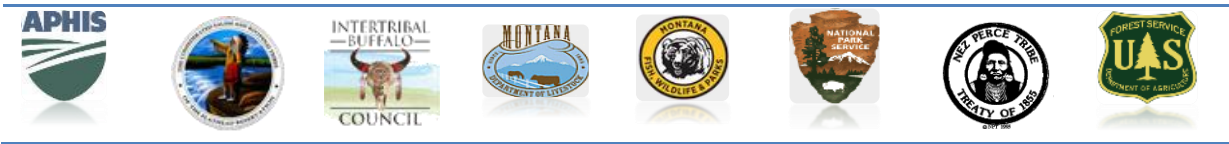


Summary Report from the Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting July 31, 2019



First draft presented August 15th, 2019 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke

The following summary report reflects activities at the July 31, 2019 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held at the Holiday Inn in Bozeman, Montana. This report comes from the 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 Ryan Clarke (APHIS), Leonard Gray (CSKT), Dan Wenner (ITBC), Mike Honeycutt (MBOL), Martin Zaluski (MDOL), Mark Deleray (MFWP), Tim Reid (NPS-YNP), Ferris Paisano (NPT), and Mary Erickson (USFS-CGNF). In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~50 other people were in the room over the course of the day, either staff members from IBMP organizations, representatives from treaty hunting tribes, or members of the public.

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¹ MountainWorks Inc.; scott@eMountainWorks.com

Action items identified

Table 1. Action items identified during this meeting

#	Who	What	By when
1	SB	Post the Apr 2019 meeting report to the website as “final”	ASAP
2	JH / CSKT	JH said that the CSKT will take the lead in organizing calls during the 2019/20 hunting season	At onset of 2019/20 hunting season
3	JC, SB	JC to provide SB citations regarding how elk behavior is impacted by hunting; SB to post to IBMP website	ASAP
4	Mike Thom leads, A Pankratz, L James	We need first is a list of all regulations that are being applied to hunting on the North Side. That list can be attached to the Winter Ops Plan as an addendum. Included is the need to understand where all legal shooting areas exist. Further, the regulations need not only to be collected, but also to be shown visually in map format. People to the left identified by Partners.	For 2020 Winter Ops Plan; review at Dec3 mtg
5	RF leads, NT, Kevin Frye, Stacy Courville	BCC is an all-volunteer organization. Q—Can the Partners provide a study on how many carcasses are too many? A—Yes, Partners can take that on and report back at next meeting (following discussion Partners listed people to the left). The issues may be difficult to tease apart—e.g., likely no biological trigger on how many carcasses are too many—but the key issue for the review will be considerations of safety (humans, bears). Part of the work, since it seems we don’t agree on the problem (do we have too many carcasses or not?) will be for the group to define the problem (If we undertake a management activity, what problem are we fixing? What negative outcome are we avoiding by acting?).	Present finding at next IBMP meeting
6	GYC, BCC	Recommended effort for two NGOs. Regarding carcass removal, we do have an example that we could look to: the Blackfoot Challenge has a carcass removal program and compost site. We suggest BCC and GYC look at this program and see if there is anything relevant that can be applied to our North Side carcass management issues. Partners agreed to provide space at their next meeting for BCC and GYC to present their findings.	Present finding at next IBMP meeting
7	PJ	Present (via email report) the YNP bison population count and NPS removal recommendations to Partners.	By Sep 15
8	SB, RC all Partners	<p>Completion of the 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report, per timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sep 15, SB to send out request to Partners (or designated staff) for input on both 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report. • By Oct 15, Partners (or designated staff) return to SB input to 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report. • By Nov 1, SB returns first draft of 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report to Partners and staff for review and continued work. • By Dec 1, Partners (or designated staff) return to SB revisions of first draft of 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report. • On Dec 3, Partners and staff to a) review status of 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report, discuss, modify; and b) set plan for completion of both by January 1, 2020. • By January 1, 2020 both 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report completed and posted to the IBMP website. Per Partner Protocols the former requires electronic signature, the latter does not. 	As shown to the left

Agreeing to previous meeting minutes

The meeting started with introductions of Partners, staff, and all members of the general public in attendance. Next the facilitator provided a short review of IBMP history. Ferris Paisano, representing the Nez Perce Tribe for the first time, made some opening comments along with introducing himself. Those comments included that the Tribe had been here longer than organized religion, including Moses and Buddha and others. He asked everyone to open their hearts to hear each other, and for people to realize that truth can emerge from a spark of conflict.

The facilitator asked if there were any objections or changes to the draft meeting report from the April 2019 IBMP meeting, and noted the report has been available in draft for review since shortly after that meeting. No objections were made. Thus the facilitator, per Partner Protocols, is to post the April 25, 2019 meeting notes to IBMP.info as *Final* (**action item 1).

The facilitator reminded Partners of their plan 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.

Report on May 16 Hunt Managers’ meeting

MD reported that the Hunt Managers’ meeting took place in Missoula in May, as detailed at the previous IBMP meeting. He said that Montana had not signed on to the Tribal Hunt MOA, but that state legal staff are reviewing the MOA. He also noted that the bison hunt is expected to go on this year as it has in past years.

TM said no new tribes have signed on to the MOA as of this meeting. Topics covered at the Hunt Managers’ meeting included safety and communication, with emphasis on the need for a weekly call between hunting entities. Several people offered that the calls weren’t held regularly during the hunting season just past due to so few bison being out of the Park and, thus, so few being hunted.² TM said that weekly calls provide perfect forum to share information (e.g., bison harvest to date, location of animals, traffic issues) for coordination and as an aid to near real time adaptive management.

JH said that the CSKT will take the lead in organizing calls during the 2019/20 hunting season (**action item 2). He said the CSKT hope and expect that all hunting parties will participate.

ME said the Hunt Managers’ meeting, coming closely after the last IBMP meeting, had tremendous participation.

Joe P of the Nez Perce Tribe said that no substantive changes have been made to the Tribal Hunt MOA recently. The Tribe continues to hope that all hunting parties will sign the MOA.

Brendan K of the Yakama Tribe noted his agreement that safety and communication were the two key focus items of the Hunt Managers’ meeting.

Impact of Hunting on Elk Behavior

Presentation by Julie Cunningham of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Julie’s presentation, which is reviewed in brief here, can be found in full at the meeting website: <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20190731/20190731.php>.³

² *The need, importance, and value of a weekly call was a repeated theme of the meeting. Likewise, the reasoning for the calls not being regularly held this year—i.e., so few bison being hunted—was stated throughout the meeting.*

³ *During the course of Julie’s presentation and the follow-on discussion, Julie was asked to supply several citations relevant to the work presented (**action item 3). Julie presented the citations to the facilitator the day after this meeting. Those citations can be found at the web page for this meeting: <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20190731/20190731.php>.*



Figure 1.—Julie Cunningham of MFWP spoke to Partners, staff, treaty hunting tribes, and public regarding the impact on hunting on elk behavior. Follow-on discussions focused, in part, on how lessons from the elk studies Julie reported on might extend to understanding or predicting the impact of hunting on bison behavior.

Julie described what MFWP and others have learned about how elk respond to hunting pressure. Her statements were based, in part, on data from the elk tracking (via GPS) studies done from 1976-1986, and more recent work completed in 2005-2006. She began with some overarching statements regarding how elk respond to hunting:

- Elk may have a stronger and more prolonged response to hunters than other predators (i.e., wolves or bears)
- Elk will change their distribution to seek refuge from hunting
- Refuges may include:
 - Large private lands that do not allow hunter access
 - National parks
 - Public lands with few open roads

Julie provided elk tracking data to support these findings. Figure 2, for example, showed the large movement elk made from the Madison Range before hunting season (August) down to private lands at the end of hunting season (December). Julie said that the private lands provided the elk a refuge where they were not, for the most part, hunted.

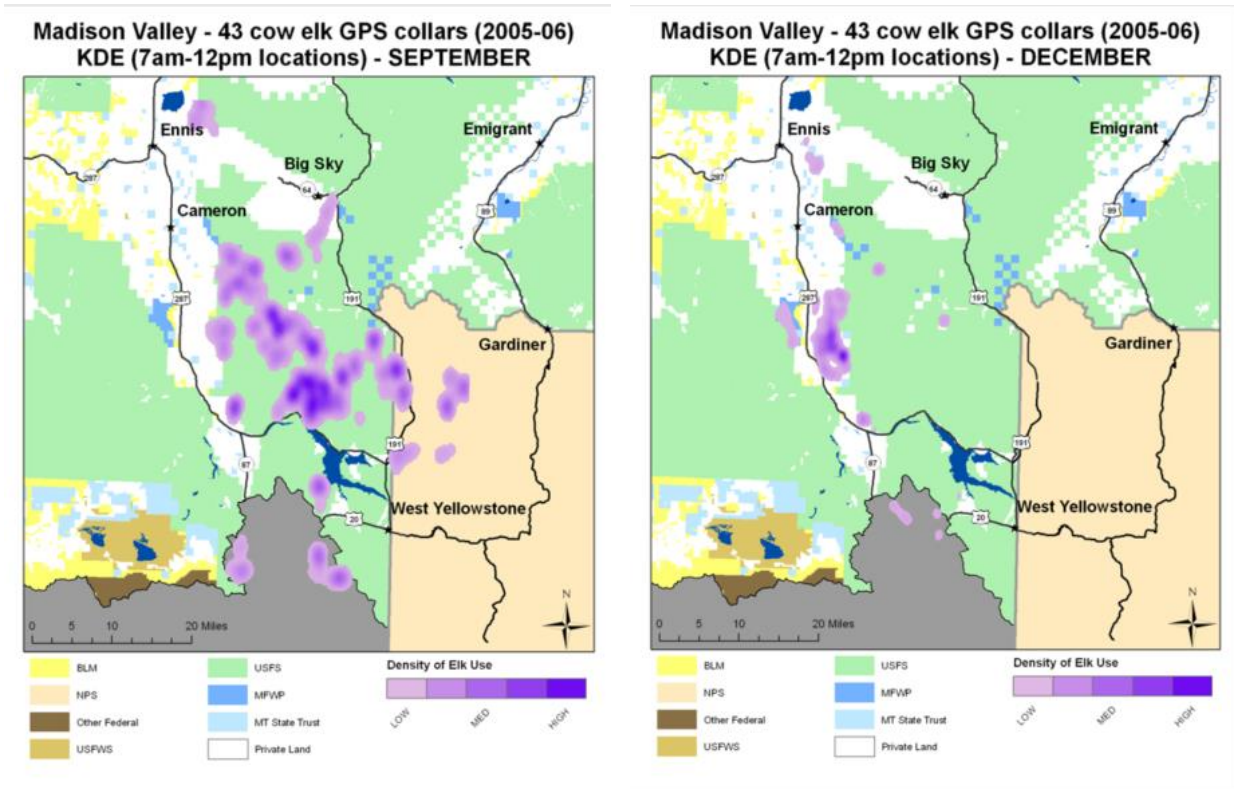


Figure 2.—Data presented by Julie Cunningham showing that elk moved over the course of the hunting season (roughly September to December) from the public lands of the Madison Range, where hunting was freely possible, to a private land, where hunting was restricted (i.e., effectively a refuge from hunting). Note that two maps here are a composite taken from different slides in Julie’s presentation.

Julie also described work done in western Montana to study elk distribution. Included in the study was a goal to determine how elk could be kept on lands available to public hunters. Conclusions included that to maintain elk distribution on public land managers should consider:

- Minimize refuge areas
- Road closures to create security areas in places with lots of hunters
- Limiting hunters
 - Timing of seasons
 - Hunter effort (reduced number licenses)

Julie’s role, per Partner request, was to help them consider the impact of hunting on bison behavior and distribution, an area that has not been widely studied, if at all. As such Julie closed her presentation with four possible areas of Partner discussion, as well as areas for possible future IBMP management action(s):

- Animals move away from hunting pressure and into refuge areas.
 - Number of hunters and timing of hunting trigger this movement.
 - Animals quickly learn these behaviors and where refuges exist.
- If we want elk to use all available habitat we need to rebuild natural migratory behaviors
 - How?
 - Manage hunting pressure to provide security
- Movement behaviors may be learned and passed between generations
 - Elk pioneer – individuals explore

- Bighorn do not – rely on generational knowledge
- Bison – unsure to what degree they pioneer or rely on knowledge?
- Would bison respond quickly to change in hunting pressure?
 - If hunting has shaped bison behavior, can we reshape hunting to see free-ranging bison?

Discussion

Following are some key concepts from the Partner and staff discussion that followed Julie's presentation:

- Many thanks around to Julie
- Refuge (from hunting) areas change from year to year, decade to decade, for many reasons. These might include changes in private ownership where the new owner has different goals for her/his land than the previous owner, changes in public land management, or changes in land use and access.
- Part of the puzzle here is also road density and the methods that people are using to access hunting areas. Be it because of more and more roads into public lands, or people driving backcountry vehicles that can get them almost anywhere, there are fewer and fewer refuge areas for animals on public lands.
- Another issue is that a faction of the hunting community now seeks long shot opportunities (described as *marksmanship* becoming more of a goal for some hunters than *huntsmanship*).
- A statement was made that movement is both institutional and generational. Another statement made that bison bulls pioneer and left alone they will do so and already have done so (Paradise Valley and the Beartooths were mentioned as examples). But bison do know or learn where the refuge lands are, just like elk.
- But one concern or limiter is that bison will want to be on the valley bottoms. There is less of that kind of country on the North Side than on the West side so on the North side bison are limited in where they can move or migrate.
- We have been great at no brucellosis transmission and should be proud of that. But I worry that we have not been so successful at our IBMP goal of creating free-roaming bison. Is the pressure caused by the hunt on bison moving out of the Park our biggest hurdle to overcome before we have more free-roaming bison? Could we stop hunting temporarily?
- Agreed. For bison, we need to be very aware that our goal is to aid the hunt, yes, but also increase distribution. The latter can help the former, of course, but simply increasing distribution across the newly enlarged tolerance areas outside YNP is also *a goal unto itself*. This is part of meeting the IBMP goal for free-roaming bison and we should be talking about that as a management goal—what can we do?
- If we stop the hunt to allow bison to more freely roam, do we stop using the trap, as well? Population is the key issue for getting bison to move out of the Park. Also, don't forget that herd memory is also impacted by the trap.
- I don't believe that having a hunt and having free-ranging bison are mutually exclusive. That said, I don't have the answer but believe this group can come up with solutions that allow both.
- A reminder that TR gave a talk recently on the potential of moving the trap out of YNP and further out into the tolerance area now available to bison.
- We also cannot forget the role of food—give them food and they will come. The role of fire in grasslands is critical. To me the potential derived from habitat manipulation/grazing improvement is as important as hunting, population goals, or trap operation.
- With climate change, it seems that bison may linger longer in the Park before moving out of the Park. If we stay with current hunting seasons, the later movement may lead to greater dispersal since they won't be hunted (i.e., coming out of the Park when no one is, or fewer are, hunting).
- It's easy to measure transmission or lack thereof. Q—But what's the definition of *free-ranging*? A—I think it means within the boundaries set forth in the IBMP.
- I don't want to demonize the trap. History has shown that bison move out of the Park even if the trap is used and sometimes they *don't* move when the trap is *not* used. The trap is not the only pinch point in bison movement and should not be looked at as the decision maker in bison distribution.

- Agree, the key decider is winter severity and lack of food.
- Do we collectively have enough patience to make this work? I agree that we've removed some of the pressure yet bison haven't really moved into the new tolerance areas. It will take time. Remember we've already impacted their behavior with hunting and past hazing. So it will take time for them to explore and relearn how to get into the new areas. Let's not over react. Let's be patient as we are dealing with a wild animal and its behavior.

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

Bear Creek Council recommendations

On April 24th, 2019 the Partners took a field trip on the North Side led by the Bear Creek Council (BCC). The field trip included a follow-on meeting with a panel of BCC members addressing and discussing North Side topics with Partners, staff, treaty hunting tribes, and the public. On the following day, at the regular IBMP meeting, Partners further discussed the field trip and potential ramifications of what they'd heard at the field trip. The two discussions with BCC are both described in detail in the April 25th IBMP meeting report (see <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20190425/20190425.php>).

At the conclusion of their discussions with members of BCC at the April 25th IBMP meeting, the Partners invited BCC to provide a list of recommendations at this meeting. BCC presented those recommendations, and provided a document supporting their recommendations. BCC's PowerPoint presentation is available in full at the meeting page on the IBMP website (see <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20190731/20190731.php>), as is their support document. The BCC support document is also provided in full below:



7/22/19

Dear IBMP Partners,

Bear Creek Council appreciates this opportunity to work with IBMP to help keep residents and hunters safe and to discuss the future of bison management. We look forward to discussing with you partners these proposed solutions to increase the safety of the bison hunt.

On the morning of April 24, 2019, Bear Creek Council (BCC) hosted a field trip for IBMP partners, tribal hunters, and Gardiner residents. About 60 people toured Beattie Gulch and Eagle Creek. In the afternoon, a panel of Gardiner residents shared their concerns about the hunt and answered questions. The following day IBMP held its regular meeting in Gardiner. During each of these events, attendees presented safety issues and brainstormed solutions to increase the safety of hunters and residents.

At the IBMP meeting, partners agreed that BCC would work with Mike Thom of Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) and other representatives from IBMP who want to be involved.

BCC agreed to:

1. Prepare a list of solutions that could be implemented. (This list was discussed at the May 16 state-tribal bison hunt meeting and revised based on input from that meeting.)
2. Submit a brief report to IBMP and make a presentation about solutions to safety issues at the July 31 IBMP meeting.

On May 1, Scott Bischke, IBMP facilitator, suggested that in preparation for a 45- to 60-minute presentation with Q & A at the July 31 IBMP meeting, BCC should do the following:

1. Provide solution-oriented changes to methods of IBMP management.
2. Categorize solutions as either short-term (less than 1 year) or long-term.
3. Point out where suggested actions fit into the IBMP Adaptive Management Plan. (<http://www.ibmp.info/adaptivemgmt.php>)

Bear Creek Council's Position:

BCC supports the IBMP goal of maintaining a wild, free-ranging bison population. BCC is not against bison hunting, but we believe that the hunt can be safer for residents and hunters and the goal of free-ranging bison can be achieved by:

- Allowing bison to inhabit the entire legal tolerance zone.
- Allowing bison to disperse and populate the state.
- Allowing transport of bison to the tribes.

These shifts in management would increase hunter opportunities; increase the places hunters may find bison; and allow for wildlife watching, photography, and tourism throughout the state. BCC believes there are ways ranchers and citizens can live with bison, prevent the spread of brucellosis, and use proper fencing. Bison can be managed like other wildlife, such as elk.

SIX SHORT TERM SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE HUNT

(The number in parentheses indicates the relevant section of the IBMP plan.)

Solution 1: Make carcass removal required in Beattie Gulch. (1.3b)

While carcasses are a natural part of a hunt and important to scavengers, insects, and bacteria, the killing of 250 to 300 bison in this small area in a typical winter creates a carcass problem. Because the April field trip occurred after an unusual winter with light hunting in Beattie Gulch, fewer carcasses were observed. This may have downplayed this year's carcass problem. But after one winter hunt a few years ago, more than 8,000 pounds of remains were removed by state agencies from Beattie Gulch and hauled to Livingston.

Models for carcass removal include:

1. Greater Yellowstone Coalition has offered to help with the cost of the placement of a dumpster in Beattie Gulch. One way to use the dumpster would be to require hunters to drag their carcasses to the shoulder of the retrieval road. Since the shoulder of the retrieval road is already disturbed, a backhoe driving along it to collect carcasses would do little further damage to Beattie Gulch. The backhoe could carry carcasses to the GYC-supplied dumpster. Once full, the dumpster could be taken to Livingston. Other possibilities include incineration or composting as used by livestock producers. Greater Yellowstone Coalition has offered to help with creating a composting site or incinerator in or near Gardiner.
2. On the National Elk Refuge, a private company, Tag 'N Drag (tagndrag.com), is authorized to provide carcass removal service that individual hunters pay for. Finding a local company to do this in Gardiner Basin could reduce carcass problems and provide local jobs.
3. Individuals could be paid for carcasses. As a model, the state of Idaho pays fisherman who bring in their catch of certain fish (<https://idfg.idaho.gov/lake-pend-oreille-angler-incentive-program>). With an incentive program, hunters or locals could benefit financially from removing carcasses.

Solution 2: Expand the clean zone deeper into Beattie Gulch. (1.1, 1.4a)

Hunters cannot shoot while in the clean zone or shoot at wildlife that is in the clean zone. Hunters cannot leave carcasses in the clean zone but can move carcasses through the clean zone. BCC appreciates that the clean zone has been adhered to since its introduction.

Expanding the clean zone (by 100 yards to the west) moves the shooting and gut piles farther from Old Yellowstone Trail and reduces the possibility that a stray bullet may injure a hunter, resident, or tourist on or near Old Yellowstone Trail.

A possible downside of increasing the clean zone is compressing the hunting area. However, tribal representatives state that hunter safety has improved in Beattie Gulch with compliance with the MOA. So having hunters in a slightly smaller area may not create a problem.

A possible benefit of increasing the clean zone is giving bison a larger pathway through which they can reach other parts of the tolerance zone. This broader dispersal fits in with the IBMP mission of free-ranging bison and puts hunters in a larger area thus increasing hunter safety and hunter opportunity.

Solution 3: Create clean zones along portions of Jardine Road and Travertine Road. (1.3b)

Both these clean zones would operate like the one in Beattie Gulch. The clean zone along Jardine Road would start at the intersection of Hwy 89 and Jardine Rd in Gardiner and go east to the Penn Stock (building and pond located one-half mile east of Eagle Creek Road). This clean zone would be 150 yards wide on each side of Jardine Road.

The clean zone along Travertine Road would start at the intersection of Travertine Road and Jardine Road and continue along Travertine Road for 0.4 mile. This clean zone would be 150 yards wide and only on the east or north side of Travertine Road. The west and south side of Travertine Road are already closed to hunting due to the residences located there.

Both these clean zones increase safety, support mixed-use in the National Forest, and still allow significant hunter access. These clean zones decrease the likelihood of stray bullets hitting a resident, their animals, or their property. During one hunt, shots were fired too close to Eagle Creek Road. Bullets hit the ground next to parked cars and within several feet of hunters dressing a bison in the parking area at the intersection of Eagle Creek Road and Jardine Road.

Solution 4: Increase residents' awareness of the danger of certain areas during bison hunting season. (1.3b)

IBMP members stated—and Bear Creek Council agrees—that Gardiner residents and BCC can take steps to increase the safety of residents and their dogs. BCC can run public service announcements in the Gardiner community newsletter during bison hunting season. These announcements will encourage residents to:

1. Be aware of hunt dates, hunt areas, and clean zones so they may make choices about the safest places to recreate.
2. Keep dogs leashed or under close supervision when outside during hunting season.

Solution 5: Increase hunter awareness about residents' use of Jardine Road, Eagle Creek Road, and Old Yellowstone Trail and educate hunters in safe practices. (1.3b)

Hunter education and maps of residential areas can help hunters avoid firing shots near roads and dressing carcasses in the middle of roads.

Solution 6: Reduce parking congestion and trash along Old Yellowstone Trail.

At the May 16 state-tribal meeting, tribal representatives discussed that dealing with traffic congestion caused by hunter parking and reducing trash left by hunters are solutions they could address. Since Old Yellowstone Trail is a county road, BCC representatives could meet with the Park County commissioners and engage them in this solution. The county, perhaps in cooperation with the Forest Service, could widen the road in Beattie Gulch to provide for parking alongside the road rather than in the road. Park County could provide bear-proof trash receptacles in the Beattie Gulch area and along Jardine Road. The tribes and state agencies could make sure that hunters know to use them.

Sincerely,

Nathan Varley

Nathan Varley
President, Bear Creek Council

Discussion

Key discussion points following the BCC presentation are summarized below:

- A Partner-requested clarification: Q—Did BCC intend solution 3 to be about all hunting or just bison? A—No, just bison. And in fact, all 6 recommendations are focused only on bison. Responses—Perhaps it should be about all types of hunting. Our wardens already educate our hunters not to shoot towards houses.
- With seven groups hunting, it's tough to know who to talk to and what regulations each group is following. For example shooting along a road—who defines what a road is? Q—If the Partners adapted some or all of these recommendations, *how* would we make it work? MOA? More regulations? A—a) Enforcing an agreement in an MOA is tougher for law enforcement officers than enforcing a regulation. So regulations work better. b) What we need first is a list of all regulations (tribal, state, USFS) that are being applied to hunting on the North Side. That list can be attached to the Winter Ops Plan as an addendum (****action item 4**). Further, the regulations need not only to be collected, but also to be shown visually in map format. Included is the need to understand where all legal shooting areas exist. c) We need, then, to exhaust all tools we have to educate the public about all regulations that are in play.
- Putting regulations into effect, as some of the 6 recommendations presented, can be difficult and/or time consuming depending on the agency or group. Given required analysis and/or process the USFS, for example, cannot generally rapidly add new regulations.
- Trash collection is tough since it often requires city or county involvement. USFS typically is not involved in trash collection. Response—Possibly the tribes could supply the dumpster, but even if so it would require USFS approval for locating and handling. The area around the dumpster would likely need to be declared a no shoot zone.
- Greater Yellowstone Coalition has said it supports the idea that it supply funding for some part of a carcass removal program < *facilitator's note*: Emptying the dumpster(s)? Collecting carcasses after hunters brought carcasses to the road? From out in the field? Shana Drimal of GYC noted that GYC could be pay for a bear-proof dumpster, but the other questions just listed were not discussed. > Q—If we have a NGO willing to pay for a dumpster, could we try it this year as a trial? (no responses to this questions were recorded by the facilitator)
- Of importance, the Tribal Hunt MOA reflects existing regulations; it does not create new regulations.

- I am worried about the clean zone—seems like it would need to apply to all hunters, for example elk hunters, bison hunters alone couldn't be singled out.
- I am not sure a goal to 100% carcass removal is reasonable. Perhaps better would be starting carcass removal at some threshold level. But what is the threshold that could bring a grizzly bear to the carcass? Realistically it is one carcass. Also, I think we should expect that the collection/dumpster location itself will become a grizzly bear attractant. Q—We (BCC) are an all-volunteer organization. Is there any of the Partners that could provide a study on how many carcasses are too many? R—Yes, Partners can take that on and report back at next meeting (****action item 5**; following discussion Partners listed RF to lead the effort, with input of Kevin Frye FWP, Stacy Courville CSKT). The issues may be difficult to tease apart—e.g., likely no biological trigger on how many carcasses are too many—but the key issue for the review will be considerations of safety (humans and bears). Part of the work, since it seems we don't agree on the problem (do we have too many carcasses or not?) will be for the group to define the problem (If we undertake a management activity, what problem are we fixing? What negative outcome are we avoiding by acting?)
- I really like the last three BCC recommendations. Most important and first is to do the full education piece.
- Regarding carcass removal, we do have an example that we could look to: the Blackfoot Challenge has a carcass removal program and compost site. We suggest BCC and GYC look at this program and see if there is anything relevant that can be applied to our North Side carcass management issues (****action item 6**). Partners agreed to provide space at their next meeting for BCC and GYC to present their findings.
- For the BCC recommendations, function should follow form. For each of the recommendations, we need a definition of the issues; we need to understand what the main purpose is for the proposed change.
- Partner direction summary: Agreement to education recommendations. See action items as listed above.

Bison quarantine and translocation

RC let the Partners know that APHIS management (Burke Healy, new Administrator of APHIS Veterinary Services and Chief Veterinary Officer of the United States) has stated that APHIS will stay working in the bison quarantine program indefinitely. RC had reported at the last meeting that this future APHIS engagement was uncertain.

RC reported that YNP currently has 58 bulls and 21 cows undergoing quarantine. APHIS has two groups of cows and bulls with a projected graduation date of December 2019.

Robbie Magnan, director of Fish and Game for the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux tribes, reported that they have moved 12 bison from the Fort Peck facilities to the Wind River Range. He said that of the five bulls recently moved from YNP to the tribal facilities, one had died.

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

ME described that for the CGNF, most habitat work and consideration to date has been on where bison are now (e.g., Hebgen Basin) and not where they might go (e.g. on the way to or in the Taylor Fork drainage). She does not currently forecast that the forest will be doing much work in the Taylor Fork but is open to discussion with the State or other Partners as to the possibilities to consider. She asked if the Partners would like to add a discussion of habitat manipulation to a future IBMP meeting? MD agreed that a comprehensive review of this topic would be beneficial to potential future management activities. < *facilitator's note*: this item added to the Partners Parked Items list for future consideration > MZ noted that if hazing of bison out of the Park was part of the eventual plan, MDOL would want to be involved.

ME noted that such a review should include the information Dr. Marlowe's research had revealed, and that she was open to a group studying habitat manipulation potentially including one or two representatives from the NGO community.



Figure 3.—Over the course of the day, roughly 60 people attended this meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan, held at the Holiday Inn in Bozeman. Here members of the Bear Creek Council provide Partners, staff, treaty hunting tribes, and the public a list of six proposed solutions to North Side hunting issues. See section of report above describing the BCC presentation.

2019/20 Winter Ops planning, possible IBMP calendar change, adaptive management

The meeting agenda had these three concepts as separate items. As the three items were strongly related they are reported on here in a single section.

WINTER OPS PLANNING

A short discussion was held on changes expected in modifying the 2018/2019 Winter Ops Plan into the 2019/2020 Winter Operations Plan. These items were stated by Partners and staff as either explicit changes, or more general needs, both of which are captured below:

- A key missing is to better inform new hunters and new wardens about the landscape, regulations, and interactions with other hunting groups and landowners. We are doing a good job now, but need to realize that it is an ongoing process as each year we have new hunters and wardens within existing hunting groups, as well as new entities potentially starting to hunt.
- We must recommit to the morning pre-hunt meetings and weekly calls. These work well. For the calls and communication, it is important to recognize that different hunting groups have different seasons so the participants on the calls may vary across the hunting season.
- Just a reminder, the reason the calls fell off last year is that there were very few bison out, so very little hunting, so very little need for cross-entity hunting enforcement communication. We fully support resuming these calls and interactions this year as strongly as in the past should we have more bison out of YNP and a more prominent hunt again.
- We should hand out the map and regulation being created (see action item 4) to new hunting groups. Similarly, we should identify “educate-able” moments or points of contact.
- A caution: the IBMP may have a role for information dissemination but we should not set the expectation that one entity is in charge of the hunt
- Communication can occur as in the past with Wednesday morning meetings at the USFS offices in Gardiner. Also, we can again maintain a special frequency for radio interactions.

- NPT does already have regulations regarding trash and parking. MFWP—yes these things are part of Montana statute and we don't need any special IBMP agreement to enforce. Education is the key.
- Q—do we need improved signage?
- Partners provided some specific changes, or areas for discussion, they expect to see in the 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan:
 - Changes to the quarantine removals section that will include both NPS and APHIS removals
 - Quarantine section—new language around the current numbers of bison in quarantine and expected transfer location (expect Fort Peck facilities will be named)
 - Page 7—Under the discussion of who coordinates the hunt call, some discussion over whether it should stay as *FWP* or be changed to the *Lead Partner*.
 - Page 8—We should consider if we strike ~~LEO~~ as given the current situation of year-round tolerance this item is no longer as important

IBMP CALENDAR DISCUSSION

Partners recognized one year ago that their annual calendar has changed. In past years NPS completed their bison count before the IBMP summer meeting. Previously, then, the key function of the IBMP meeting each summer was to learn of those population counts and discuss NPS recommendations for removals the following year.

CG told the Partners that NPS researchers have in recent years learned that their count is more accurate if they wait until bison are in the rut, meaning NPS has shifted their annual bison count until later, generally completing it now in early September. Thus, while the potential changes to the Winter Ops Plan captured in the section above are important, the biggest impact on those changes—the bison count—is no longer available for the IBMP summer meeting (historically held in late July or early August).

Regarding the count, PJ stated that the earliest NPS could present (via email report) the YNP bison population count and NPS removal recommendations to Partners would be the first week of September (****action item 7**).

As that count is no longer available to Partners at their summer (late July/early August) meeting, a proposal was put forward for discussion to change the annual calendar to cancel the summer meeting and instead have a 2-day fall meeting, though earlier than the typical date of late November. Positives cited for the change included greater efficiency in Partner interactions, logistical simplicity (e.g., hotels, travel) resulting from one trip vs two, and the potential to have a public forum during the overnight between the two days of meetings. Negatives included a concern that only having two IBMP meetings per year (i.e., spring to evaluate past year's hunt; fall to plan for coming year's winter operations) might result in less work being done on IBMP issues. If they choose to move to a two-meeting-per-year scenario, one Partner said, they should also consider summer work groups with IBMP-related assignments.

The public was asked for any thoughts they had on changing the IBMP meeting schedule. Shana Drimal noted that progress under the IBMP is slow. She agreed with those who noted that if the group went to two meetings, it would be imperative that Partners and staff left the each meeting with lots of action items to progress on before the next meeting. Sabina Strauss said that frequency (number of times public can come to an IBMP meeting) and time of day matter. In the latter case she said most people who work can't attend IBMP meetings because they are held during working hours. Hence the nighttime public forum, she said, might be worthwhile especially for meetings held in the places where citizens are most impacted by IBMP topics.

When the discussion turned to having Partners meeting only at night so that the public would be more likely to attend, Partners provided push back. Partners noted that IBMP meetings are business meetings with regular staff having assigned duties and reporting and that having the meetings during regular work hours was thus appropriate.

Another idea put forward was that the Partners meet on a new, twice-per-year schedule, but additionally have a third meeting that is held as a combined summer field trip followed by public forum.

The discussion concluded with direction to the facilitator to add this topic to the Parked Item list for inclusion on the IBMP December 3 meeting.

USE OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

As he has done in the past, the facilitator presented a list of potential adaptive management changes pulled from the citizen comments over the past several years (see Appendix 1). A question posed was whether the Partners are still using adaptive management as their guiding management principle. The last change to the IBMP Adaptive Management Plan, it was pointed out, occurred in 2016 (see <http://www.ibmp.info/adaptivemgmt.php>).

Partners noted that the Adaptive Management Plan was critical early on after the 2008 GAO report, to capture very large changes in IBMP operation. Since then the Partners have continued operating under adaptive management, though in more incremental changes often reflected either in each year's Winter Ops Plan, or in day-to-day operations (e.g., as determined in real time with hunt calls described elsewhere in this report). It was noted that the facilitator's list included many items from the public that the IBMP Partners did not control.

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

Mark—update on addition of new treaty hunting tribes

Some new tribes have indicated the potential to begin hunting, but nothing concrete to report on actions in that realm. Otherwise, nothing new to report.

Shana Drimal—Update on bison coexistence/fencing project

No new update provided for this meeting.

Mary—Update on Custer-Gallatin National Forest Plan revision effort

The Forest released its draft plan and draft EIS and took public comment through June 6, 2019. Roughly 21,000 comments were received, many focused on bison. The final preferred alternative is expected to be released in the spring of 2020, followed by an objections period. The CGNF hopes to have its new forest plan finalized by late 2020.

Other items to report?

MD noted that the 2020 Hunt Managers' meeting has been set for May 20, 2020 in Missoula.

Next meetings, final comments

TIMING FOR COMPLETION OF THE 2019/20 WINTER OPS PLAN AND 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

The facilitator, in conjunction with the Lead Partner, provided the following timeline⁴ (**action item 8):

- By Sep 15, SB to send out request to Partners (or designated staff) for input on both 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report.
- By Oct 15, Partners (or designated staff) return to SB input to 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report.
- By Nov 1, SB returns first draft of 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report to Partners and staff for review and continued work.
- By Dec 1, Partners (or designated staff) return to SB revisions of first draft of 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report.
- On Dec 3, Partners and staff to a) review status of 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report, discuss, modify; and b) set plan for completion of both by January 1, 2020.
- By Jan 1, 2020 both 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual Report completed and posted to the IBMP website. Per Partner Protocols the former requires electronic signature, the latter does not.

⁴ Note: the dates here have been changed slightly from those presented at the meeting.

REMAINING 2019 MEETINGS OF THE IBMP

The Partners noted the remaining meeting of 2019 to be their fall meeting: December 3rd in West Yellowstone MT.

At the July IBMP meeting, TM offered that the CSKT host the summer 2020 IBMP meeting. He noted that holding IBMP meetings at tribal communities has been and is important to allow people local to those areas to better understand the IBMP. Likewise, DW noted that a meeting in Poplar might be appropriate in the future to allow Partners to see the Fort Peck quarantine facility.

MEETING CLOSE

Lead Partner Ryan Clarke of APHIS thanked Partners, staff, and public for attending the meeting, then bid everyone safe travels and closed the meeting.

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 presented. 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 represent the upper Gallatin Landowners. As we've stated before, we are OK with bison if they come into the area on their own but we are against shipping them in. Want to see that Partners understand and agree to this concept.
- We want to work with you guys. There was mention of a West Side tolerance zone subcommittee. I would ask that you allow at least one of the landowners to be on this subcommittee as we are going to be the ones most impacted by changes. I'd be willing to step up and be part of that process and sure others in our group would, as well.
- We are still concerned about impacts on grazing and safety. Last meeting Clayton Marlowe gave a talk that showed that most of the best grazing land in the Taylor Fork encompasses our private land. That's a big concern to us; we rely heavily on that grazing.
- I believe that with the land agencies at the table I think there are resources to make this easier on the landowners. I know the RTR has an agreement on their fencing and has lots of their fencing paid for and has continual support for that. So I ask you guys consider something like that for the West Side. We have lots of fencing out there and most of it is certainly not bison-proof. Work here could go a long way to alleviating our concerns.
- Safety is a huge issue. Haven't see much on the highway safety aspect. People are still hauling through there on the West Side.

- From our presentation earlier today, BCC has been thinking so a couple thoughts. So myself and the next two will just add a couple more thoughts.
- I have been thinking about the aesthetics aspect of the discussion this morning. I think we are trying to weed out issues but regarding just aesthetics part and what can be done on the practical level. I think we

are seen by the general public as good stewards of the bison resource or not so much. The public sees the hunt go on so ultimately one of our goals is to increase tolerance for wild bison outside the Park. Ultimately part of that is hosting hunts. We are in the Gardiner Basin and we are in the hospitality business in Gardiner and always have been, since the 1800s. I think the town would like to have hunters come to hunt, we would love to see tribal hunters come from afar for this generation's old activity of harvesting of bison.

- I think one way to get there would be by addressing some aesthetic issues to make it more acceptable to more people. So I think outside of this room a lot of the people I have surveyed over time want wild bison, don't know they are hunted, and certainly don't know that nearly every bison that leaves the park is hunted and dies.
- So to be seen as good stewards is what I am driving at. So that's why we should think about some of those things that are about appearances, safety – certainly we're all agreed there and that is gratifying. But when it gets to why remove carcasses when they can be used by other animals, etc, but we need to talk about how many carcasses can be there at one time, and what situations are created around that— bears and bear safety.
- We have seen collateral damage—bobcats and other dead critters around bison carcasses. We don't know why but would think all groups here would be interested in knowing or studying that.
- Mostly we really thank you. We feel like we have been heard and that you all have had thoughtful responses. We really appreciate the time.

- I also want to thank the IBMP Partners and all the tribes for letting us come in and crash your party.
- We worked hard on our recommendations and hope it shows. We want to make something good happen for the bison.
- I want to thank Mark for bringing forth the IBMP goals, especially the one for wild, free-roaming bison. I really want to encourage the IBMP Partners to work on this one. We have had no brucellosis transfer to cattle which is good but that's easy since we have no cattle so let's be realistic.
- So I believe our national mammal deserves some wildlands and we the citizens deserve to watch that mammal, the bison, to roam our public lands.

- Just want to take a short moment to thank you for your attention this morning and for that discussion that followed.
- I've been coming to these meetings for 5 years and the discussion about the wild, free-roaming bison I think is really critical to this issue.

*** Meeting adjourned ***

Abbreviations

- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BCC—Bear Creek Council
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- CG—Chris Geremia
- CGNF—Custer Gallatin National Forest
- CSh—Cam Sholly
- CSc—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 Wenner
- 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— InterTribal 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
- ML—Mike Lopez
- 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
- 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
- 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

Appendix 1.—Facilitator-derived list, from past citizen comments, of possible adaptive management changes to the IBMP

Review of Citizen Comments at last 6 IBMP meetings

Presented at 7/31/19 IBMP meeting in Bozeman, MT

Completed by facilitator Scott Bischke with a goal to find actionable items, at least some of which could be considered by IBMP Partners for adaptive management changes.

1. Make lands included in DSA available to bison as well as elk.
2. Can the Partners lobby for a new DSA around the Fort Peck Reservation?
3. Use Fort Peck as a Phase II facility to better expand quarantine program.
4. Create program to remove pathways to migration identified in Cunningham/Geremia talk.
5. Provide assisted migration ("loose" herding) of bison into Taylor Fork.
6. Try a pilot migration into the Taylor Fork study to help mitigate the severity of any problems. Let's stop speculating and get some bison in there and see what happens.
7. Conservation partners are willing to help fill the funding gap to see that restoration efforts can begin.
8. Regardless of how bison get to Taylor Fork we (Greater Yellowstone Coalition) are ready to pitch in and help, like funding ranger positions, so let's talk.
9. Create rules that allow (mandate?) that hunters drive bison miles outside of park before hunting.
10. Create a harvest pasture or pastures
11. Create cooperation with ranchers so that their lands are considered ceremonial grounds before bison are hunted there.
12. Have a single hunt under a single set of regulations for all hunting parties, whether tribal or state.
13. Remove the population cap of 3000.
14. Develop a regular and ongoing method for Partner/community communication.
15. Encouragement to allow enforcement officers from Partner groups to give a presentation on their challenges and successes.
16. Complete (or restart and complete) the new EIS for bison management
17. Repeal MCA 81-2-20
18. Remove *brucella abortus* from the bioterrorism watch list.