

Summary Report from the Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting August 1, 2018



First draft presented August 17th, 2018 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke

The following summary report reflects activities at the August 1, 2018 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held at the Hilton Garden Inn in Bozeman, Montana. This report comes from the flip chart notes of facilitator Scott Bischke¹. The report will be marked *Draft* until formal Partner agreement to make it *Final* at the start of their next meeting. The nine Partner attendees were Rebecca Frey (APHIS), Leonard Gray (CSKT), Ervin Carlson (ITBC), Mike Honeycutt (MBOL), Martin Zaluski (MDOL), Mark Deleray (MFWP), Daniel Wenk (NPS-YNP), Neil Thagard (NPT), and Mary Erickson (USFS-CGNF). In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~70 other people in the room, either staff members from IBMP organizations or members of the public.

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Action items identified

Table 1. Action items identified during this meeting

#	Who	What	By when
1	SB	Post the Apr 2018 meeting report to the website as “final,” pending agreement of NPS and MDOL on quarantine presentation in the section on quarantine	ASAP
2	SB	Partners asked that a discussion of highway safety be added to their November meeting agenda)	For the next meeting
3	SB	MD closed the discussion by asking that a) habitat manipulation be added to the Parked Items list for a future meeting (** Action item 3);	ASAP
4	MD	b) saying that MFWP would put together a draft hunting regulation speaking to partial closures on the West Side and send to Partners to review and share with their tribal councils and agency leads (** Action item 4).	By Oct 1
5	SB and MD	Document management, compilation, editing, and preparation for Partner review of both the 2018 Annual Report and 2018/19 Winter Operations Plan	By multiple dates shown in body of report
6			
7	NPS	Completion of annual bison population estimates; resulting report sent to IBMP Partners for their review	By Sep 15

Agreeing to previous meeting minutes

The meeting started with introductions of Partners, staff, and all members of the general public in attendance, followed by a short review of IBMP history. Then the facilitator asked if there were any objections or changes to the draft meeting report from the April 2018 meeting, and noted the report has been available in draft for review since shortly after that meeting. MDOL and NPS reported still being in discussion over the wording in the section on quarantine. Partners all agreed that once MDOL and NPS agreed upon the language of that section, the facilitator, per Partner Protocols, is to post the April 2018 meeting notes to IBMP.info as *Final* (** action item 1).



Figure 1.—Over the course of the day, roughly 80 people—including Partners, staff, and the public—attended this meeting of the IBMP.

The facilitator also reminded Partners of their agreement to include focus on three items that they agreed to as having a good chance for short term success. That agreement, first discussed at their May 2017 meeting and finalized at their August 2017 meeting, can be found at <http://ibmp.info/Library/20170803/20170803.php> (see link titled “Report on increasing IBMP Partner

effectiveness”). The three items of focus—1) Improving utilization of expanded bison habitat, especially in new West Side tolerance area, 2) Creating a bison quarantine facility, 3) Improving safety, quality of the north side hunt/improving boundary issues—form three sections of this meeting, as reported below.

Improve utilization of expanded bison habitat, especially in new West Side tolerance area

Led by Julie Cunningham of MFWP, Partners did a short review of the Technical Committee presentation from their April 24th meeting. That presentation — which can be found in the meeting report and on the meeting pages at <http://ibmp.info/Library/20180425/20180425.php> — described habitat suitability and most likely migration pathways for bison moving into the new West Side tolerance area. Julie reminded the Partners of the four most likely migrations routes, as detailed in Figure 2.

POSSIBLE MIGRATION ROUTE	PROS	CONS	COMPOSITION/SEASON
Gallatin Headwaters	Shortest distance between current distribution and west-side habitat	Would require movement through alpine areas which is not likely behavior	Summer/fall; likely small bull groups
Highway 191	Most likely given current distribution and tolerance	Bison would have to move through 9-10 miles of suboptimal habitat	Year-round, could be bull or cow/calf groups
Red Canyon	Within current tolerance area	Would only be possible in summer through series of meadows	Summer only, likely small bull groups
Tom Miner Basin	Biologically, most likely migratory pathway with the most connected bison habitat	Is outside current tolerance area	Possible year-round, most-likely in summer, could be bull or cow/calf groups

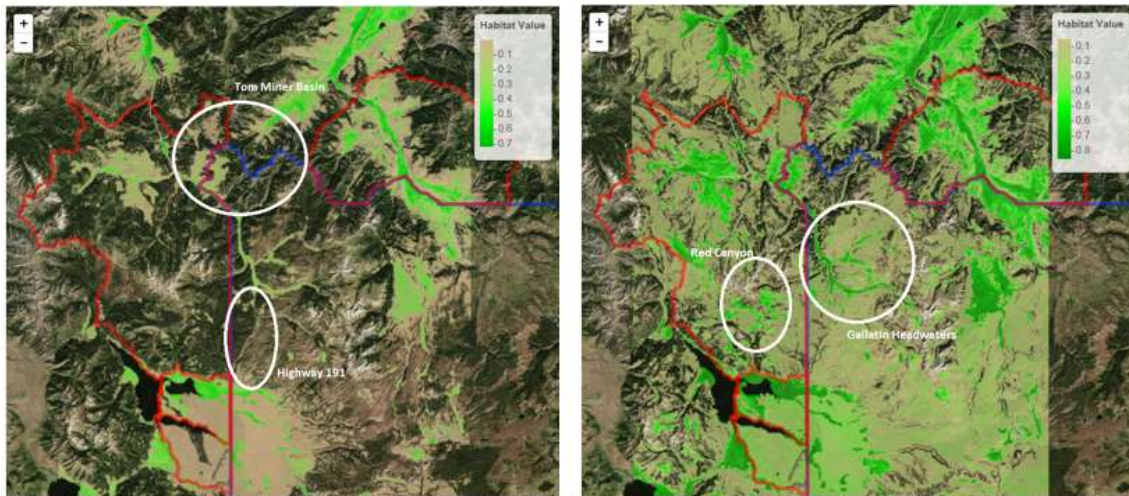


Figure 1: Potential bison corridors connecting current distribution with west-side habitat expansion area. On left, base map indicates year-round bison habitat with the Highway 191 and Tom Miner Basin highlighted. On right, base map indicates summer (July) bison habitat with Red Canyon and Gallatin Headwaters highlighted.

Figure 2.—Description and map of possible migration routes for bison seeking to move into the new West Side tolerance zone. This information was first presented at the April 2018 IBMP meeting, but reviewed at this meeting.

Julie said that bison *are* exploring. At least one bull bison was seen along Highway 191 this spring and another was reported to have briefly moved into Idaho, north of Island Park. To promote, or at least not hinder, such explorations Julie described that MFWP is considering proposing partial closure of West Side hunting. That closure could be accomplished for limited times and/or in limited locations, both selected to stop hunting pressure from limiting the extent of bison migration into the new West Side tolerance zone. Such a closure would

require sanctioning by the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission. Assuming the idea were pursued, the earliest closure implementation would likely be for the 2020/21 hunting season. The process to change hunting season regulations requires a series of steps from public involvement through review by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

MD stated that the idea of a partial closure was exploratory at this point and that FWP was soliciting Partner feedback. He noted that such a closure would impact state hunters only; to be effective, tribal hunters would also have to agree to the closures. Partner feedback to MD's question was almost entirely positive to the idea of partial hunt closures to encourage bison to pioneer new migration corridors. Some key points made in the ensuing discussion are captured below:

- A great idea. The key issue is that getting migration started is a slow process. You need to give the bison time—it could be years—to explore new migration pathways. Yes they can go into or through elevations of 8500-9500 feet if there is habitat there or to move to beyond those elevations. We expect the bulls to be the main pioneers. It's tough to predict when and where they will go — it may be some unique event or weather incident or something we don't expect that gets them started on a new migration route.
- Hunter harvest is actually low on the West Side. We also lose bison to traffic accidents and that matters to bison pioneering new areas, as well. So while we consider partial hunting closures, which we agree with, we must also consider highway and safety restrictions to protect not only people, but bison as well.
- Yes, I think they will largely go right up Highway 191. One thing we could do is open up the borrow pits and land near to the road, pushing trees back away from the road, giving them open ground to walk up so the road is not their only option in that area.
- One thing to realize, however, is that safety-wise bison are not like deer and elk. Bison don't dart out into the road.
- The partial closure is a great idea but if implemented, it can't be on a year-by-year basis. We need to make it at least semi-permanent, long enough for the bison to establish their migration pathways. The concept I assume would be that once those pathways are established, the hunt could start again.
- One hurdle is that the FWP Commission will immediately ask, "Will all hunters be doing this or just state hunters?"
- Q—Is the only goal to increase bison for hunting? We would also want the goal to be increasing live bison populations outside of the Park. A—Yes, goal fits with those of the IBMP: to increase free-roaming bison without brucellosis transmission. We recognize that hunting needs to be used as a control.
- The ShoBan want bison dispersal to a larger landscape. We would likely be OK with temporary closure but we don't want to be locked out. I could talk to our council about a possible curtailment of hunting; we have done that in the past near Gardner.
- We at the NPT don't have many hunters on the West Side. We respect the concept of improving bison dispersal across the landscape.
- It is the right thing to do for the animals. They need to build up their numbers in the new tolerance area.
- A repeat, we must include an emphasis on highway safety as part of any plan to increase bison migration into the new West Side tolerance area. (** Action item 2 — Partners asked that a discussion of highway safety be added to their November meeting agenda; includes the potential to discuss North and West sides, and to build off recent North Side discussions held by TR and MH with MDOT and Park Country Commissioners).
- Regarding highway safety, it's notable that MDOT in the past asked the IBMP when and where bison are likely to be moving. Now with some locations of year-round tolerance we need new methods of communication with them.
- MDOL is OK with the idea of bison moving north into the new West Side tolerance area. There are no cattle in that area.
- At CTUIR we don't have lots of hunting in that area but would have to take the closure idea back to our Council. There's lots of pressure in the North so we want greater dispersal there, as well. It's important to note that the type of hunting matters. Sometimes hunting can *promote* animals to move where you want them.

- In the long term, we should also consider over- and under-passes to aid movement and improve safety. Also, we need to consider creating new habitat as a way to assist animal migration.
- The USFS is open to the idea of habitat manipulation, but how would that happen? Should we get a proposal from the Habitat Subcommittee to get the ball rolling? For us, such work needs to make it into the USFS work plan before anything will get done.
- Red Canyon would be a good place to implement controlled burn to open migration habitat. (Some back and forth discussion occurred regarding natural burn was already sufficient, and if prescribed burn was cooler and thus less damaging, plus could be directed specifically at such items as noxious weeds.)

MD closed the discussion by a) asking that habitat manipulation be added to the Parked Items list for a future meeting (** Action item 3); b) saying that MFWP would put together a draft hunting regulation speaking to partial closures on the West Side and send to Partners to review and share with their tribal councils and agency leads (** Action item 4); and c) requesting that a session on highway safety be added to the Nov2018 meeting agenda (already noted under ** Action item 2).

Bison quarantine and translocation

DW reported that APHIS and the State of Montana had approved Stephen's Creek as a quarantine facility. Roughly 100 animals (75 males, 25 females) are being held there for serum testing. The next test is planned for this week. NPS is in active discussion with APHIS and the State of Montana regarding conditions that must be met to allow bison to be moved to Fort Peck Tribe facilities.

DW reported that a meeting was held in Washington DC on February 28, 2018 that included representatives from NPS, APHIS, the Fort Peck Tribe, and the Secretary of Interior's office. He said that NPS has been, and remains, hopeful to move bison from YELL to Fort Peck by the end of 2018. However, questions about risk management were brought forward by APHIS at the meeting that make achieving bison transfer by the end of 2018 uncertain. MR requested that the Fort Peck Tribes be included in such discussions. DW responded that his operating assumption was that APHIS was expected to brief the tribal groups.

A question remains open regarding whether the Fort Peck facility is certified as a quarantine facility. Dan Wenner of ITBC said that APHIS had committed to coming up with an MOA for certifying the Fort Peck facility. BF said that yes, she thought that the Fort Peck Facility had passed inspection by APHIS personnel. She said the new concern regarding risk management was being driven from Washington DC, however, and she did not have insight to how and when those decisions were being made.

MH said that MDOL is present at Stephen's Creek when testing is conducted by NPS. We want risk assessment and called for "negligible risk." It is a standard we know we can reach because we already have done it — though that was the group of bison that were illegally released while still in quarantine.

MR asked, "What is *negligible risk*?" She said that ITBC and the Fort Peck Tribes want the quarantine MOA signed and the Fort Peck facility to be able to begin operating as a certified quarantine facility as they have long envisioned and committed substantial funding towards.

Improving safety, quality of the North Side hunt/improving boundary issues

JH reported that the Hunt Managers' meeting had been held in June in Missoula. The meeting included representatives of the NPT, CSKT, Yakama, CTUIR, Blackfeet, Northern Arapaho, and ShoBan tribes. Many topics were covered including such items as hunt issues at Beattie Gulch, review of last year's hunt, and keys to having a safe hunt. While tribal regulations differ, a great willingness for the tribes to work together was noted.

JW noted that a huge part of safety is communication, a major topic in the tribal hunting MOA signed in the past year (as described in the last several IBMP meeting reports). He emphasized the need for all parties, even if they have not signed the MOA, to participate in shared communications regarding safety and the hunt. While Beattie Gulch is most often discussed, that communication also needs to occur for hunting areas beyond Beattie Gulch.

The state has been invited to sign the tribal MOA. NT noted that Mike Volesky (MFWP) was present at the hunt managers' meeting in part to consider that possibility. Mike had some language modifications to suggest

— legal representatives from the tribes and state were to meet after the hunt managers meeting to consider language that would be mutually agreeable. It is a complicated discussion, NT said, including issues of safety, conservation, legality, and jurisdiction. It was suggested that the groups may have a difference in focus: that the state being more focused on a cap in hunters while the tribes are more focused on communication and organization.

A game warden from the Blackfeet described the Tribe's first year hunting (North Side). The Tribe gave out 81 licenses. He noted that the tribal hunters found hunting difficult, not knowing the lay of the land. The Blackfeet worked with other tribes to better learn the area and the best way to hunt it. In future years the tribe will hunt year-around, the warden said, and will not cap the number of licenses nor put any restrictions on whether hunters can take bulls, cows, or calves. He noted that Blackfeet hunters wear orange and always have a game warden present when they hunt.

LW said the ShoBan also strongly recognize the need for safety in the hunt and noted the importance of a backup hunter. He added a suggestion for all hunters: that they remove the full carcass after a successful hunt.

ME said that she appreciates the positive things that have come from the MOA. She noted that the USFS has a responsibility for safety, as well, and that should unsafe conditions prevail one of the few remedies the USFS has at its disposal is closure of a hunting area. We must demonstrate we are sustaining safety, she said.

NT wondered if the IBMP Partners might create an orientation that new hunting tribes could attend, thus increasing the safety of the hunt, overcoming the startup issues stated by the Blackfeet in their first year, and avoiding the potential closure mentioned by ME. Adam Pankratz said that while no formal orientation exists, MFWP is willing to meet in the field and/or by phone with new hunters. It is hard to get started hunting, he agreed. He said MFWP will help the Crow and the Arapaho as needed and if requested.

JW noted that if there was a closure at Beattie Gulch, the safety issue (and others) would simply be pushed further North where hunting was once again allowed. Excellent communication would still be critical. Others agreed.

Along with safety, a recurring theme of the discussion—as it has been many times in the past—was the need to increase bison dispersal. That discussion brought requests from several that tribal enforcement and tribal hunters be better informed regarding operation of the trap at Stephen's Creek. Coordination and cooperation between all parties was again stressed.

Regarding the trap at Stephen's Creek, RW said that yes the trap hinders some bison from progressing north to areas outside the park where they can be hunted. However, he noted, in some years many bison have been taken by hunters after the trap began operating, and that while in operation some bison are allowed to pass the trap. He stressed the need for all parties to work together; we too often talk about competition when should be talking about collaboration. He asked that hunters reset their expectations — that they shouldn't feel they are 100% guaranteed to get a bison. He also asked the Partners not to forget two ideas presented in previous meetings: terminal quarantine and hunting pastures. Hunting pastures could be a way to increase hunter take.

Report on Considerations of a Temporary North Side Capture Facility

At their last (April 2018) meeting, Partners discussed the potential value of creating a temporary North Side bison capture facility, as has been done in the past on the West Side. Tim Reid of NPS organized and led a group of Partners and staff to consider such a possibility, including phone calls and field inspections of possible locations. Tim provided a summary of the deliberations. His full talk is presented below, plus is available on the meeting webpage (see <http://ibmp.info/Library/20180801/20180801.php>).

Temporary Capture Facility

Why now:

- Help facilitate greater bison distribution across the landscape and improve harvest efficacy and distribution before capturing bison
- ROD indicated capture locations in Zone 2 would be considered once hunting in Montana was emphasized to control bison abundance and distribution

Events

- April IBMP Meeting
 - Partners agreed to explore temporary trap locations
 - Partner representatives were assigned
- June 6 Phone Call
 - Discussed background and purpose
 - Identified concerns and opportunities
 - Discussed that the upcoming season is opportunity to provide more information on how bison use the landscape, given potential for less need for trapping, depending on how the hunt is conducted
 - Discussed roles and responsibilities

Discussion of Concerns

- Money and staffing (Operations/Security)
- Wildlife disturbance (habitat and migration impacts)
- Recreation conflicts and restrictions
- Road access
- Visibility of facility and operations from road
- How hunt is conducted has limited bison distribution past Beattie Gulch
- Trap location and operation in Zone 3 is not allowed under current management plan

Discussion of Opportunities

- More effective protection of Zone 3?
- Potential for greater bison distribution if coupled with dispersed hunt pressure
- Improve harvest and safety issues near park boundary if bison are more widely distributed within the tolerance area
- Opportunity for tribal participation?
- Role for terminal pasture concept?
- Private landowner leasing for capture facility

Roles and Responsibilities

- Who does what?
 - MT DOL is lead agency for bison operations outside the park
 - MT FWP is lead agency for property damage issues, treaty hunt liaising, and state hunt
 - USFS is lead agency for any NEPA and permitting on their lands
 - Assistance for facility operation can be requested from all partners

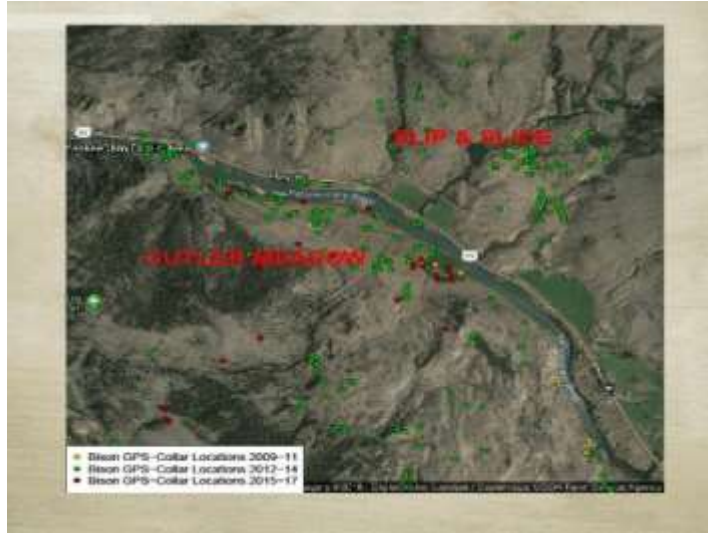
Locating the Capture Facility

- Topography
 - Where landscape naturally focuses or limits bison movements
- Bison Use
 - How bison were distributed last several years
- Irrespective of land ownership
 - Simply what the landscape offers

Potential Areas Noted During Site Visit

- July 18 Site Visit
 - Vines MT DOL, Thom USFS, Reid NPS
 - Identified 5 Potential Areas
 - Colloquial names used
 - identified as simply points where topography and bison align
1. Corwin Area
 2. Trestle Area
 3. Cutler Meadows
 4. Slip n Slide Area
 5. Zone 3 – Old Yell Trail area (not auth under current plan)





SITE VISIT DISCUSSIONS

Note: Comments common to all include potential impacts to wildlife habitat, migration, recreation and the relationship between bison distribution and hunt activities/trapping ops.

- **Corwin** - Public/Private, close to road (+/-), wildlife, potential to hinder full distribution.
- **Trestle area** - Public/Private, good road access, better situated for distribution.
- **Cutler Meadows** - Public, road access bad, best situated relative to Zone boundary/bison movements, bison infrequently make it this far.
- **Slip n Slide** - Pending public ownership, front pastures viable with roads, visible, majority of bison movement on W side of river.
- **Zone 3/Old Yell Trail** - Non-viable for state, not authorized under current management plan, topography and access favorable.

SUMMARY

SPRING IBMP 2018: "Future removals to stabilize population growth could be one-half of what was necessary to reduce the population size (i.e., 400-600 instead of 1,000 - 1,200)"

- Positioned to learn how effective hunt can be and how bison will use landscape, assuming distribution-oriented hunt structure and notwithstanding 2018/19 winter severity.
- Capture capacity at north end of north management area was envisioned in 2000 ROD as a logical outcome of progressing through IBMP steps (greater tolerance of bison; presence/emphasis of hunting).
- Discussion/Next steps
 - Maximize use of upcoming ops/hunting season to cooperatively monitor/learn how bison will use the landscape and inform trap location?

Partner question and discussion following Tim’s presentation included multiple topics. Tim started that discussion by posing the question: Can we maximize the use of upcoming ops/hunting season to cooperatively monitor/learn how bison will use the landscape and inform trap location? A brief summary follows with related items lumped even if they occurred at different times:

- The areas proposed for a temporary bison capture facility map with areas bison have been documented in the past.
- It’s likely that bison don’t often make it to Cutler Meadow due to management actions (e.g., hunting pressure, hazing).
- Financial costs—including such items as set up, tear down, and site remediation—were cited as one reason the West Side temporary capture facility has not been used in recent years.
- Biological costs were cited as a concern regarding potentially locating a temporary capture facility on the North Side. Those costs could include impact to winter range to many species; and impact to migration of some species (e.g., bighorn sheep), in part because Cutler Meadows, and to a lesser extent Trestle area, are at landscape pinch points.
- Concerns and/or unknowns about a temporary facility (some a rehash of what Tim had already presented) that were brought forth included a) the size of the facility, b) how long the facility would operational each year, c) the potential need, depending on location, for USFS permitting, d) security of the facility, e) access to the facility (both road access and, even with road access, access under winter conditions), f) costs for plowing, g) facility itself decreasing available hunting area, and h) remediation of the site when the temporary facility was removed.
- Personnel cost increases were cited by the State of Montana given their need, potentially, to provide personnel for the facility. MH noted that MDOL has decreased the number of full time equivalents (FTEs) in recent years for the North Side, and to add back FTEs requires OK by the state legislature, which takes time.
- Q—If we opened a temporary North Side capture facility, would we close the Stephen’s Creek facility?
A—No, that’s not the proposal. If no, then we must recognize that operation of the Stephen’s Creek facility reduces bison migration north of the YNP and thus reduces harvest opportunities.



Figure 3.—Tim Reid of NPS described deliberations of an ad hoc team of Partners and staff who met to discuss the possibility of instituting a temporary North Side capture facility.

The discussion focused, for the most part, on concerns associated with opening a temporary capture facility on the North Side. A closing statement was made that the idea holds many benefits toward achieving IBMP goals, and thus should be kept alive—or at a minimum not dismissed—as a potential tool for future Partner use. The discussion closed with no action item assigned to further explore a temporary capture facility on the North Side.

Planning for the 2018/2019 Winter IBMP Operations Plan

DISCUSSION REGARDING POSSIBLE CHANGES FROM THE PREVIOUS WINTER OPS PLAN

Partners considered the current (2017/18) Winter Ops Plan² and changes they would like to make for the coming year. The Partners each had a copy of the current plan, and stepped through its different sections of that plan as shown in Table 1.³

Table 1.—IBMP Winter Ops Plan outline

pg	Heading (topic of potential note for change)
2	Introduction (9 objectives of the IBMP)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jurisdiction and Legal Mandates (Tribal hunting updates?) • Media Relations/Public Information (Tribal additions?) • Organization (Table 1 is Partner activities matrix)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Bison Abundance (population, removals—hunt, trap, also see p11) • Monitoring & Reporting of Bison Movements & Management Activities (safety)
5	Bison Distribution (as described in AM Plan, geography, hazing, #s, dates)
6	Hunting Bison (5 or 4 or ? tribes, season dates & guidelines)
8	Hunt-Trap Coordination Protocol (total removal goal and interim goals by date)
10	Hazing Bison (methods, responsibilities, coordination)
11	Capturing Bison (why, how, coordinate w/hunt, testing, removal, + next item)
12	Shipment to Processing Facilities (transfer to Tribes for slaughter, vaccination, testing, research)
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lethal Removal of Bison — Risk Management (safety) • Vaccinating Cattle (vaccination goal for north and west sides)
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety (IBMP personnel, private parties) • Access/Approval to Operate on National Forest System Land (how to) • Assurance of General Security (facilities, field operations) • Maintenance of Records and Accountability for Bison Removal (MDOL, NPS)
15	Adaptive Management Review, Evaluation, and Modification (updating Plan)

The facilitator captured change requests for the 2018/19 Winter Ops Plan, as shown in the bulleted list below (in some cases, discussion shown did not lead to a requested change.). The first draft of the 2018/19 Winter Ops Plan, which will be sent to Partners in September by Lead Partner agency MFWP, will include these changes in the draft document mark up:

- 1) No animals are being requested for research purposes.
- 2) Need to improve via improved weekly hunt calls
- 3) Need to improve (meaning keep more current, hopefully daily) tally on number of bison harvested
- 4) Need to improve communication regarding operation of the Stephen’s Creek trap (when open, when closed, number of animals passing)
- 5) On p 11 (first paragraph) and p 16 under responsibilities and regarding hazing — a question about if table is accurate in that MDOL requested assistance but NPS did not provide it. A response came that it was a

² The current IBMP Winter Ops Plan can always be found at <http://ibmp.info/library.php>.

³ The Lead Partner suggested that for efficiency in the future these items could or should be collected in advance of the meeting.

- matter of NPS resources not being available. At the time of the request the Park was wrapped up in a bison facility security issue. This explanation was accepted.
- 6) On p 12 under shipment to processing — ITBC has stopped its role in that activity and should be removed
 - 7) Under managing bison abundance section there will be the potential for use of quarantine and this is anticipated to always be an objective.
 - 8) A question came up about which tribes should be listed in the Winter Ops Plan given the uncertainty the timing of tribes their treaty hunting rights for the first year. Several solutions were posed:
 - a) In places where tribes are mentioned do not specifically name each tribe, but instead use language such as, "...Partner tribes and those tribes that choose to exercise their right to hunt." At one point the CTUIR, NPT, CSKT, and ShoBan could be categorized differently, but state of Montana recognition⁴ of the Fort Laramie Treaty has opened hunting to more tribes.
 - b) Alternatively, since the Winter Ops Plan is developed by those who have signed the Plan, name other hunting tribes in a footnote.
 - c) Just say "...tribes that will be hunting..."
 - 9) I'd like to see us shift away from prescriptive harvest numbers and focus more on improved communication.
 - 10) Statement — We need a process to provide help and training to new hunting groups. (No proposed language or location in the Winter Ops Plan was provided for this idea.)
 - 11) A request was made to replace the terms "hazing" with "managed migration". Both terms, it was stated, refer to human-assisted movement of bison on-the-hoof. The request was not widely endorsed, including one statement that "hazing" is a term used in the 2000 ROD and also in Montana statute (81-2-120[1]a) so thus should not be eliminated.
 - 12) On p 12, where shipment to processing is mentioned. Q — How is the language here consistent with how the state has handled transfer of bison to the Fort Peck Tribes. A — Recall that movement of fish and wildlife to/from any Interior lands or facilities in Montana was prohibited without prior approval by an Executive Order from Governor Schweitzer, and is still in effect. A Partner suggested this history be reflected in the Winter Ops Plan. Also, it was stated that the legal opinion of the federal government is that federal supremacy overrides the Governor's Executive Order, particularly as it relates to transport from one federal enclave to another.
 - 13) On p 16 (and elsewhere, if applicable) remove all descriptions of helicopter hazing as it is no longer employed.

DISCUSSION REGARDING IBMP POPULATION GOALS

Over the past year, a number of bison population "goals" have been mentioned at IBMP meetings, field trips, hunt manager meetings, and similar. Most often mentioned are goals of 3000, 4200, and 6000 bison. The Lead Partner asked for a short review of the source of the varying goals. Key comments are captured below:

- The IBMP ROD sets a YELL bison population goal of 3000 bison.
- The average population of YELL for the past "17 or 18 years" has been about 4200 animals. Some noted that 4200 is a range that helps meet many IBMP goals. Those goals include that the population is sufficiently large to lend to bison out-migration from YNP and thus be available for hunters; sufficiently small to a) maintain the landscape, b) help assure out-migration will likely be controllable without the need for a large ship-to-slaughter program, and c) protect from social strife (e.g., traffic safety concerns). A statement was made that a bison population of 4200 centers around a number that provides the greatest good for addressing the greatest number of concerns.

⁴ JH clarified that the treaties are between individual tribal nations and the US government. The concept of the state of Montana acknowledgement came from when the CSKT originally started to hunt near YNP at which time the state "acknowledged" the tribe's right to hunt on lands within the state.

- Modeling indicated a YELL bison population of roughly 6000 animals⁵ was the lower range of habitat carrying capacity. This number reflects the entirety of YNP, not just the Northern Range.
- A clarification was asked for and received: YNP description of an average population of 4200 animals has been measured after calving whereas the limit of 3000 animals stated in the ROD is before calving. It was stated that 3000 bison would be expected to have 300-450 calves. Thus in comparing the bison population “goals” of 3000 and 4200, as has been done in the past year, a more equivalent comparison would be between goals of 3300 and 4200 (or conversely, compare 3000 to 3600 [estimate of pre-calf equivalent of 4200 animals post-calving]).
- One Partner said the Partners clearly had not managed to a population of 3000 bison, then asked — “If we wanted to change the population goal away from 3000, would we need a new EIS?” A1 — Based on the previous discussion, perhaps the real question should be, “Is it really worth the money and effort to change the number for 3000 to 3600?” A2 — “Yes, at least when considering that the population goal number drives Partner management options.” A3 — “No it’s not worth doing an EIS just for that change. But changing the population goal should be a part of a larger EIS effort that incorporates new information garnered since the 2000 ROD.” A4 — “We should shy away from numeric goals, as a rule and also if a new EIS is undertaken. Numbers can be limiting and long term, as we see here. Instead, we should manage to triggers for action. Such a plan lends itself to adaptive management as the goal and helps with conflict. Triggers could be those that are leading indicators of conflict potentially coming.”
- One Partner noted that there are few from the ranching community in attendance at the meeting as it is largely a non-event. An important goal is to avoid a massive action, so we must be thinking about how to avoid bison getting in the Madison Valley or Tom Miner Basin.
- A statement was made that MDOL doesn’t fight for the 3000 population limit since little conflict is generally seen at populations of near 4200.

Partner briefings/updates—status of ongoing activities related to Yellowstone bison and brucellosis

Shana Drimal—Update on bison coexistence/fencing project

Shana noted that Bison Co-existence project has now completed 40 projects with approximately \$40,000 contributed to help landowners better live with bison. She said five projects are in the works this summer, one in the Gardner area, the others in the West Yellowstone/Horse Butte area.

Next meetings, final comments

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the IBMP Partners will be held November 28th, 2018 in Pray MT (at Chico Hot Springs).

PROCESS FOR PREPARING OF 2019 WINTER OPS PLAN AND 2018 ANNUAL REPORTS

The facilitator, in conjunction with the Lead Partner, provided the following overview and timelines for completion of these two documents (** Action items 5 and 6):

2019 Winter Ops Plan

- Lead Partner MFWP responsible
- Timeline until next IBMP meeting

⁵ A staff member mentioned the source of this estimate is a 2009 paper (Plumb GE, White PJ, Coughenour MB, Wallen RL. 2009. Carrying capacity, migration, and dispersal in Yellowstone bison. *Biological Conservation* 142:2377-87).

- *NPS population bison estimates completed and resulting removal recommendation report sent to Partners by Sep 15 (** Action item 7)*
- *1st draft of Winter Ops Plan to be sent to Partners by Sep 15*
- *Partner edits back by Oct 15*
- *2nd draft, if deemed necessary, sent to Partners by Nov 15*
- MFWP update, status report regarding Winter Ops Plan at Nov 28 IBMP meeting
 - *NPS presentation of bison removal recommendations*
 - *Determination of removal goals*
 - *Enumeration of any other things missing in Winter Ops Plan with assignments for completion*
- Final edits completed by Dec 15
- Begin Partner electronic signing by Dec 16
- Partner signing of 2019 IBMP Winter Ops Plan completed by Dec 31.
 - As required per Partner Protocols. If Partners do not come to agreement, then most recent Winter Ops Plan remains in effect.
 - Signing completed electronically
- Posting of 2019 IBMP Winter Ops Plan to IBMP website by Jan 1, 2019.

2018 Annual Report

- Lead Partner MFWP responsible
- Recall new report format (see 2015 Adaptive Management change; <http://ibmp.info/adaptivemgmt.php>)
- Timeline until next IBMP meeting
 - *Partner request for input to Annual Report sent out by Sep 22*
 - *Partner #1 input returned to MFWP by Oct 22*
 - *1st draft of Annual Report sent to Partners by Nov 15, with request to fill any missing items*
 - *Partner #2 input returned to MFWP by Nov 28*
- MFWP update, address things missing from the Annual Report at Nov 28 IBMP meeting, provide assignments for completion
- Partner final input by Dec 15
- Completed 2018 IBMP Annual Report by Dec 31
 - *Lead Partner has final say on any disputes*
 - *No signature required per Partner Protocols*

TWO FAREWELLS

Partners and staff said goodbye to two NPS contributors, biologist Rick Wallen and YNP Superintendent Dan Wenk. Both Rick and Dan will retire before the next IBMP meeting in November.

Julie Cunningham of MFWP told of Rick's importance to the IBMP and to his years of pursuit of helping people understand the science that underlies bison, be it from an ecologic, biologic, cellular, or disease perspective. She also provided a personal anecdote, describing how Rick (and PJ White) took her on as a somewhat desperate MS student after she learned her graduate funding had been lost. On behalf of the Partners, Julie presented Rick with a beautifully painted bison coffee mug. For his part, being urged to provide some last thoughts, Rick said (paraphrasing here), "Let's keep calling the kettle black. If we keep finding the truth, if we keep telling the truth, we will achieve what we've set out to do."

Lead Partner Mark Deleray provided Dan with a large placard as a farewell gift, calling it, "The biggest thank you card ever!" The placard said, "In thanks to Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Dan Wenk, for years of dedicated service to the Interagency Bison Management Plan, its Partners and staff, and the passionate community of people who participate in the IBMP." Partners, staff, and many members of the public signed the card with best wishes for Dan.



Figure 4.—This meeting of the IBMP was the last one for two members of NPS, biologist Rick Wallen (far left, with Julie Cunningham of MFWP) and Superintendent Dan Wenk (far right, with Mark DeLeray of MFWP).

Many provided Dan their verbal best wishes, as well, thanking him for such things as a) his love and compassion for bison; b) for working with the tribes and always listening and helping us go forward; c) for always being calm, cool, and collected; d) credit for challenging us to question the status quo and consider if we should move away from it; e) for exceptional leadership, f) thanks for the years of service (and a nod to Rick Wallen again here, as well); and g) thanks for being a strong advocate for Park resources, for bison, and for the American public. For his part, Dan provided some return comments. He said a few words, including thanking everyone for their kindness and acknowledging and thanking his NPS team, saying if he brought anything to the table that was worthwhile it was because of the education and tutelage of those people. “It truly is a team effort,” Dan said, concluding in part with the following: “I have great confidence that the next superintendent, Cam Sholly, will represent bison well. And to all of you it’s been a pleasure to work with you. You know, we’re not done. We hope we can get some more things accomplished in the name of bison and bison conservation.”

MEETING CLOSE

As a final comment the Lead Partner thanked everyone for their attendance, and bid them safe travels.

Public comment

The following summaries of public comment are not intended to be complete, but rather to capture key points of each public comment as stated. Upon review, Partners sometimes point out that statements made during the public comment are either incomplete or incorrect.

The facilitator has especially attempted to capture those comments from the public that appeared to be solution-oriented and/or have the potential for inclusion in adaptive management planning, and/or process improvement, and/or use as agenda items for future meetings. These items, as well as other potentially actionable public input, are called out with a “***” in the listings that follow. The “***” callouts are especially added to items that the facilitator does not believe are already under consideration by the Partners (or have been in the past).

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 just after lunch in reaction to numerous past public comments about public input being of less value at the end of the day.

- I feel like we are facing a complex equation and that it is growing.
- I like to work on root causes and do my best not to offend anyone which is difficult, as there are many sensitivities.
- Much growth. Anything that came be displaced by growth can be replaced by growth.

- Cattle have served us well. When I look at numbers I see there are 4000 bison and a 100 million cattle. So I am requesting a bit more balance and a bit more space for the indigenous bovine of this continent. And besides, the bison are a lot less work.
- ** I have visions of a new way — for example the ranchers could become ceremonial grounds where say people could have vision quests before they hunt. I like simplified solutions and I'm looking at what the bison need to survive.
- The bison are here to provide for us, but they have to be alive to do it.

- Speaking to you on behalf of the Bear Creek Council. I am disappointed that you did not speak more about the carcass issue.
- ** We recommend that item become part of the Nov meeting. We would like to ask that you a) add the carcass issue to the Nov meeting, b) that we have a Gardiner citizen panel at your Nov meeting — people who live with the hunt and deal with carcasses on daily basis in Beattie Gulch and Jardine road area, they need to be part of this discussion because they have first-hand experience, and c) that you have a field trip at your spring meeting so you can see what these people are putting up with.
- Bear Creek Council supports fair chase, ethical hunting. The bottom line is we feel that the bison and the hunters both need more habitat.

- I am a business owner, three properties at Beattie Gulch.
- With respect to statement that primary focus is safety for the tribes, what about us, our business? My industry of tourism is the largest income producing for the state of Montana, larger than the cattle industry.
- Let's repeal 812120 so that we can ship bison to the tribes and they hunt on their tribal grounds. Beattie Gulch hunting has shut down my business for 6 months of the year since 2013 and now you want all year.
- Where does money—5 million—go for operations? For what? All this is about grass, control, and greed.
- Uncomfortable to talk about you say? What about the physical, emotional stress you put upon us who live there and have businesses there?
- ** We have on tape 42 gunman on the ground at one time. That's primary reason bison can't get to Cutler Meadows.
- In one year taxes on one of my properties went up 119%; goes to support forest land to be used as tribal ground primarily.
- Fact, only 9 cases of brucellosis in cattle in Montana in recorded history, yet thousands of our bison have been killed and not one case of wild bison transferring brucellosis to cattle. Where is the common sense in this?
- Killing field is brucellosis breeding ground for elk. 358 bison killed there in one year.

- Thanks for letting me speak. I am an employee of the Buffalo Field Campaign.
- I spent lots of time tabling in Park this summer. Lots of tourists are concerned about low number of wild bison we have. As am I. 4000 sounds like a lot but it's not enough. This heard is the only hope for wild buffalo to exist long term.
- I come to lots of these meetings and do feel like we've taken a different direction today. I appreciate the conversations that have happened today to allow bison to operate on a larger landscape. But what's missing is we need more buffalo. 4000 is not enough for long term viability.
- I spend lot of time in the park and I see lots of beautiful meadows and open valleys and space where bison could be but they're not there and it's really sad to see that.
- It's way past time for this plan to expire. It's time the ESA to get done or whatever the hell needs to happen. It's time for a new plan and that plan needs to allow for more bison.

- This meeting is not about life; it's always about death.
- We don't have enough bison in the park. We talk to people from all over the world and they have no idea what you all are doing.
- I'm all about the numbers but we never see the numbers. They never match. If state is selling 81 tags and rest are going to Native Americans and then I learn we that 900-1300 bison are disappearing. The hunt's got to stop for a while.
- I'm Native American myself. You all have got to have some respect for your own sacred animals.
- As far as living with bison I thought people who came here came to live with the wildlife, not give death and destruction for ranchers. I'm OK with ranching, problem is do it on your own land. Public lands, key word, public. All of us are public. We pay taxes for that land as much as any rancher.
- First and foremost bison are native to this country. Cows are not, they are an invasive species in this country.
- Another issue is, we as people are supposed to be the caretakers of this planet. I don't see that happening. Because I feel it is the blood of animals that fuel the money machine.

- I have been in the Park a lot lately, and I represent a lot of groups. We want to see more talk about preserving the species.
- I have to agree that the ranchers and the hunters do not own public lands or the bison. We all do. There are many us; we represent thousands and thousands of people, not only in this country but in foreign countries and they want to see a good heard of bison.
- I'm sorry but I have to disagree there are not 4000 bison I the Park. I've been in Montana for 10 years and the population has dropped significantly. It's terrible. Not only the 1200 taken out with hunting and trapping and slaughter but died in the park with winter kill. They're looking a bit thin and ragged, they're coming back but There's so few left why do we have to send them to slaughter? Maybe a hunt, a small hunt.
- And they're listed to be endangered species act because of low numbers. We should be protecting them not killing them.
- And let there be a real hunt for Native People and not where they line up.
- ** Need to talk more about bison and adaptive management and repeal 812120
- We need to love our bison not kill them.

- I talked with Mr. Azure, chairman of the Ft Peck Tribe, after this morning and I want to make comment on behalf of the Fort Peck Tribe and agreed to by ITBC.
- As you all know the Fort Peck Tribe constructed a quarantine facility with their own money in a remote part of their reservation. It is by far more secure than what has been utilized in the DSA — it has double fencing, electric fencing, 13,000 acre pasture that is a buffer around it. So the opportunity for a buffalo in that facility to break free and put any other animal at risk for disease is remote. And people know that and have been there.
- And I guess I make this comment because as you all that we've been working to moving buffalo to Fort Peck Tribe there's been a lot of activity that the Tribe has not been included in. Apparently there has been a risk assessment done and conversations between all the agencies involved except for the Fort Peck Tribe. I think it's deplorable that the Fort Peck Tribe was not included in these conversations after the Tribe put the money up to try to have a quarantine solution that will allow live bison, conservation of these animals from Yellowstone, and then translocation.
- I think today the discussion focused on negligible risk. Negligible risk means a remote chance of transmission of the disease. How does this written standard compare with what happened in 2015 when you lose 10,000 cattle out of the ESA without any brucellosis testing. How is that not violating



Figure 5.—Partner Mary Erickson, Supervisor of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest, makes a point during the IBMP meeting.

- negligible risk and then you have this real high standard up at Fort Peck where you can't even give us a shot?
- So when the comments were first made about this quarantine facility, APHIS put a comment in that tribal sovereignty was going to be a barrier. We shot that down, worked hard, spent money, allowed inspection, did an MOU for testing, we jumped through every single hoop to show that we had capacity and that we would cooperate. And now we learned here today that there's been all this discussion and the Tribe has not been included. And I just have to say that it comes right back to that idea that the tribes do not have capacity and it's discriminatory. I think today is a fine example of this body discriminating against the Ft Peck Tribe.
 - We have Black Butte Ranch. We are the first private property coming out of the park. We've had bison and we believe in free-roaming bison. And I will say they're not friendly to jack leg fence.
 - But that's not the reason I am here. Instead I have been watching this process, and the process includes agency people, tribal people, and I'm looking for a member of an effected private property on this panel. There isn't one.
 - ** Who speaks for the effected private property owners? Could be from West, Gardner, up the Gallatin. The only time we get to speak is at the microphone. I really feel we are under-represented in this process.
 - I've been involved in a lot of public process in my life. And you need to have as many of the effected parties as possible. So it is something to think about.
 - I have been studying this ecosystem since the late 1950s. Have many scientific publications. So I know these ecosystems probably better than the agency people.
 - Anyway, thanks for meeting, and thanks for the concern you people have.
 - And last two cents for the Forest Service — this has nothing to do with bison — we have a fire 3 miles from us and the Forest Service and the people coming and helping us and informing us and all the others things they have done, we couldn't be better served. So thank you to the Forest Service.

- Happy to hear talk about traffic issues. And that you recognize that bison likely to walk up highway 191 to head to new area and along Gallatin.
- I ask you to add the west side as part of the discussion you mentioned on North side regarding traffic and safety at the next meeting.
- I have seen some people getting tickets this year but also have had to call 911 for people who have had wrecks and come up our driveway. We have to get the trucks off and they have to get them to slow down the traffic especially if the bison come up.
- We need multitude of agencies working together. Idea of adapting the landscape so they can walk somewhere beside the highway sounds like a wonderful thing.
- I say again for the Upper Gallatin Landowners who I am representing today we are not opposed to bison, if they come wandering in we're happy to see them, but we still are absolutely opposed to putting them on a truck and sending them our way.
- If there's something you can do in the Park, something in the forest to make it easier for them to move in, that would be terrific.
- We're losing animals every day on that highway. So we have to get those trucks off and get people to slow down. If roads keeps deteriorating in the Park people will have to slow down. ... So maybe doing nothing is the answer. But please slow it down.

- With Defenders of Wildlife. Along with NGO partners we are committed to restore bison to lands beyond Yellowstone. Encouraged by program of NPS, State, APHIS to create program to divert bison from slaughter to Fort Peck. But as Majel said, the tribe need to be better engaged in these efforts.
- Here's why conservation partners are engaged in this effort: Yellowstone bison prized for genetics, and thus can contribute to conservation herds on tribal and public lands and thus contribute to overall restoration of bison on the Great Plains.
- Recently we have many hurdles that have been overcome: we now have a signed EA, we have MOU for Stephen's Creek facility to keep bison diverted from slaughter, we also have Corwin Springs with 60 animals and estimates of 100 with offspring that can also be used for restoration.
- ** Along with needs for better communication with tribes, we need actual schedule for bison moving from Stephen's Creek.
- We remain hopeful Ft Peck remains a viable option with their half million dollar facility as an option to reduce slaughter of bison. Beyond being an insurance facility. We are still being hopeful.
- Progress has been made but we want
- Thanks to Rick Wallen and Dan Wenk.

- World Wildlife Fund. Ft Peck Tribes have been doing phenomenal things there with 418 Yellowstone bison, economic development, feeding the community.
- I hope when you all come to the table that you are here to share information. Yet it is difficult for me to know that APHIS has already decided that bison are not going to Ft Peck for quarantine. I have heard it's not happening from parties at this table. And yet all of you demurred from making that comment today.
- When you are growing up when you know something that can help someone you share it. I am not naïve. But it's sad to me when politics trumps honesty. We all see what's happening in our country right now and we have to recognize that beyond what's going on in politics we need to be honest with each other.
- It's really upsetting that I know that those bison are not going there and Fort Peck hasn't even heard.
- If part of today's theme is improving the IBMP could we try to leave the politics at the door?
- In terms of the risk, yes there may be some level of risk but what about 10,000 cattle leaving the DSA in 2015 and for some reason that risk is not being quantified and is considered acceptable? The idea that somehow a minute risk is unacceptable but the unquantified risk is acceptable is a problem.

- Policy. Even in the way we set up a meeting like this is policy. Who is allowed to speak and who is listening.
- The last 6 people that spoke before me they all speak really clearly and no one is listening.

** Final **

- I respect you but there is no one from private property.
- Do you hear what we are saying, where is the science?
- The policy that you have is not working. The new guy who is coming is not qualified, comes from the top— that is policy.
- Next time you get your check I hope you think, it is not working. I really thank you that is not criticizing on the personal level. It's not working.

- Thank you. I want to say thanks for the discussion this morning. We are making slow progress.
- For utilization of West Side. I really appreciate FWP for proposal to close northern portion of Madison hunt district. I agree with points on highway safety measures. If MDOT will be part of next meeting yes include talk about West Side. Perhaps share habitat suitability maps and migration pathway information. Transportation planning can take many years.
- I also think looking at habitat on the West Side is important, too. Whatever we can do, like habitat treatments, whatever we can do to support effective and safe dispersal of the bison into the West Side expansion area.
- As far as the North Side, talking today about temporary trap, lots of issues around that. It deserves further consideration and please don't remove from discussion yet. Also, Mary's point that even if you take away hunt you still have Stephen's Creek trap hindering dispersal. It goes back to larger issues of managing to a total population target and as long as that's in place we are going to have that pressure to take the population down.
- And I hope bison are sent to Ft Peck by the end of the year.

*** Meeting adjourned ***

Abbreviations

- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- CGNF—Custer Gallatin National Forest
- CS—Carl Scheeler
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- CTUIR—Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- CV—Clay Vines
- CWG—Citizens’ Working Group
- DSA—Designated Surveillance Zone
- DW—Dan Wenk
- EA—Environmental Assessment
- EC—Ervin Carlson
- EH—Eric Holt
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GW—Germaine White
- GWA—Gallatin Wildlife Association
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- ITBC—Inter Tribal Buffalo Council
- JC—Jennifer Carpenter
- JH—John Harrison
- JW—Jeremy Wolf
- LG—Leonard Gray
- LW—Leander Watson
- MBOL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MD—Mark Deleray
- MDOL—Montana Department of Livestock
- MDOT—Montana Department of Transportation
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MEPA—Montana Environmental Policy Act
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- MH—Mike Honeycutt
- MOA—Memorandum of Agreement
- MOU—Memorandum of Understanding
- MR—Majel Russell
- MSGA—Montana Stockgrowers’ Association
- MSU—Montana State University
- MV—Mike Volesky
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NAS—National Academy of Sciences
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- NGO—Non-governmental organizations
- NP—Nez Perce
- NPS—National Park Service
- NPT—Nez Perce Tribe
- NPTEC—Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee
- NRC—National Research Council
- NRDC—Natural Resources Defense Council
- NT—Neil Thagard
- Park—Yellowstone National Park
- PIOs—Public Information Officers
- PJ—PJ White
- RC—Ryan Clarke
- ROD—Record of Decision
- RF—Rebecca Frye
- RFP—Request for proposals
- RTR—Royal Teton Ranch
- RW—Rick Wallen
- SB—Scott Bischke
- SEIS—Supplemental EIS
- SG—Stephanie Gillin
- SK—Salish Kootenai
- 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