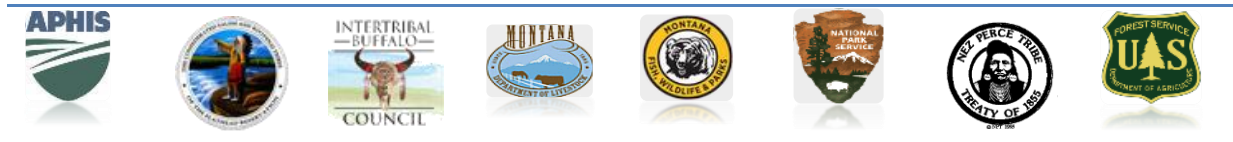


Summary Report from the Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting (via Zoom) July 29, 2020



First draft presented July 30, 2020 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke

The following summary report reflects activities at the July 29, 2020 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held via Zoom teleconferencing. 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 report is shorter than usual because a full video of the ~3 hr meeting is posted on the meeting webpage at <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20200729/20200729.php>.

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Attendees

The nine Partner attendees to the Zoom telecon were Ryan Clarke (APHIS), Bing Matt (CSKT), Arnell Abold (ITBC), Mike Honeycutt (MBOL), Martin Zaluski (MDOL), Mark Deleray (MFWP), Tim Reid (NPS-YNP), Quincy Ellenwood (NPT), and Kathy Minor (USFS). In addition to these Partners, ~30 others attended (mostly listening) on the Zoom call. Those included staff, representatives from treaty hunting tribes, and Shana Drimal from the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, who had been invited to make a short presentation.

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General public participation

The general public was invited to join the meeting via Facebook Live. The real-time feed of the Zoom telecon was hosted on the CSKT Tribal Council Face book page. Links were provided on the IBMP website meetings pages.

Approximately one week before the meeting, a Google Form was made available for public input with a link again posted on IBMP meetings web page. A note told the public that any comments received by noon July 28 would be sent to the IBMP Partners that day (i.e., before the telecon). No public comments were been posted by noon on July 28. Several comments *were* posted before midnight July 29, the declared closure time for the Google Form, and those comments are provided at the end of this report.

Meeting agenda, report structure

Now ~6 month in from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, most people were well versed in Zoom meetings. Still, the planning team from Lead Partner CSKT sought to create a short (3 hours versus all-day format), concise agenda worthy of the discussion challenges posed by the Zoom interface. That agenda follows.

The Zoom teleconference was recorded and is posted in-full to the web page for this meeting (see <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20200729/20200729.php>). As such, the report that follows focuses mostly on action items developed during the meeting.

AGENDA (version 7/28/20) for 7/29/20 IBMP ZOOM TELECON (9 AM - 12 noon [max])

1. WELCOME! (9-9:20)
 1. Scott, Martin -- meeting logistics
 - Zoom protocol for Partners, staff, and treaty hunting tribes
 - Public watching via Facebook Live
 - Public comments have been and still are being taken via Google form
 2. Welcome from Lead Partner Bing Matt and CSKT team
 3. Scott summary of update on IBMP key deliverables, given cancellation of April 2020 meeting
2. All (9:20-10) -- 5 min per Partner to summarize their own handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and how that impacts the IBMP
 1. APHIS, CSKT, ITBC, MDOL/MBOL, MFWP, NPS, NPT, USFS
 - NPS time will include introduction of new YCR Chief, Nancy Finley (other Partners may want to use time to introduce folks new to the IBMP community, as well)
3. All (10-10:45) -- 2019/20 Winter Ops wrap up
 1. NPS -- begin review with Chris Geremia short presentation summarizing the 2019/20 winter operations
 2. APHIS, CSKT, ITBC, MDOL/MBOL, MFWP, NPT, USFS
 3. CTUIR, ShoBan, Yakama, Blackfeet
4. As shown (10:45 - 11:05)-- SHORT status updates on new or ongoing programs or issues
 1. ITBC
 - description of Indian Buffalo Management Act (federal bill HR 5153)
 - status of Fort Peck quarantine capacity
 2. MFWP
 - release of Montana Bison Conservation and Management Act
 - Update on carcass removal efforts (potentially with Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Bear Creek Council)
 3. NPS -- description of new bison EIS
 4. NPS, USFS -- Update on two lawsuits (Neighbors against bison slaughter, Cottonwood Law) and potential to impact IBMP, including preparation of 2020/21 Winter Ops Plan (next item)
5. All (11:05 - 11:30) -- 2020/21 Winter Ops planning
 1. changes needed to on-the-ground operations --
 - APHIS, CSKT, ITBC, MDOL/MBOL, MFWP, NPS, NPT, USFS
 - CTUIR, ShoBan, Yakama, Blackfeet
 - For any change noted, assign writing/editing task and deadline for 2020/21 Winter Ops Plan
 2. Scott / CSKT-led -- timeline for 2020/21 Winter Ops writeup
6. Scott / CSKT-led (later NPT) (11:30 - 11:40) -- Annual report writeup planning, timeline
7. NPT, all (11:40 - 11:55) -- Planning for Dec 2 IBMP meeting
 1. Contingency planning if COVID-19 is still eliminating the chance to meet in large-group public forum Discussion on location for Dec 2020 meeting, if held - Given not having met in or around the Yellowstone area since Dec 3, 2019, should the Partners consider changing the meeting location back to Bozeman or similar, and have the
 2. Lapwai meeting at a future date?

Final thoughts from Bing and/or CSKT team? (11:55 - noon)

ADJOURN

Meeting opening

New Lead Partner Bing Matt from the CSKT welcomed everyone, wished them a productive meeting, noted how he had represented the Tribe at the IBMP many years past, and made kind comments about his CSKT predecessor, Leonard Gray. Partners started the meeting by declaring the *draft* meeting summary from their December 2019 meeting as *final*, and instructed the facilitator to mark it as such and post to the IBMP website.

Short overviews from multiple agenda topics

PARTNER WELCOMES

Partners and treaty hunting tribes each took ~5 minutes to greet everyone, and spend a bit of time discussing how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting their work and groups. For the most part, all reported lots of Zoom meetings, restrictions to travel, and some limitations on functioning—though with continuation of the essential services required from their groups. Almost everyone mentioned missing meeting their IBMP collaborators in person, even more so since the normal spring meeting had been canceled.

2019/20 WINTER OPS WRAP UP

Chris Geremia of NPS provided a summary bison removal numbers for the 2019/20 season. Chris slides can be found at the web page for this meeting (see <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20200729/20200729.php>). Chris spoke about the population goals (stabilization) the Partners head set for the 2019/20 season, the goal to balance bison hunt and capture, the status of quarantine operations (105 bison selected), and a set of lessons learned from the year. Chris also provided the following slide summarizing bison removal numbers for 2019/20:

WINTER OPERATIONS 2019-2020: IMPLEMENTATION 1. Stabilize Population													
	Removal Method	NORTH						WEST					
		Male		Female		Unk		Male		Female		Unk	
		A	Y	A	Y	Unk	C	A	Y	A	Y	Unk	C
HARVEST	Harvest (Mont)	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Harvest (CSKT)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	0	0
	Harvest (NPT)	10	0	11	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	16	0
	Harvest (CTU)	4	0	4	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Harvest (SB)	4	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Harvest (YN)	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Harvest (BT)	0	0	1	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Harvest (NA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Observed and unreported ¹	42	0	17	0	54	15	2	0	0	0	37	0
	NPS ²	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MTFWP ³	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
CULL	Captured and Consigned	38	34	202	42	0	126	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Removed to Quarantine ⁴	0	33	0	41	0	31	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Capture Pen Mortality	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	MTDOL Management Shooting	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year to Date	HARVEST	69	0	38	0	80	34	4	0	5	0	53	1
	CULL	40	67	202	83	0	158	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	109	67	240	83	80	192	4	0	5	0	53	1
											771	63	
Approximate Management Removal											834		
HARVEST:	284											PEN MORTALITY:	1
SLAUGHTER:	442											MGMT SHOOTING:	2
QUARANTINE:	105												

Other Partners (and treaty hunting tribes), in turn, summarized their seasons, noting the numbers shown in the graph above. Points of concern from the discussion, many of which turned into action items during the 2020/21 Winter Operations discussion, included:

- Continuing tension between operation of the trap and its influence on the number of bison available for hunters.
- Potential that due to COVID-19 that NPS will not be able to make its yearly survey flights to count bison (a count the Partners use each year to determine bison removal goals).
- Given COVID-19, the challenge of transport bison around the state that have been consigned to slaughter.
- Possibility that the bison migration has moved to later in the winter, meaning some tribes are having less success given that their seasons end *earlier* in the calendar year.
- The success of the quarantine program in moving certified brucellosis-free bison to Fort Peck for assurance testing, and how the first of those bison will soon be moving on to a number of out of state tribes for the first time.
- Kudos for excellent communication between hunting groups through the hunting season, though recognition there was room for improvement (the latter, particularly, regarding timing of the bison captures for the trap).
- Recognition that hunt reports (i.e., harvest data) are critical in week-to-week planning and that not all groups have been as timely as desired in supplying those reports.

STATUS UPDATES

Key status updates included:

- The success of the quarantine program in moving certified brucellosis-free bison to Fort Peck for assurance testing, and how the first of those bison will soon be moving on to a number of out-of-state tribes for the first time.
- The addition of new quarantine assurance testing capacity at Fort Peck Reservation.
- The release of a subcommittee report on an assessment of the methods for handling bison carcasses. Also a related report on bison carcass handling using dumpsters. Both items are posted at the web page for this meeting (see <http://www.ibmp.info/Library/20200729/20200729.php>).
- A short discussion on the NPS beginning the development of a new bison management environmental impact statement, centered on YNP. The EIS will include new information learned since the onset of the IBMP in 2000. Notice of intent for the EIS is expected this winter. Invitations are being sent to Partners now to act as cooperating agencies.
- Two lawsuits, both regarding the management of Yellowstone bison, are ongoing.

PLANNING DATES FOR THE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The facilitator, in conjunction with the Lead Partner, provided the following timelines during the course of the afternoon for these two year-end reports:

- Lead Partner NPT responsible
- By Sep 15, Scott sends out request for Annual Report input
- By Oct 15—first draft materials submitted
- By Dec 2 (IBMP meeting)—Partners review first draft; identify missing sections
- by Dec 15—Final Partner input
- By Jan 1, 2021—2020 IBMP Annual Report completed and posted to the IBMP website (per Partner Protocols, no signature from Partners is required)

PLANNING DATES AND ACTION ITEMS 2020/21 WINTER OPS PLAN

Beginning with the discussion of the previous Winter Operations season, Partners identified a number of issues that needed further review for potential change. They created action items and in some cases teams around those items in need of potential change. Those items are captured in the action items list that follows:

Action items identified

Table 1. Action items identified during this meeting

#	Who	What	By when
1	SB	Post the Dec 2019 meeting report to the website as “final”	ASAP
2	ChrisG	Inform Partners if YNP will do bison population count flights	Aug 31
3	ChrisG	Provide Partners with annual NPS bison population count (or estimation) and harvest plan	Sep 31
Review for improvement (rewrite as appropriate) portion of Winter Ops Plan dealing with the following areas. First pass modification (or decision that there will be none, by date shown)			
4	Steph G lead	Improving communications between on-the-ground enforcement personnel. Additionally, this item might include focusing on need for more timeline hunt reporting by creating a matrix showing the responsible party for each Partner for reporting. (team to include Neil T, Carl S)	Sep 31
5	Jeremy W lead	Improving the Interplay between population goals, having a successful hunt, and trap operation. This item includes improved communication, separate that described in item 4. (team to include TimR, members from FWP, NPT, Yakama – likely all hunting parties)	Oct 15
6	Mark D lead	Continuation of bison carcass handling assessment <i>potentially</i> leading to a future adaptive management proposal, even before the Partners meet in December (team to include Shana D of GYC, others who helped craft bison carcass handling assessment)	Oct 15
7	Dan W	Update, as needed, of quarantine section (team to include Chris G, Ryan C or Becky F)	
8	Mike T	Review Beattie Gulch area safety zone markers (team to include Carl S, possibly all hunting parties)	Oct 15
9	SB	Manage timeline creation (working with the NPT Lead Partner team) both the 2020/21 Winter Ops Plan and 2019 Annual report, per the schedules in this report	

After capturing the action items just noted, the Partners set a timeline for completion of their 2020/21 Winter Operations Plan:

- Lead Partner NPT responsible
- By Aug 31—YNP will decide if they are able to make bison populations counts
- By Sep 31—YNP will provide population assessment (regardless of if flights can be made) and harvest recommendations for the coming season
- By Oct 15—Partner-requested changes (see action item list) submitted to Scott for compiling, sending back out
- By Nov 15—Scott sends back out Winter Operation to date to Partners for review, further discussion before Dec 2 meeting
- Dec 2 (IBMP meeting)—Partners review, accept new 2020/21 Winter Ops Plan
- By Dec 30—Electronic signing complete
- By Jan 1, 2021.—The 2019/20 Winter Ops Plan is fully signed and posted to the IBMP website



Figure 1.—Roughly 40 people attended the IBMP meeting, held as a Zoom telecom do to the COVID-19 pandemic. Public access to the meeting was provide via livestream through Facebook Live.

Planning for the December 2020 meeting (and impact on 2021 meeting planning)

After short discussion, Partners recognized a shared belief that a high possibility existed that COVID-19 travel and large gathering restrictions might still be in place during their December 2020 meeting, planned for Lapawai, ID with the Nez Perce Tribe acting as Lead Partner and host.

A consensus was quickly arrived at, with the following points:

- If an in-person meeting is possible in December 2020, it will be held in Bozeman, MT. If it is not possible, then the meeting will be held by Zoom telecom.
- Given the loss of the three normal meeting times in 2020, the schedule noted in the Partner Protocols will be bumped ahead one year. Thus the three tribal groups—ITBC, CSKT, and NPT—will host the IBMP meetings in 2021, as they has expected to do in 2020. (which group would host which meeting was not decided)

< Facilitator's note: Following the Zoom call the Lead Partner team recognized that the change in meeting hosts for 2021 should not include the financial obligation for those hosts to fund the facilitator for a second year in a row. Since this issue was not discussed during the Zoom call, it has been added to the draft agenda item for the Partners' December 2020 meeting. >

Meeting close

Lead Partner Bing Matt of CSKT thanked everyone for their time, said he appreciated the group's work and expertise, and bid all good health in the days ahead, and then closed the meeting.

Public comment

The following public comments were received through a Google Form that was opened ~ one week before the meeting. Each bullet is from a separate commenter.

- Hello to IBMP partners and members of the public. My name is Megan Davenport. I am listening to the meeting in two roles, as Wildlife Biologist for ITBC and as a doctoral student at West Virginia University. I speak here NOT as ITBC staff, but as a passionate advocate for the organization and its mission. As a researcher, I study the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism on buffalo restoration efforts through the work of ITBC. In this process I am working with archival data owned by ITBC from the early 1990's surrounding the Yellowstone buffalo issue, and ITBC's continued activism on this issue. 28 years have gone by since the Council's formation in 1992. 27 years have passed since the ITBC Membership passed a resolution to become involved in the Yellowstone issue in order to stop the needless slaughter, and to offer other solutions such as quarantine. 26 years have passed since ITBC officially introduced a quarantine proposal to Yellowstone National Park. Following guidance from federal and state agencies at the time as to what would be required in a quarantine facility, not one, but two ITBC Member Tribes had "put their money where their mouth is" and offered land, resources, and plans to begin work building such facilities. 26 years ago. This venue of public comment is far too short to outline (evidenced through archival research) the number of challenges that ITBC and many Tribes have since gone through to accomplish what will happen next month – the first major transfer of Yellowstone buffalo to Tribal lands. ITBC exists to secure rights and resources to support buffalo restoration for all Tribes. This is an incredibly, historic victory, and is only the beginning. The support of all partners in making this happen is applaudable. But I also believe it is incredibly important for this group to REMEMBER and ACKNOWLEDGE the journey it has taken to get to this milestone. Twenty eight years of letters, meetings, speeches, resolutions, lawsuits, publications, and blood and sweat poured into fighting to secure these rights. My awe over the organization's continued activism is unending, and I ask you all to keep a deep connection with the history of this issue, and to become involved in learning more if you are unaware. Thank you for the time!
- (from Sabina Strauss) Thank you all for making this meeting accessible to public! Also, thank you to Shana and Mark on reporting on the carcass subcommittee work! I appreciate the consideration to include the carcass mitigation as part of the winter operations plan, that would be really helpful! Thank you all!!!
- Dear IBMP Partners and Treaty Tribes – Thank you so much for a great meeting today and for providing the opportunity for public comment. On behalf of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, I am writing to encourage the partners move forward with implementing a volunteer bison carcass removal program in the Beattie Gulch area as was purposed by Mark Deleray in this morning's meeting. It's become increasingly clear that the high density of bison carcass remains near Beattie Gulch as a result of the hunt presents a public safety issue in addition to posing other concerns including possible grizzly bear mortality, lead poisoning of scavengers, negative effects on area aesthetics, and other negative impacts to nearby residents and businesses. Taking a voluntary and educational approach to addressing this issue seems like a reasonable step in helping to address significant concerns from the Gardiner community and reduce the potential for human-wildlife conflicts, etc. Furthermore, this will help to further increase social tolerance for wild bison on the landscape as well the hunt that takes place here – which is critical not only for continuing to push for more bison on a larger landscape outside Yellowstone but also for the broader restoration of the species (many are watching what happens here, outside Yellowstone, as an example of what living with bison might look like for them). Please consider implementing this program and take us up on our offer to help pay for a bear-proof carcass dumpster for disposing of remains near Beattie Gulch. It's important that actions are taken that demonstrate a willingness to cooperate and work together to make improvements where needed and ensure this is a success. Thank you again for this opportunity to comment and for your continued hard work on this issue! Shana Drimal (Wildlife Program, Greater Yellowstone Coalition)
- (from Nikos Pastos) Your cultural invasion have desecrated our homelands since the early 1800's, and despite the good efforts of generation after generation of Indian leaders; the various departments of the

** final **

U.S. Government, and the State of Montana have interfered with the natural, sacred balance between man & the relationship between all the living creatures that were carefully sustained & maintained for thousands and thousands of years by the indigenous tribal peoples of North America. Your paternal, colonial, specious eugenics rhetorical scientism approach to disease transmission and extirpation of our national mammal is an echoing disgrace to common sense and conventional Tribal wisdom. The unethical perpetuation of policies to wantonly destroy the natural environment jeopardizes the food security of all future generations. These actions of systemic harmful disturbances to our homelands and to our children's futures - and to our cultural lifeways must cease and desist. The Hellgate Treaty of 1855 is a good reference point in recent history; our Tribal families, and all heirs to the Hellgate Treaty have the stipulated right to hunt, fish, and gather in usual and accustomed places as we have since time immemorial. Honor the Treaties with the various indigenous nations. Use real science, modify the management plans to let bison roam in the national forests where they are a native species. Let the bison roam free and multiply.

*** 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
- 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
- QE—Quincy Ellenwood
- 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