

## Lessons Learned from 2007 West Bison Operations

### 2007 Bison Hazing Operation Summarized

On June 12, 2007 there was a hazing operation inside Yellowstone National Park in which approximately 325 bison (including 85 new calves) from Cougar Meadows to Fountain Flats, approximately 9 miles. The operation was conducted with 11 horse riders from N.P.S, MDOL, and MFWP. Other personnel involved included 3 LE for traffic control, 5 volunteers for traffic and crowd control, and a MDOL helicopter. (The helicopter was needed to get the bison from Cougar Meadows to the West Entrance Road). The bison were successfully hazed to Fountain Flats. The following factors of concern were raised in the process of the operation and should be considered in future operations inside the park:

- the large number of bison hazed
- the condition of the bison (food available, weight loss, calving)
- newborn calves effected by the operation
- the long distance traveled in a single day
- the large amount of visitor traffic and the length of traffic delays caused by the operation
- the need for several experienced horse riders with bison hazing experience

### The effects of these factors were:

- As bison became tired and traffic interfered, the bison herd was stretched out along the road for approximately three miles creating a less manageable span of control.
- This seemed to be a long distance traveled for undernourished bison and newborn calves.
- Long waits in traffic jams of up to three hours were imposed on park visitors.
- The inability to maintain control of the herd once it was stretched out over distance compromised visitor safety, especially around Madison Campground (though no incidents of injury or property damage were reported).

### Recommendations for 2008 Plan

1. Prior to hazing large groups of bison up the Madison River (West Entrance Road),haze bison that are inside the park farther inside(up the Firehole and Gibbon River Drainages) to make room for bison being hazed into the park and/or up the Madison River.
2. Establish suitable areas to hold bison based on grazing, water, and space as determined by Bison Management Team. (Rick Wallen)

3. Maintain control of bison herds as they are hazed, especially near picnic areas, campgrounds, and other areas occupied by visitors.
4. Be sure that participants who will be hazing bison are trained and/or experienced in hazing bison.
5. Provide traffic control that will direct traffic in such a way as to allow for safe passage of bison and for the intermittent flow of traffic past the hazing operation when possible.
6. Provide adequate law enforcement units to contact protesters and/or visitors who compromise the operation or the safety of others.
7. Minimize impact to bison, park visitor experience, and park operations by conducting hazing operations that involve the fewest bison being moved the shortest distances feasible within management requirements.
8. Utilize "day herding" to encourage bison to remain on areas that have been determined "range ready" or to hold bison in areas determined to provide spatial separation from bison groups being moved into the park.