</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 9: Determining where bison completing quarantine will go and how they will be restored and conserved on the landscape, with the highest priority on managing them as public and tribal wildlife, must precede capturing bison and implementing quarantine. Recipients of quarantined bison must be identified and an acceptable, appropriate translocation process must be in place prior to quarantining Yellowstone bison. This determination of where bison will go should be integrated with all Fish, Wildlife and Parks or other assessments of relocation possibilities for wild bison in Montana. (Lead = MFWP, NPS)</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>MFWP initiated a statewide bison management planning effort in 2012 to determine if there are suitable locations for restoration of bison in Montana. MFWP then developed a draft programmatic environmental impact statement in 2015 to address the potential for bison restoration in Montana. The state has still not released a final EIS or decision on this and it appears that this process is stalled for the foreseeable future as well. Following a decision, a sight specific EA would still have to be developed to look at specific locations for relocating bison.</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 10: Bison translocation and bison movement should not include moving seropositive animals outside the current DSA, and may preclude relocating seropositive animals to new areas within the DSA with the intent of establishing new herd ranges. The intent is to avoid establishing new sources of disease and new disease risks to cattle. (Lead = MDOL)</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p><i>Clarification: this did not mean bison going to a quarantine facility outside the DSA. Partner's previously noted: it is impractical to move Quarantine Feasibility Study seronegative bison to an area within the DSA where they could become re-infected.</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 11: Hazing of bulls should be minimized, unless there are issues with property damage or safety, because they are not a factor in the issue of brucellosis transmission. Hazing of newborn calves should be minimized for humane reasons. (Lead = MDOL, MFWP)</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>Bulls are now allowed in the Gardiner Basin year-round and fewer bison (including bulls and calves) are being hazed on the west-side. (It was later clarified that this meant within current tolerance zones).</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 12: Discuss expected adverse weather events (similar to fire management) and work with involved entities (public and private) to develop and agree on contingency plans. (Lead = Partners)</p>	<p>Solid Progress</p>	<p><i>See 2014 IBMP Report Appendix</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 13: Develop and work with the livestock industry to implement an effective cattle vaccine and protocol to reduce the risk of transmission and make bison presence/translocation more acceptable. Support/secure funding for ongoing vaccine research. <i>Note: Support for vaccine research was rejected by the partners.</i></p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>CWG wants to reiterate that they want research to be focused on cattle, not wildlife. Research seems to be moving toward "wildlife"; "where's that money coming from?"</i></p>
<p>Population Management Recommendation 14: Lobby for removing the significant barriers that exist for Brucella abortus research because of the select agent listing. (Lead = Lead Partner that year—CSKT, ITBC, NPT)</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>Much effort has been made over the years to lobby for removing B. abortus from the select agent list. For example, in May 2012, the Partners (excluding APHIS) signed a letter urging Montana's Congressional delegation to ask the Centers for Disease Control to move to a tiered approach when classifying B. abortus to allow research to more readily proceed. This was denied at the time. Unsure of recent efforts and/or developments on this but last we heard progress was being made and/or possibly that it has been removed from the list?</i></p>

<p>Population Management Recommendation 16: Outside the Park, hazing and removals should be minimized in selected, suitable areas to establish year-round populations of Montana bison. This approach should be pursued incrementally in a “learn as we go” fashion. This will be a public process that identifies the boundaries of the area and a contingency plan if bison leave that area. (Lead = MDOL, MFWP)</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>Partial Progress with the Governor’s decision on the EA. Only allows bull bison to use the Gardiner Basin year-round, and limited numbers of bison to use the new west-side expansion area. Note: Minimizing “removals” should also include hunting to allow bison to establish in areas.</i></p>
<p>Risk Reduction Recommendation 6: Reduce livestock/wildlife interactions at key seasons. This will include building upon and improving techniques already in use as well testing and application of other innovations (e.g. strategic hazing using low-stress animal handling methods; targeted fencing; guard dogs to keep wildlife off feedlines/haystacks/calving areas; trained dogs to locate fetal material to enable cleanup, and so forth). (Lead = CWG) <i>Note from Previous Partner Discussion: decreasing interactions very important. However not realistic as this is not our job. Decision: Partners accepted this recommendation but said they cannot be the lead for the work.</i></p>	<p>Partial Progress</p>	<p><i>The Bison Coexistence Fencing Program was initiated. In 2013 Working Dogs for Conservation was invited to discuss options for using conservation detection dogs for use in disease management. Not sure what else has been considered (i.e. fetal tissue removal/clean-up, etc.?).</i></p>
<p>Risk Reduction Recommendation 8: Remote vaccination of wild bison using the current vaccine and delivery method as a means of reducing risk of transmission should not be a priority at this time. (Lead = None pending outcome of EIS)</p>	<p>Solid Progress</p>	<p><i>Solid Progress though apparently still being considered by APHIS/DOL. NPS staff issued a Record of Decision regarding remote vaccination on 3 March 2014. The NPS concluded that the implementation of park-wide remote vaccination at this time would likely not achieve desired results and could have unintended adverse effects to the bison population and visitor experience. CWG feels strongly that efforts should not be focused on vaccinating wildlife.</i></p>