

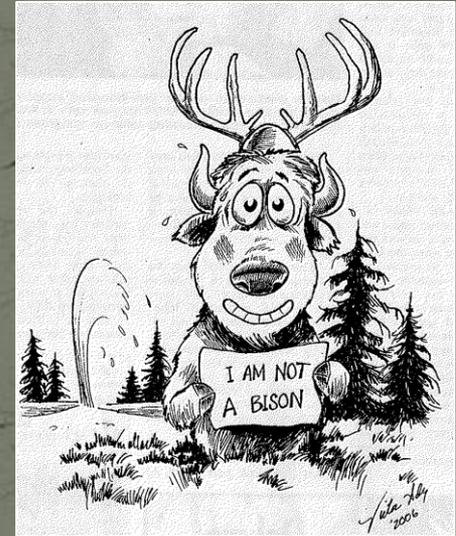
Is there an ongoing role for the CWG?



Report from 2017 Meetings

Is there an ongoing role for the CWG?

- 2 public meetings to gauge interest
- Desired broad public representation
- 21, 17 people showed
 - No tribal or ag. attendance
 - New & previous participants
 - All bison proponents
- Start w/ revisiting previous recommendations
- Priorities moving forward



General Takeaway

- Strong interest to reconvene CWG
- Tribal, sportsman & ag. constituent participation desired
 - CWG should move forward regardless
- Previous Recommendations: Some progress, still a long ways to go.
 - Most recommendations still relevant
 - Key Priority Recs Identified
- New concerns



General Takeaway

- Identified 4 top focus areas/goals for Partners going forward
 - To achieve priority recommendations
- Quick brainstorm of ideas/actions to get there
 - For two focus areas
 - With or without CWG



Pete Benguefield

Presentation/Discussion Overview

- Progress Report on Priority 2011 CWG Recommendations
- 4 top focus areas/goals for Partners
- Ideas/actions to get there
- Potential CWG Projects
- Open Discussion
 - Is there a role for CWG going forward?
 - If so, what will this look like?



Progress Report on Priority 2011 CWG Recommendations

Categorization:

A. Solid progress made

- Completed or substantially complete
- Ongoing (i.e. no discrete endpoint or goal)

B. In progress or partial progress

- Some action but either incomplete or started then stopped

C. No action

- Or no progress

Progress Report on Priority 2011 CWG Recommendations

Habitat Effectiveness / Habitat Expansion



Pete Bengeyfield

Habitat Effectiveness / Habitat Expansion

Recommendation 1: Identify public lands that could/should be open to bison year-round in accordance with state and federal law.

- **Partial progress (started then stopped).**
 - *State of MT Bison Management Plan appears stuck*
 - *Draft EIS - Programmatic not site specific.*

Habitat Effectiveness / Habitat Expansion

Recommendation 2: Systematically **identify suitable, available habitat** outside Yellowstone National Park in the Greater Yellowstone Area (i.e., Federal, State and Private lands).

- **Partial progress**

- *USFS lands included in MEPA (EA) analysis for west side.*
- *CWG: Consideration of additional federal, and state & private lands (Northside)*

Habitat Effectiveness / Habitat Expansion

Recommendation 3di:

Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically: Upper Gallatin/Taylor Fork/Cabin Creek/Porcupine/Buffalo Horn Creek, etc.

i. Begin a public process to evaluate opportunities for **reintroduction and management** of bison in this area, including within Yellowstone National Park.

- **No Action**

- *Bison allowed - Governor's EA decision*
- *Need a plan for how to get them there*

Habitat Effectiveness / Habitat Expansion

Recommendation 3dii:

Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically Upper Gallatin/Taylor Fork/Cabin Creek/Porcupine/Buffalo Horn Creek, etc.

ii. Start work to amend/alter State and Federal Management Plans and other decisions to account for the presence of bison on the landscape and take responsibility/be accountable for successfully **implementing those plans** regarding bison. (Lead = MFWP).

- **Partial progress**

- *Governor's decision adopted into the IBMP*
- *New plans required for translocation/management?*

Habitat Effectiveness / Habitat Expansion

Recommendation 3e:

Develop and implement strategies that manage bison as wildlife on those lands, specifically:

i. Additional Habitat Areas: Immediately initiate and complete by the end of 2013 the **statewide bison management plan** to restore wild bison to additional biologically suitable, socially acceptable areas.

- **Partial progress (started then stopped)**
 - *Requires completion of MT State-wide Plan including site-specific analysis*

Progress Report on Priority 2011 CWG Recommendations

Population Management



Population Management

Recommendation 1:

Modify the Interagency Bison Management Plan **Zones 1, 2, and 3** with an eye to finding better habitat solutions particularly in light of changes that have occurred since zones were designated in 2000.

Identify habitat that can alleviate population pressure, including available public and private lands, and potential habitat acquisition as well as potential funding sources.

- **Partial progress**
 - *Addressed through the new EIS/IBMP process*
 - *Additional habitat & dispersal*

Population Management

Recommendation 2:

Strive to **manage bison as wildlife**, and complete, implement, and support a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks management plan that includes setting bison population objectives and hunting strategies as a priority population management tool.

- **Partial progress (Started then stopped)**
 - *Addressed through the State-wide Bison Management Plan*
 - *New EIS/IBMP?*

Population Management

Recommendation 3*a:

Make **hunting** a bigger component of bison management and consider different seasons or other opportunities to increase the impact of hunting.

- **Partial progress**

- *Constrained by limited footprint*
- *Hunting pressure affecting distribution*
- *Need more habitat, better dispersal, year-round occupancy*
- *Significant concern for CWG*

Population Management

Recommendation 3*b:

Outside the Park, the main means for controlling bison abundance and distribution should be state-administered and tribal **hunting**. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should test new methods for dispersing hunting in time and space.

- **Partial progress**

- *Should include the Tribes*
- *Constrained by limited footprint*
- *Hunting pressure affecting broader distribution*
- *Significant concern for CWG*

Population Management

Recommendation 4:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Tribes hunting Yellowstone bison should work more closely together to set collective hunt targets and to document the **hunting** success numbers.

- **Partial progress**

- *Recognize ongoing efforts but appears to be getting worse in the eyes of the public.*
- *Significant concern for CWG*

Population Management

Recommendation 5a-5f*:

Agree on and establish a target **population range** that is biologically and ecologically acceptable and accounts for a variety of public interests.

As Interagency Bison Management Partners, agree on criteria for evaluating and determining a population range and appropriate management tools, such as:

Population Management

- a) Winter range outside the Park
 - b) Risk factors
 - c) Individual agency management mandates, constraints & responsibilities
 - d) Genetic diversity, population structure & demographics, reproduction, & distribution
 - e) Addressing private land owners' concerns
 - f) Hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities
- **Partial progress (started then stopped)**
 - *Addressed through the new EIS/IBMP process*
 - *Appropriate pop range necessary*

Population Management

Recommendation 6a-6d:

When bison have to be removed because of high migration numbers, management constraints, safety, etc., the priorities should be (in order):

Population Management

- a). Hunting outside the park,
- ~~b). Moving them to nearby appropriate available lands,~~
- c). Translocation from the Yellowstone area (capture, quarantine, transport and release), &
- d). Lethal removal by managing agencies.

- **No Action**

- *This “order” has not been implemented.*
- CWG: Reconsider B as it pertains to bison in the Upper Gallatin

CWVG Priority Goals for IBMP Partners

Four top focus areas/goals for the IBMP partners going forward with or without CWVG help:

1. Completion of the new IBMP
2. Completion of the MT State-wide Bison Management Plan (BMP)
3. Habitat & Dispersal of bison outside Park: North-side
4. Habitat & Dispersal of bison outside Park: West-side

1. Completion of the new IBMP

- Reflects changes on the landscape, sets scientifically based population ranges, treats bison as wildlife, etc.
- CWG population recommendation's:
1, 5a-5f*, 6a-6d

**Potential role for CWG going forward? Unsure.
Open to ideas from Partners.**

2. Completion of the MT State-wide BMP

- Identification of reintroduction sites
- CWG recommendation's:
 - Habitat 1 & 3e
 - Population 2, 3*a, 6a-6d



Potential role for CWG going forward? Unsure. Open to ideas from partners.

3. Habitat & dispersal of bison outside Park – North-side –

A. Additional Habitat

- State & private lands
- Consider outside Gardiner Basin
- Update/new landowner survey?

Potential role for CWG going forward? Yes

B. Habitat Improvement Projects

- Work with FS

Potential role for CWG going forward? Yes

3. Habitat & dispersal of bison outside Park - North-side -

- C. Address hunting pressure/overcrowding (e.g. at Beattie Gulch) to allow for dispersal
 - FWP/Tribal Cooperative Management Plan
 - Population objectives (min & max # bison)
 - Biological & social carrying capacity, management constraints
 - Balance hunting desires & need for population reduction with goal of broader dispersal

Potential role for CWG going forward? Unlikely unless interest from tribes & FWP

3. Habitat & dispersal of bison outside Park - North-side -

- D. Move away from managing toward a total population target of 3500
- Limits dispersal/broad distribution
 - New IBMP



Potential role for CWG going forward? Unsure.
Open to ideas from partners.

3. Habitat & dispersal of bison outside Park - North-side -

CWG recommendation's that
could be accomplished

- Habitat: 2, 3bi-3biii
- Population Management:
1, 3*b, 4, & 6a-6d



Donna Lawson

4. Habitat & dispersal of bison outside Park – West-side –

- A. Plan for restoring bison in the new west-side expansion area (i.e. Upper Gallatin, Taylor Fork, etc.)
- Assisted migration?
 - Translocation?
 - Identification of corridor/pathway(s)
 - Habitat improvement – prescribed burns?
 - Highway crossing(s), road mitigation?

Potential role for CWG going forward? Yes. CWG could provide ideas/recommendations, help with addressing landowner concerns, etc.

4. Habitat & dispersal of bison outside Park – West-side –

- B. Hunt plan to allow dispersal/restoration
 - Address proactively on west-side
 - Consensus agreement: limited/no hunting during restoration
 - FWP/Tribal Cooperative Management Plan
 - Population objectives (min & max # bison)

Potential role for CWG going forward? Unlikely
unless interest from tribes & FWP.

4. Habitat & dispersal of bison outside Park – West-side –

CWG recommendation's that could be accomplished:

- Habitat: 3di-3dii
- Population Management: 2, 3*a-b, 4, & 6a-6d



Tom Murphy

Potential CWG Projects - Recap

4A. Plan for restoring bison in the new west-side expansion area (i.e. Upper Gallatin, Taylor Fork, etc.)

- Recommendations for a proactive plan
- Assist with landowner concerns & seek landowner involvement

3A. Additional Habitat on Northside

- Recommendations for state & private lands
- Assist with new landowner survey (inside & outside Gardiner Basin)

3B. Habitat Improvement Projects on Northside

Open for Discussion

- Helpful to the Partners?
 - Endorsement?
- What projects to work on and to what ends?
- What would the CWG look like?
 - Partner Rep(s)?
 - Subcommittees?
 - Facilitator?
- Who will make up the group?
 - Any tribal interest?
 - Reps from Ag community?
- How would CWG interact w/Partners?
 - Time slot at IBMP Meeting?
 - Deliverables?





Pete Bengeyfield

Thank you!!!