

- The federal government and State of Montana are signatories to the IBMP, which they have implemented since 2001 to sustain a viable population of Yellowstone bison and reduce the risk of brucellosis transmission from bison to cattle.
- Bison numbers have almost doubled since 2008, and there are concerns that high grazing intensities on some summer ranges may not be sustainable over time. Population size was about 5,500 bison during summer 2016. To date, no cases of brucellosis transmission directly from Yellowstone bison to cattle have been detected. However, there have been at least 20 documented cases of transmission from infected wild elk to cattle in the Greater Yellowstone Area in the past 15 years.
- High bison densities can result in the migration of thousands of bison into Montana, which can overwhelm managers' abilities to maintain separation with cattle and protect people and property.
- Consistent with the IBMP, managers developed an operations plan to decrease bison numbers by 750 to 1,300 during the winter of 2017 through public and treaty harvests in Montana and culling in YELL at the Stephens Creek capture facility.
- The NPS has signed agreements with several tribes to provide them with bison for direct transfer to meat processing facilities and subsequent distribution to their members.
- The effectiveness of hunting in Montana has been limited by concentrations of hunters near the park boundary that prevent bison from distributing, wound bison, and cause safety issues.
- The shipment of bison to processing facilities is extremely controversial and generates negative publicity. The State of Montana and APHIS object because of the risk of brucellosis transmission; animal rights groups object on humane treatment grounds.

Development of a New Interagency Bison Management Plan

- The NPS and the State of Montana have entered into an agreement to co-lead the development of a new Yellowstone Bison Management Plan. There are also six cooperating agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the InterTribal Buffalo Council. The states of Wyoming and Idaho, as well as APHIS, declined to participate.
- The EIS is managed by the NPS, who is providing sole funding for the EIS effort at this time.
- Public scoping was initiated in 2015 that included ~~ed~~ing a newsletter identifying alternative concepts. About 8,300 individual comments were received. Since that time, the NPS and Montana have met on several occasions to develop a range of alternatives for a Draft EIS.
- To assist with alternative development, the co-leads contracted the Udall Foundation, U.S. Institute on Environmental Conflict Resolution, to provide third-party, neutral facilitation and engagement services for the EIS process. The Udall Foundation completed a situational assessment of co-lead and cooperating agencies perspectives on bison management, and provided facilitation at one meeting between the NPS and Montana.
- There has been little agreement on many facets of bison management, both under the existing IBMP and in this new EIS process. Montana has two agencies involved, the Department of Livestock and Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Both of these state agencies differ in their perspectives on bison management and thus, there is no "unified" state approach towards bison management from Montana. This has made it very difficult to come to agreement on a range of alternatives, tools for management, and overall objectives and goals.
- In addition, relationships are strained due to the conflict over the NPS bison quarantine proposal and current management under the existing IBMP. There may need to be a reevaluation of goals and objectives, as well as renewed State of Montana commitment, to a new bison management plan in order to move forward.

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