

August 5, 2010

MEMORANDUM

EXHIBIT 9

TO: Suzanne Lewis, Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park

FROM: P. J. White and Rick Wallen, Wildlife Biologists, Yellowstone National Park

SUBJECT: IBMP Meeting Notes, August 10/11, 2010

West-side Migration

- Bison are migratory wildlife that need low-elevation winter range.
- IBMP partners have acknowledged that the risk of brucellosis transmission from bison to cattle on the Horse Butte peninsula is substantially lower (approximately zero) compared to 2000 when the Record of Decisions for the IBMP were signed.
- Incursions into Zone 3 occurred, but were not a failure of the IBMP because management actions and the lack of cattle prevented the risk of brucellosis transmission from increasing.
- 2010 bison distribution in the west boundary monitoring area based on NPS aerial surveys. Numbers in parentheses represent the additional number of newborn calves observed.

Area	March 12	April 9	May 7	May 15	June 14
Horse Butte Peninsula	4	242	311 (39)	103 (52)	0
South of Madison Arm	0	0	98 (9)	0	0
Gneiss and Duck Creeks	4	8	43 (2)	48	16
Graying Arm (North)	0	0	0	43 (5)	0
Barns and Bakers Hole	0	0	201	79 (17)	0
Cougar Creek & Meadow	8	114	54	244 (12)	29
Madison Junction	5	126	0	191 (35)	38 (27)

West-side Hazing

- IBMP partners completed an assessment of the expected late-winter scenario by May 1 and concurred on tactics for hazing bison back into YELL.
- Intensive interagency hazing operations were conducted from May 4 to June 21, 2010. Sporadic operations have continued to present on a group of <10 cows/calves.
- The State Veterinarian has the management discretion to initiate management actions in zone 2, including hazing, capture, testing, or lethal removal to prevent bison from entering zone 3.
- MDOL already has the discretion to respond to incursions from zone 2 under the 2008 Adaptive Management Plan (Management Action 1.1.a, Management Responses).

Brucellosis Persistence/Bison Parturition

- In the greater Yellowstone area, bison and elk are infected with *Brucella abortus* and there can be no guarantee that cattle near the boundaries of Yellowstone will not be exposed.
- Allowing bison to occupy public lands outside the Park where cattle are never present (e.g. Horse Butte peninsula, South of Madison Arm) until most bison calving is completed (late May or early June) is not expected to significantly increase the risk of brucellosis transmission from bison to cattle because:

- 1) bison parturition is essentially completed weeks before cattle occupy nearby ranges;
 - 2) female bison meticulously consume birthing tissues;
 - 3) ultraviolet light and heat degrade *Brucella abortus* on tissues, vegetation and soil;
 - 4) scavengers remove fetuses and remaining birth tissues; and
 - 5) management maintains separation between bison and cattle on nearby ranges.
- Allowing bison to occupy public lands outside the park through their calving season will help conserve bison migratory behavior and reduce stress on pregnant females and their newborn calves, while still minimizing the risk of brucellosis transmission to cattle.

Habitat/Fencing

- Public lands on Horse Butte and South of the Madison Arm are likely not sufficient habitat to support the numbers of bison (>1,000) that may migrate there in some winters.
- IBMP partners agreed to develop a fencing strategy in collaboration with private landowners (2008 Adaptive Management Plan, Objective 3.2, Management Action 3.2.b) to minimize the risk of transmission of brucellosis from bison to cattle, without adversely affecting other wildlife. There has been little progress to date.
- IBMP partners agreed to identify and explore opportunities for bison use of available habitat in other public and private land areas in the Hebgen basin (See 2008 Adaptive Management Plan, Objective 3.2, Management Action 1.3). There has been little progress to date.
- Excluding bison from the southern ½ of zone 2, which is almost entirely public land (USFS), would merely exacerbate bison density on Horse Butte and induce movements elsewhere such as to the north.
- Hazing bison across Highway 191 and back into the park is not a solution.
- Other alternatives are available, including (1) consideration of strategic fencing and the capture pen near the boundary of zone 3 to impede bison movements to higher risk areas, and (2) identification of additional habitat (including enhancement) for bison on public lands.
- Hunt – need to allow some bison outside the park on public lands year-round so they're available to hunt during the established season. Bison don't typically migrate outside the park early enough in winter (before mid-February) to be hunted.
- Transfer of bison to American Indian Tribes – need to fast-track efforts by direct outreach to tribes, APHIS, and BIA.
- Citizen's Working Group – Montana needs to facilitate formation with public commitments.