

Summary Report from the Interagency Bison Management Plan Meeting July 30, 2014



First draft presented 3 August 2014 by meeting facilitator Scott Bischke

The following summary report reflects activities at the July 30, 2014 meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners, held at the Best Western+ Kwataqnuq Inn in Polson MT. This report comes from the notes and flip chart records of facilitator Scott Bischke¹. The report will be marked “Draft” until formal Partner agreement at the start of their next meeting. The nine Partner attendees were Don Herriott (APHIS), Leonard Gray (CSKT), Ervin Carlson (ITBC), Christian Mackay (MBOL), Martin Zaluski (MDOL), Pat Flowers (MFWP), McCoy Oatmann (NPT), Daniel Wenk (NPS-YNP), and Mary Erickson (USFS-GNF). In addition to those at the deliberative table, ~20 staff members from across IBMP organizations and ~25 members of the public were present.

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Action items identified

Table 1.—Action items identified during this meeting

#	Who	What	By when
1	SB	Post April 2014 meeting notes to IBMP.info as final	ASAP
2	Partners or staff SB	<p>The Partners agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to take two weeks to review the new AM Plan and return any comments or edits to the facilitator; that at the end of that two week period, the facilitator can make those edits or, if no comments are received, post the 2014 AM Plan as final (** action item 2); and that the 2014 Annual Report would be based on the new 2014 AM Plan. 	As noted (~Aug 15 th)

July 29th Field trip

The CSKT hosted a half-day field trip on the day previous to the IBMP meeting. The field trip started with a barbeque lunch overlooking Flathead Lake from Salish Point Park. Among many items, the lunch included big horn sheep patties and big horn sheep salami, as well as breaded Lake trout.

Barry Hansen, CSKT Fisheries Biologist, provide background on the Tribe’s efforts to stem the increase of Lake trout in Flathead Lake. The increase of non-native Lake trout has resulted in negative impact to native fish including West slope cutthroat and, especially, Bull trout. Barry said the CSKT recently completed an EIS that provides for two methods of removing Lake trout: gill netting (planned to ramp up slowly over time) and two fishing derbies (called “Mack Days”) per year. The Tribe does not seek to eradicate Lake trout, but rather to “suppress them forever” to a manageable level sufficient to protect endangered Bull trout. The Tribe also foresees creating an active food crop from the gill-netted Lake trout. He was happy to report that in their first spring of gill netting for Lake trout, the by-catch of Bull trout was almost zero, and the by-catch mortality of Bull trout was zero.

Captain Arnie piloted the group from the field trip out into Flathead Lake aboard the Kwataqknuk Resort’s ferryboat *Shadow*. Various CSKT speakers provide interpretive information over the ship’s loudspeakers. Topics included the fisheries and fishery management of Flathead Lake, interactions with the State of Montana regarding public education about lake-related issues, the geologic history of the Mission Mountains, name places, lake bathymetry, patterns of land ownership within the reservation, and past bison inhabitation of Wild Horse Island. To everyone’s surprise, Tom McDonald, Division Manager for CSKT Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation, showed those aboard “...the best Lake trout fishing spot in the entire lake”, one the guides don’t even know about!

Upon returning to dock, Partners, staff, and public expressed great appreciation to Tom and the CSKT for their efforts in hosting the lunch and field trip.

Figure 1 provides a look at the some of the happenings during the afternoon event.



Figure 1.—Images from the CSKT-hosted field trip on Flathead Lake including the ferryboat *Shadow*; Captain Arnie and Tom McDonald; the luncheon on top of Salish Point; Barry Hansen talking about Lake trout; the narrows; and the flags of the State of Montana, USA, and CSKT.

July 30th Meeting opening

Germaine White, CSKT Information and Education Specialist, introduced Tony Incashola who offered an opening prayer and invocation, including some words in his native tongue. Tony introduced the drumming group Yamncut, who provided two songs, one of which was the *Calling Buffalo Song*. Ron Trahan, current CSKT Tribal Council Chair, next welcomed the IBMP Partners on behalf of the Tribe. Ron said that the drumming was a good way for good people—as all those assembled here were—to start the day. It is also good, he said, to work to bring back bison, the animal that has always protected and fed us.

Agreeing to previous meeting minutes

The facilitator asked if there were any objections or changes to the draft meeting report from the April 2014 IBMP meeting. No objections were brought forth; thus the facilitator, per Partner Protocols, is to post the April 2014 meeting notes to IBMP.info as “final” (** Action item 1).

Discussion on creating the 2015 IBMP Winter Operations Plan

HARVEST PLAN

PJ provided a presentation regarding NPS’s proposed bison harvest plan for 2014/15. The content of that presentation is presented here. The full presentation can be found at <http://ibmp.info/Library/20140730/20140730.php>.

PJ started by looking back at the 2013-2014 season, providing this insight:

- 4,600-4,900 bison (3,400 north; 1,500 central)
 - 14% annual growth rate (driven by northern herd)
- Recommended removal of 600-800 bison
 - At least 300 females; 165 males; 135 calves
- Hunters and culls removed 640 bison
 - 284 adult females; 200 adult males; 152 calves; 4 unknown
- Less winter-kill and predation (~200) than expected (~450); Population growth rate = 0.99

The population, then, PJ stated did remain essentially stable helped in part by the culls. Turning to the situation today, PJ noted that

- 4,860 bison counted in June/July
 - 4,120 adults; 740 calves
 - 3,420 northern; 1,440 central
- Predicted migration:
 - Average snow: >500 north and 500 west
 - Above-average: >1,500 north; >700 west
- Heavy cropping of summer range

We could, PJ said, potentially see migration patterns similar to last year if there was a bad winter.

For the bison harvest, NPS looked at three removal scenarios, and modeled the predicted end of winter bison populations as follows:

- Remove 600 bison: 300 females; 165 males; 135 calves
 - 4,020 bison at end of winter
- Remove 800 bison: 375 females, 225 males; 200 calves
 - 3,840 bison at end of winter
- Remove 1,000 bison: 500 females; 250 males; 250 calves
 - 3,650 bison at end of winter

PJ explained that the key for population control is the number of cows removed. Since one bull can mate with many cows removal of one bull results in only one animal gone; removal of one cow is equivalent of removing two animals—the cow and its calf of the next year. Most removals are expected to be from the Northern Range. NPS expects that some animals will need to be shipped to meat processing.

Based on these scenarios, PJ said, NPS makes the following recommendation for bison harvest under for 2014/2015:

- Remove ~900 bison this winter
 - 360 adult females; 100 juvenile females; 200 calves; and 240 males (primarily north area)
 - Primarily bulls in western area
- Hunting in Montana (400+ bison)
- Shipments to Meat Processing Facilities
- Shipments to Research
- Complete Quarantine/Terminal Pasture EA

The NPS recognizes the proposed harvest plan to have a number of considerations that require Partner discussion:

- Cow/calf removals—resistance?
 - Late season—pregnant bison
- Logistics of shipments and distribution of bison meat in a short time frame
- Contingency plans for mass or minimal migration
 - Increased tolerance; Haze/hold bison; Increased removals; Haze to capture facility?
- Long-term: 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000 bison
 - Impacts magnitude of migration
 - Trade-offs: hunting; culling; social issues

PJ concluded his talk with this slide of NPS considerations and concerns for creating the 2014 – 2015 bison harvest plan, leaving the floor open for the Partners to begin their discussions. Those discussions moved back and forth through many topics. The following report lumps the Partner discussion together into common threads, though they may not have occurred sequentially.

Is the recommended harvest of 900 animals realistic? PF agreed that 900 seemed reasonable. He said that in addition, he believed that 300-400 animals allowed in the Gardner Basin was about the limit of what was possible before conflict, public safety, and social stress issues snow balled.

NPS reminded the Partners that it is not only the overall number of bison harvested, but the sex ratio that matters in population control (see discussion above). Several Partners argued that (a) the population should not be allowed to spike upward, the swings and resulting need for huge harvests some years is socially unacceptable, and (b) that while we might not be able to get there all at once we should year-by-year design the harvest plan to continuously lower the bison population toward...

What is the IBMP population goal for bison in YELL? This discussion went in circles, with numbers ranging from 3000 to no limit. Some said that the forage base is not sufficient for the current number, others said that the bison harvested even given last year's high population and hard winter were in excellent health. Comments were made that improving habitat through range restoration, and expanding habitat such as available through the West Side EA (see section "Status of State of Montana programs") would allow for more bison. Statements were made that the Partners are currently operating under the mandates of the 2000 ROD, meaning a goal of 3000, and that to change it meant going through an AM change. For a longer term goal, many said that such a discussion will happen under the new EIS (see section titled "New EIS to evaluate bison management").

Some Partners said that they were not clear what the long term trend for YELL bison population should be: decreasing, stable, or increasing.

This discussion had no resolution. In the end, there appeared to be agreement on only three numbers: the 2000 ROD indicates a goal of 3000; the average number of bison in YELL since the 2000 ROD has hovered around 4000; and the current number of bison in the Park is roughly 4800.

What if there are not 900 animals that come out of the Park? Partners recognized that if the upcoming winter is mild, it is possible not as many bison will come out of the Park. RW stated that after ~30 years of data, NPS can predict that with numbers alone (2500 central herd, 3500 northern herd) that animals will migrate out of the Park.

Notwithstanding that comment, Partners asked, is it possible that there will not be enough out-migration to harvest (hunt, ship and slaughter) 900 animals? What then? Won't we then potentially risk having huge numbers the next year and thus a potentially huge outmigration two years hence?

This same question was asked in many different ways. And over the course of the discussion, multiple responses were presented. Those answers are captured below, though with the recognition that these ideas were presented in what was effectively a brainstorming session and none of these ideas had 100% Partner consensus:

- *Hunt inside the Park.* DW stated that this activity would be outside NPS mandate, plus would result in large public opposition. EC stated that if allowed, the tribes would carry this activity out in a respectful way.
- *Animals move on their own away from the northern boundary.* A Partner asked if there is any possibility that members of the Northern Herd might move to the Central Herd, thus decreasing pressure on bison to migrate into the Gardner Basin. NPS responded that while anything was possible, in fact in recent years the trend has been for the Central Herd animals to move into the Northern Herd. PJ noted that NPS does not understand why, that's just what they have observed.
- *Drive animals out of the Park (i.e., "haze to trap").* Those bison, then, would be available for hunting and/or ship and slaughter. Comments were provided that this activity would result in large public opposition. Also, hazing animals to push them outside the Park required a bigger conversation, DW noted, for example because of the interplay with animals being pushed back into the park by hunting. The two management efforts do not stand in isolation.

- *Allow the bison population to spike again and deal with it in the following years.* Many spoke to the concern that large population swings ultimately lead to a large out migration at some point, with subsequent need for large ship and slaughter operations (plus public safety and other concerns) that are socially unacceptable to many in the public.
- *Is an increase in winter kill possible?* One Partner asked if a harsh winter might increase calf mortality, thus lowering the bison population. DaveH said not likely, that current survival rate for bison calves over winter is high even in harsh winters—0.6 for bison calves versus 0.3 for elk fawns.
- *Is use of operational quarantine and then translocation of live bison to tribes possible?* No because (a) the two pastures at Corwin Springs are not available, and (b) the operational quarantine facility concept is just starting into an EA review now, so surely not available this year (the only possible streamlining of the process would come if an existing facility is found rather than starting from scratch—see section titled “Possible quarantine EA by the NPS”). ITBC stated their support of transfer of live bison to tribes as a goal that should be prioritized over ship and slaughter once operational quarantine is available.

How many animals can be taken by hunting? And if insufficient animals come out of the Park, how do prioritize hunting versus ship and slaughter? A discussion, again without resolution, proceeded regarding the maximum number of animals that could be reasonably harvested by hunting, and whether hunting should be considered the priority. Some noted that 400 seemed to be the capacity that could currently be met both with hunters available, and for social acceptance in park boundary areas. PF stated that even 400 might be ambitious. RW agreed. MO noted that the NPT have met their hunting goal and want to maximize the hunt as a priority. He and TM disagreed that we are at the maximum hunt harvest since tribal hunts are new since 2007, and that their hunters are becoming more and more efficient. JH noted that the tribes don’t think of hunting as a tool whose goal is for population control. Instead they would like to hunt to replace ship and slaughter.

RW stated that hunters take 2-3% of animals that migrate into the Gardner Basin. The rest often go back until pushed back out by pressure from other bison, or pulled back out by bison who have not been out and been hunted yet.

Opinions of equal fervor were put forward championing hunting (e.g., treaty rights, not yet maximized, more socially accepted) over ship and slaughter (efficiency, ability to handle higher numbers of bison) as a priority. No resolution was reached. But several ideas were mentioned for possible consideration:

- Allow capture for ship and slaughter early in the season—assuming animals come out—before the hunt moves into full swing
- Can more tribal groups be allowed—whether via currently unused treaty rights or otherwise—to hunt?
- Can we haze animal to, for example, Cutler Meadows to make them more accessible to hunters?
- Can we stagger the hunts (tribal and state) to say hunt 3 days, then rest 4 days, to allow the bison more time to move out of the Park, feel less harassed, and thus be more available?
- What if for the north side we did an AM change similar to the west side; i.e., with time and number targets? For example:
 - Dec - Jan 1: all bison that come out of the Park are allowed to pass. Hunt allowed only in Cutler Meadows and Eagle Creek, nowhere else, to allow animals to better disburse away from the Park.
 - Jan 2 – Mar 31: Capture and ship some animals. Let some pass for the hunt, which is allowed in all areas. Use the guideline of 300-400 animals as the maximum allowed in the Gardner Basin (includes Eagle Creek) to begin stopping all animals at the Park boundary. The 300-400 animal guideline is used as sufficient to serve the needs of hunters, while minimizing safety issues and bison-associated social conflicts in the Gardner Basin. (It was noted during the discussion that based on last year, shipments to slaughter are only expected to occur in February and/or March.)

- April 1 on: If there are greater 400 animals in the Gardner Basin, capture and hold the animals until May 1, then release them back into the Park.

How do we distribute the animals destined for ship and slaughter? DaveH noted that the logistics of ship and slaughter may be the biggest issue that the Partners face. To date, only ITBC and CSKT have been takers for animals in the ship and slaughter program. NPS can capture the animals. From there, NPS needs Partners to provide transportation, security, processing, and distribution.

How do we accomplish harvesting 900 animals? The Partners expressed some concern about the how the harvest might break out, even given that enough animals come out. CM led a discussion to come up with a potential breakdown, based on last year's results and this year's expectations. The numbers that follow were the Partners best guesses, and only that—they do not reflect commitment at this stage by any Partner:

- 300 Hunt (combined state and tribal, recall NPS goal of focus on cows)
- 150 Ship and slaughter (ITBC, funding concerns noted)
- 450 Ship and slaughter (CSKT; popular program; likely could increase their take of these animals from last year; Tribal Council has stated that it is critical not to take pregnant females)
- 35 Research (APHIS)
- ? Ship and slaughter (NPT, uncertain pending tribal council allocation)

900+ animals

JS noted that bison ship, slaughter, and package came to ~\$330 per animal. Several Partners stated that this cost seemed reasonable, and might open up other avenues for final bison disposition, including (no order of preference intended): other tribes (e.g., other treaty hunting tribes or 26 affiliate tribes of YNP), Montana food bank networks, USDA food programs for tribes, contacts available from APHIS from when they managed the ship and slaughter program, and/or the general public.

Lessons learned regarding bison outside YNP in 2014

Much of this planned discussion came out in the Winter Operations discussion that preceded it (see section directly above). Still, SS provide some overview on his observations from the Winter Operations of the past year, both in presentation, and in response to Partner and staff questioning. A summary of the point he made follows:

- All in all SS was happy with last year's hunt and the cooperation by all agencies. The groups have worked well with each other and been very adaptable.
- Most of the reported public safety and property issues happened after the hunt.
- SS appreciated that different groups have done good work; for example the CTUIR documenting their removal of gut piles.
- In the Gardner Basin, roughly 90% of the calls on conflicts came from four areas, mostly north of the highway.
- MFWP will offer help to land owners who then have the choice whether they want to accept that help or not.
- As Partners and as sovereigns, we are all learning each year in multiple areas including such things as signage, closures, and enforcement.
- Pleased to see that the harvest could be increased.
- Fencing changes along highways requires the engagement of the Department of Transportation.
- We meet with Park County every Monday. For the counties, the more information we give them, the better.
- MDOL and MFWP talk regularly with the Sheriff's office. The Sheriff would like have information on bison shipments.
- Public tolerance of bison outside the Park seems to be increasing. This is happening for many reasons, including public education (e.g., the pamphlets created under Citizens' Working Group

recommendation), the NGO co-existence fencing program (donated funds toward fencing projects), increasing experience and hence tolerance with the hunting.

- With regard to the hunt, the best thing to do is continue to monitor ourselves on a day to day basis (e.g., working together on the closure of Beattie Gulch).
- We have to recognize that rarely is there a single, fits-all-situations solution. Every solution has other consequences that might impact other people or goals.
- We have more need for fencing than supply of rails for fences.
- SS believes the issues on the ground can be fixed.
- PF—There is an expectation that a wildlife underpass or overpass may be put in north of Yankee Jim Canyon. While not applicable to bison, the cooperation on this big project may lead to bison-associated projects in the future in the Gardner Basin.
- The highway department has been very responsive to our requests.

Status of State of Montana programs

(Note that given time constraints during the morning, the last four bullets under this agenda item in the final schedule were instead discussed during the 4:15 Updates section. They are shown here for continuity with the original schedule.)

STATE OF MONTANA BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN (ARNIE DOOD OF MFWP)

Arnie noted that the State of Montana Bison Management Plan is on-going, though with some twists and turns. The State's plan exists separately from the IBMP, focusing on the rest of the state away from areas covered by the IBMP. The State received some 23,000 comments during public scoping on an EIS for a potential State Bison Management Plan.

Arnie reminded the Partners that a two-day meeting of state and community leaders, and the general public, was held in Lewistown in September 2013. The meeting was in part to re-start the process of work toward the Bison Management Plan, which had stalled slightly for several reasons, including the election of a new governor and with that the seating of a new director of MFWP.

A second meeting of the "Lewistown Bison Group" was planned for April 15-16, 2014 with a goal of discussing issues as Montana moves ahead to evaluate potential alternatives to be included in an environmental impact statement (MEPA analysis) for bison conservation and management. That meeting was cancelled and moved to July 14-15 in Billings.

In Billings, the assembled group came up with five possible alternatives (these in addition to those developed in the public scoping):

- (1) no action alternative;
- (2) Private landowners voluntarily allow bison on their land but the bison remain public;
- (3) Tribes voluntarily allow bison on their tribal lands but the bison remain public;
- (4) Bison are established on a large, conflict free area of say 50,000 acres; or
- (5) Place 50-100 animals in a mixed landscape where they will have little impact on rural issues.

Arnie said that issues of where the bison would come from, what does statute require, how many landowners might willingly participate, and more remain unanswered. He further reminded those attending the IBMP meeting that regardless of the bumps and bounces of the State Bison Management Plan (or the IBM, for that matter), that bison as an issue for the State of Montana is not going away.

QUARANTINE BISON AT TURNER RANCHES (MFWP)

Quarantine animals were sent to Turner Ranch for soft release and further prove that they are brucellosis free. PF noted that a request for proposals for final disposition of the animals was open until April 25th. Five proposals were received. These animals are expected to be moved by November 2014.

UPDATE ON WEST SIDE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS (MFWP, MDOL)

No decision document has been issued as of this point. The Board of Livestock is one of two decision entities regarding the MEPA analysis. At their January 2014, the BOL had questions and delayed decision on the MEPA analysis pending having those questions addressed. At their March 2014 meeting, the BOL received answers to their questions, but deferred their decision again. At their May 2014 meeting the BOL tabled the discussion and did not act upon it. Thus there is no action to report on the EA.

The Region 3 Director, PF, is one signatory, MBOL the other. MFWP has written MBOL a letter asking them to further review the EA and act upon it. MFWP is still waiting on response to the letter. PF noted that he is uneasy with no decision, especially so given that 130,000 comments were received.

CM noted that the MBOL was hung up on the idea that the IBMP Partners have never been able to manage bison at the 2000 ROD-mandated 3000 animal limit. Given that, how would they be able to manage to a larger number?

CM noted in response to a question that the Governor is informed but has not weighed in on the EA yet.

GOVERNOR'S DIRECTIVE NOT TO HAZE ON PRIVATE LANDS (MDOL)

CM stated that the Governor's Directive did not have a large impact on hazing operations this year. He mentioned that MDOL was not given permission to haze on private property on Horse Butte. They did conduct hazing operations on private property along the South Fork of the Madison. In that case the bison were on land where cattle would be the next day, which met the directive's goal of "...unless an imminent threat exists" (not intended to be a direct quote from the directive).

CM does not expect that the Governor will change his directive any time soon.

MDOL FUTURE VACCINATION PLANS (MDOL)

MZ said that while MDOL is still evaluating such a possibility, but no firm plans have been developed to date.

Possible quarantine EA by the NPS

DaveH described the current state of the operational quarantine EA planned by NPS. He noted that a press release regarding public scoping for the EA would be sent out during the IBMP meeting. Dave described what was included in that press release, which is presented in full as follows:

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yellowstone National Park
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 30, 2014 14-051

Al Nash
(307) 344-2015
YELL_PublicAffairs@nps.gov

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK NEWS RELEASE

Public Input Sought On Bison Quarantine Proposal

The National Park Service is seeking public comment regarding a plan to consider a quarantine program for Yellowstone bison at one or more new quarantine facilities, which could be located within Yellowstone National Park, on tribal lands, or elsewhere.

The purpose of a quarantine program would be to remove bison from the Yellowstone population and make brucellosis-free bison available to augment or establish new tribal and public populations of bison. The program would assist in the conservation of the species, support the culture and nutrition of Native Americans, and reduce the number of Yellowstone bison that are shipped to processing facilities.

The public is encouraged to attend one of the following public meetings to learn more about the proposed planning effort:

- Monday, August 18 in Gardiner, Mont.: Yellowstone Association Headquarters, 308 Park Street
- Tuesday, August 19 in Bozeman, Mont.: Homewood Suites, 1023 E. Baxter Lane

Both presentation-style meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. and are scheduled to conclude by 8:00 p.m.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Comments may be submitted on-line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BisonQuarantine>, hand-delivered during normal business hours to the mailroom in the park's Administration Building in Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming, at one of the public scoping meetings or mailed to: Compliance Office, Attn: Yellowstone Bison Quarantine EA, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY, 82190.

Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or in any other way than those specified above. All comments must be received by midnight MDT, September 12, 2014.

Partners asked if the State of Montana would have a role in the operational quarantine? DW noted that the state, USFS, and others could have a role in the operational quarantine facility, all depending on where it was located. He noted that is still to be determined. In initial scoping, five alternatives are likely to be put forward: (1) no action alternative (i.e., do not develop an operational quarantine facility); (2) inside YNP; (3) outside YNP, inside DSA; (4) outside YNP, outside DSA on tribal land; and (5) outside Park part in DSA, part out (i.e., calves are held until criteria met, then allowed outside DSA). PF noted that the state of Montana would have jurisdiction if the bison were moved to private land, since the wildlife on private land are under the public trust and thus under state jurisdiction. DW said he appreciated the Partner questions as identifying issues was exactly one part of what was needed and intended during the scoping process.

DaveH noted that the 2000 EIS foresaw the possibility of an operational quarantine process being developed as a tool of the IBMP. Thus, a new EIS is unlikely warranted. However, the 2000 EIS noted that if an operational quarantine facility was to be established, further analysis would be needed. Hence the EA.

New EIS to evaluate bison management

At the April meeting DaveH announced that NPS, MDOL, and MFWP had signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a new environmental impact statement for bison management. This agreement would require MEPA analysis by the State, NEPA analysis by NPS. The underlying reason for the new EIS is the on-the-ground changes that have occurred in bison management since the signing of the last EIS in 2000.

At this meeting DaveH said that scoping is in progress with a preliminary range of alternatives being worked out. He said that cooperating agencies should see drafts of those alternatives within a week.

Pat Flowers retirement and recognition

Partners, led by NPS, surprised Pat Flowers by presenting him a painting and plaque thanking him for years of service toward achieving the twin goals of the IBMP. The presentation was not on the agenda and clearly caught Pat, who is retiring before the end of the summer, off guard. His pending retirement made this Pat's last IBMP meeting.

Partners, staff, and public provided Pat thanks for his service. Many good words were spoken to and about Pat. Recurring themes included, in no particular order: thank you; you have been a solid rock for the

IBMP, as well as your other efforts with MFWP; you have been a great supporter of the tribes; you bring such a calmness in tense situations; you are a stalwart partner; you are too young to retire; when you're officially retired, we'll hire you; you are always cool and calm under adversity; you are always a voice of reason; you are an incredible asset to any group you serve; you are always accessible and direct; you always make time to talk with me; I cannot imagine where this group would be right now without you. And perhaps most importantly—we will all miss you.

Pat, while clearly emotional, provided some thoughts of thanks of his own, including that he felt truly humbled to hear everyone's kind words. He said that it had been a great honor to work on this issue, and that he had immersed himself in the issue after seeing the passion bison brought to all involved, especially the public. Pat concluded his thoughts saying that he wanted more than anything else to wish everyone involved in the IBMP well, and also to provide his greatest hope that the group would continue to move forward.



Figure 2.—Pat Flowers, retiring, was surprised by a gift for his years of service toward meeting the goals of the IBMP. The images show Dan Wenk making the presentation—with David Hallac (holding the gift) and McCoy Oatmann looking on—and then all in attendance giving Pat a standing ovation in recognition of his efforts.

Human dimensions study of wild bison

Dr. Elizabeth Metcalf, from the University of Montana, described a study that her team is undertaking to look at the human dimensions of bison. She began with an overview of the new study, saying that most people want to do the “right thing”, yet behavior is influenced by many things, for example balance among attitudes, values, information, ability, regulation, and more.

Guiding questions for the study include—How do YNP goals fit within gateway communities attitudes/values? Study objectives include:

- Provide NPS with understanding of gateway community residents_attitudes towards bison
- Assist with outreach strategies in upcoming planning efforts
- Provide an opportunity for local residents to express their bison experiences
- Initiate relationship building with YNP and communities

Dr. Metcalf noted that while people often equate them, attitudes and values are not the same. Attitudes—which are unobservable internal reactions—are “a learned, predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to some object.” Personal values, on the other hand, “...provide an internal reference for what is good, beneficial, important, useful, beautiful, desirable, constructive, etc.” Values transcend objects, situations, and issues.

Dr. Metcalf described several differences between attitudes and values, including that while attitudes are numerous, values are limited in number. Also, attitudes are learned (through experience or information) rather than innate like values. *Both* attitudes and values can be tough to change, especially values.

CSKT uplands restoration

Art Soukkala gave an update on ongoing CSKT work to restore uplands on the reservation. The work is directly applicable to consideration by the Partners of ways to improve habitat for bison forage in many areas, for example in the Gardner or Hebgen basins.

Art noted that the CSKT seek to return native grasses to the prairie, with a concomitant goal of getting away from needing to spray for exotics and weeds. Most of the work was initiated under a MS student from Montana State University, is ongoing and thus—he said in response to a question—not published.

Treatments that were tested to improve native plant reestablishment included no till and broadcast seeding, differing seeding rates, three herbicides, and two cover crops. Drill planting at the highest rate resulted in the highest native plant establishment. They also are doing experiments fire to prepare the prairie for planting. Soils were for not grazed during the treatments Art discussed, other than intermittently by passing deer or elk.

Art provided some lessons learned from their work. You do this over time, he said. Look at this as a multi-year commitment. Don't try to do the work all in one year or your efforts might be wiped out by, for example, one horrendous drought year. Art also suggested that people doing restoration work understand their soils, in particular moisture holding capacity. Further, he said it is important to learn to be appreciative of small changes, incremental improvements in native species initiation, since progress is likely to be slow.

Art's full presentation can be found at <http://ibmp.info/Library/20140730/20140730.php>.



Figure 4.—Art Soukkala addresses the Partners, staff, and public regarding uplands restoration on CSKT lands.

Partner briefings and updates

Mary—North Hebgen habitat restoration efforts

ME said that CF apologized for not being able to attend but sends thanks to the Partners and staff that have been out on the ground with his team. The habitat restoration work continues to be a priority for the GNF. CF will provide an update at the November meeting.

Sam—update on bison coexistence/fencing project

This item was covered under the section titled “Lessons learned regarding bison outside YNP in 2014”. The bison co-existence project continues, with funds available to help landowners purchase and erect fences. Interested parties should contact SS at MFWP.

Germaine—status of continuing efforts on bison education brochures

GW and AJ said that edits had been received and made on the informational bison education brochure that is in progress. The brochure, the third, centers on Native American cultural ties to bison. GW previously described that the brochure seeks to capture the fundamental importance of bison to tribes, including discussions of traditional uses, bison management, and treaty rights.

The project is close to finished and expected to soon go to print. At that time it will be available from MFWP, plus the pdf will be available for download on the IBMP website (see <http://ibmp.info/bisoneducation.php>).

Ryan—update on Gonacon trials

RC note that there is nothing new to report from the Gonacon study, which is still underway. He said that the lab APHIS uses to analyze samples does not prioritize theirs, and that results are often slow to come by even after samples have been submitted. Also, the work will take quite some time. Thus he said that while he is happy to provide updates, that Partners and public should not expect a lot of new information to be presented at every IBMP meeting.

Dan—status of lawsuit against helicopter hazing

The case is under appeal by the Alliance for the Wild Rockies. It is still under review by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Scott—status of the compilation of AM changes into a single AM document

The facilitator noted the per Partner instruction to him at the April 2014 IBMP, he had compiled all of the current AM changes signed by the Partners into a single document. Further, per agreement, the new unified “2014 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan” is available in two formats: one showing markup from the 2011 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan, and one as a clean document. The new AM Plan was sent to the Partners during the week prior to the current meeting. The Partners agreed:

- to take two weeks to review the new AM Plan and return any comments or edits to the facilitator;
- that at the end of that two week period, the facilitator can make those edits or, if no comments are received, post the 2014 AM Plan as final (** **action item 2**); and
- that the 2014 Annual Report would be based on the new 2014 AM Plan.

Future activity planning

FUTURE IBMP MEETING SCHEDULING

The Partners discussed their earlier commitment to meet in Lapwai ID for their November meeting. The NPT previously offered to host the meeting. Given that the current meeting was being held outside the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA), and given some concern about the potential for poor roads in November, the Partners—with NPT agreement—decided to switch their November meeting back to the GYA. Specifically, the meeting will be held in the Gardner or Yellowstone basin on the north end of YNP (location and potential for field trip to be determined).

The Partner committed to, and MO agreed, hold their summer 2015 meeting in Lapwai with the NPT acting as meeting host. As part of the decision, NPS agreed to incur responsibility for meeting location fees associated with the November 2014 meeting, while the NPT will do the same for the summer 2015 meeting. For the November 2014 IBMP meeting, then, NPS will act as host, NPT as Lead Partner. For the Summer 2015 IBMP meeting, NPT will act as host, NPS as Lead Partner.

PLANNING FOR COMPLETING 2014 IBMP ANNUAL REPORT

The facilitator described that the process for completing this year’s annual report will be similar to past year, per Partner agreement (provided). The Annual Report will be built on the 2104 IBMP Adaptive Management Plan and again include reporting on progress toward meeting the 2011 recommendations of the Citizens’ Working Group. As described in the Partner Protocols, the goal is to have the Annual Report

completed by December 31st. NPT, the Lead Partner for the November meeting, will assist the facilitator, as needed, with issues associated with compiling the Annual Report.

THANKS AND LEAD PARTNER CHANGE

All Partners joined in thanking Lead Partner Leonard Gray, along with Tom McDonald and the rest of the CSKT team for their efforts running the second meeting of 2014.

Per agreement at the November 2013 meeting, the Lead Partner now changes to McCoy Oatmann (and second Angela Sondanaa) of the NPT for the final IBMP meeting of 2014.

Public comment

The following notes on public comment to the IBMP Partners are not intended to be complete, but rather reflect the facilitator's best effort to capture key statements. The facilitator has especially attempted to capture those comments from the public that appeared to be solution oriented and have the potential for inclusion in AM planning and/or process improvement. These items, as well as other potentially actionable public input, are called out with a "***" in the listings that follow.

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 during the middle of the day in reaction to numerous past public comments about public input being of less value at the end of the day.

- I have a paper showing that there is increased seroprevalence in wildlife. We need to realize that what's going on with bison isn't happening in a bubble. (The speaker held up a photo.) This was called a "gut pile" resulting from cleaning a bison during the hunt. This isn't just a gut pile. It includes a fetus! The fetus could be a vector for brucellosis spread. Is anyone worrying about this?
- Has anyone been investigating our wildlife populations? We have free-ranging elk and they can also transmit brucellosis to cattle. For example if they licked that fetus from the gut pile they could get brucellosis from bison, then later pass it along to cattle.
- I don't think anyone is looking into this issue. We have a Wyoming feeding ground happening right here in Montana.
- We need to know—what is the effect of these fetuses that can come from gut piles resulting from hunting bison?

- I will say one thing that I hope you hear and think about over and over—habitat, habitat, habitat! That is where we need to go. We are managing animals on larger landscapes now and the good news is there are far larger landscapes available. And to be clear, many landowners would welcome bison.
- I am concerned that the hunting program may end up exceeding the social landscape tolerance for it. I personally won't buy a bison tag until we have a more viable population in Montana. I think that is within our reach.
- Bison don't belong to YNP even they say they want you, the Park, to do this or do that. I don't want the Park to do things that keep bison from coming to Montana.
- ** If you must do something within the Park, I suggest that you capture bison and move them up to the Upper Gallatin within YNP.
- I want to see the habitat EA acted on. I think the Partners did a good job. We need this EA accepted and the lands on the west side, Taylor Fork opened to bison.
- Regarding the possible operational quarantine facility, I want to know where it will be located, and who it will be managed by.

- Our group has reached out to our folks over the last 20-30 years. We see that for the last long time that the west side expansion was the best idea to come around, so our group is very disappointed that it wasn't passed by MBOL.
- The Partners need to recognize that expanding habitat year around will help the bison issue. There are a lot of chicken and egg scenarios with YELL bison.
- There has been a lot of trust broken over the years, but there is also room to fix that broken trust, as well.
- I am dismayed by the discussion that hunting of bison should not be prioritized. It should.
- These are wildlife and should be managed like wildlife.
- I appreciate the discussions about how do we expand hunting opportunities, how do we map out new tolerance zones and perhaps have periods of non-hunting? We need to work with the tribes on this topic.

- I represent the Montana Wildlife Federation. We are willing to help each organization here, or the IBMP Partners as a whole.
- Our group recently agreed to resolutions on (1) bison reestablishment somewhere in Montana, (2) disease.
- We believe that bison should be managed as wildlife by MFWP, and not as livestock.
- We should focus on managing the risk of brucellosis transfer, not the disease itself.
- We see establishing a bison population in Montana of primary importance for protecting the genome, ultimately with a goal of being able to hunt them. They need to be established in a large area outside YNP where they can live full time.
- Our group would like to get involved in bison. We have done so by, for example, commenting on the West Side EA, and on the state-wide bison management plan.
- We need to have the public involved to come to some level of consensus.

- I'm the landowner that first greets the bison when they step out of the Park north of Gardner.
- I am hurt by what happens every year. I am only given one minute for every month that I have lost business. I have to tell people what they will see here—the slaughter—and that if they want to come to see bison they may want to go somewhere else. So I lose business.
- Tourism is the largest revenue producer in Montana. This slaughter at the border hurts tourism. (The speaker reads part of a letter from someone who had stayed with her. It says in part that the writer came from a place that respects animals, that they were appalled by what they saw north of Gardner, that what they saw was blatant violence to animals, and how they would not return).
- I am not against hunting. It happens on the 5 acres in front of my house so from January to April I lose business.
- I have asked God why I was given the right to have this land. And I now know that I am here to speak for the animals.
- I had 110 gut piles in front of my driveway. We need some common sense put into this situation. It seems that people just aren't getting it.

*** Meeting adjourned ***

Abbreviations

- AJ—Andrea Jones
- AM—Adaptive management
- APHIS—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- BB—Brooklyn Baptiste
- BFC—Buffalo Field Campaign
- CF—Cavan Fitzsimmons
- CM—Christian Mackay
- CSKT—Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes
- CTUIR— Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- CWG—Citizens’ Working Group
- DaveH—David Hallac
- DH—Don Herriot
- DSA—Designated Surveillance Zone
- DW—Dan Wenk
- EA—Environmental Assessment
- EC—Ervin Carlson
- GAO—Government Accountability Office
- GNF—Gallatin National Forest
- GW—Germaine White
- GWA—Gallatin Wildlife Association
- GYA—Greater Yellowstone Area
- ITBC— Inter Tribal Buffalo Council
- JH—John Harrison
- JS—Jim Stone
- LG—Leonard Gray
- MBOL—Montana Board of Livestock
- MD—Marna Daley
- MDOL—Montana Department of Livestock
- MDOT—Montana Department of Transportation
- ME—Mary Erickson
- MEPA—Montana Environmental Policy Act
- MFWP—Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- ML—Mike Lopez
- MO—McCoy Oatman
- MOU—Memorandum of Understanding
- MR—Majel Russell
- MSGA—Montana Stockgrowers’ Association
- MSU—Montana State University
- MZ—Marty Zaluski
- NEPA—National Environmental Policy Act
- NGO—Non-governmental organizations
- NP—Nez Perce
- NPS—National Park Service
- NRDC—Natural Resources Defense Council
- Park—Yellowstone National Park
- PF—Pat Flowers
- PIOs—Public Information Officers
- PJ—PJ White
- RC—Ryan Clarke
- ROD—Record of Decision
- RF—Rebecca Frye
- RFP—Request for proposals
- RT—Rob Tierney
- RTR—Royal Teton Ranch
- RW—Rick Wallen
- SB—Scott Bischke
- SEIS—Supplemental EIS
- SK—Salish Kootenai
- SS— Sam Sheppard
- 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