

## **West Side Expansion EA**

### **Population Range and Operational Activities**

The Operational Population Range (OPR) in this decision is between 3,300 and 4,000. At population levels above 4,000, no additional tolerance will be given above what is outlined in the 2000 IBMP ROD and subsequent adaptive management changes. At 3,300 and below, tolerance will be given as outlined in Alternative B of the West Side Expansion EA.

Within the OPR, several population factors and management actions will be taken within the tolerance area. Those are outlined below.

The West Side Expansion is viewed as an active management adaptive change. Adjustments in tolerance area and management activities may be made annually based on annual population surveys.

#### **Population Count**

An operational count of all bison within the IBMP management areas and YNP will take place each year after the close of hunting and before calving season; on or about April 1. This will be an aerial count conducted by the state of Montana. The purpose of the count is to inform the partners of management actions for the coming operational and hunting seasons.

It is recognized that the count can have an error rate of +10%.

#### **Above 4,000**

At counts above 4,000 head, no additional tolerance will be given above what is stated in the 2000 ROD and subsequent adaptive management changes. Seasonal hazing and/or trapping will continue as necessary, as planned by the IBMP partners.

#### **Count between 3,700 and 4,000**

Annual tolerance will be given to bison in Alternative E of the EA commonly known as Horse Butte. Trapping removals will continue on both the North and West sides of the park. Hunting seasons for the following fall will be set taking into consideration the number of bison removed by trapping, with a management goal of 3,300. Bison outside of alternative E will be captured and/or hazed back into the Park as necessary by the deadline stated in the ROD as currently adapted.

It is recognized that once bison numbers get above approximately 200 on Horse Butte, bison tend to move outward onto surrounding areas. After the haze back deadline when bison on Horse Butte exceed 200 or when multiple hazings of the same animals back to Horse Butte occur, any bison outside Alternative E will be returned to YNP, lethally removed or captured and hauled to slaughter as necessary.

#### **Count between 3,300 and 3,700**

Annual tolerance will be given to bison in Alternative C of the EA. Trapping removals will continue on

both the North and West sides of the park as necessary. Hunting seasons for the following fall will be set taking into consideration the number of bison removed by trapping, with a management goal of 3,300. Bison outside of Alternative C be captured and/or hazed back as necessary by the deadline stated in the ROD as adapted.

**Count at less than 3300**

Annual tolerance will be given to bison in Alternative B. Trapping removals will continue on both the North and West sides of the park as necessary. Hunting seasons for the following fall will be set taking into consideration the number of bison removed by trapping, with a management goal of 3,300. Bison moving outside of Alternative E will be lethally removed by agents of the MDOL, MFWP or hunters.

**Taylor Fork**

Once the bison population reaches 3,300, and bison are established in the Taylor Fork area north of Taylor Creek and south of Buck Creek, that population will continue to be counted as part of the overall population. However, should the total population be above 3,300, this group will not be subject to hazing or trapping. It is initially expected that the upper limit of bison in this area will be 100. MFWP will manage the hunt to reflect this objective.

**Capture, Slaughter, Vaccination**

Capture and slaughter will remain a tool for reducing population to the level outlined in the original EIS, and for maintaining that population, should hunting fail to reach the yearly objective. If capture on either the North or West sides becomes unavailable as a management tool, tolerance will revert to the level in the original ROD as previously adapted.

Vaccination of captured animals that test negative will take place in accordance with a subsequent vaccination EA.

Count	Action
> 4,000	No change in tolerance from year 2000 ROD and subsequent adaptive management changes
3,700 – 4,000	12 month tolerance on Horse butte, Alternative E.
3,300 – 3,700	12 month tolerance, Alternative C.
3,300	12 month tolerance, Alternative B.