Spring 2026 Public Meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners May 14, 2026 West Yellowstone, Montana

Approved at the Fall 2026 Meeting of the IBMP Partners on October 28, 2026

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Attendees

IBMP Partners

- Michael Neafsey—United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
- Tim Reid—National Park Service (NPS), Yellowstone National Park (YNP)
- Tom McDonald—Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)
- Chaz Bends—InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC)
- Matt Jedra—United States Forest Service (USFS), Custer-Gallatin National Forest (CGNF)
- Christy Clark—Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP)
- Mike Honeycutt—Montana Board of Livestock (MBOL)
- Tahnee Szymanksi—Montana Dept of Livestock (MDOL)

Not in attendance: Representatives from the Nez Perce Tribe.

Treaty Hunt Tribes

- Crow Tribe of Montana
- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)
- Yakama Nation

University of Wyoming, Ruckelshaus Institute

- Alexander Hancock (Primary facilitator)
- Melanie Armstrong (Secondary facilitator)
- Xavier Michael-Young (Note-taker)
- Tarissa Spoonhunter (Director of the High Plains American Indian Research Institute)

Opening Session: Welcome and Overview

Lead agency welcome & introductions

The meeting began with a welcome from Michael Neafsey, partner for the 2026 lead agency, the USDA APHIS. He thanked everyone for joining, noting the presence of NGOs, State, and federal partners in the room. He requested that people be focused and respectful in their discussions.

All attendees from IBMP partners (primaries, secondaries, and staff) and Treaty Hunt Tribes then introduced themselves.

Meeting logistics and agenda approval

Alexander Hancock, facilitator from the Ruckelshaus Institute at the University of Wyoming's Haub School of Environment & Natural Resources, introduced the facilitation team. The team included a note-taker, Xavier Michael-Young, who would be capturing the day's proceedings, with particular attention to action items and proposed changes to the IBMP adaptive management plan.

The facilitator presented the agenda for the day and asked for any changes or objections. There were no changes or objections.

> **IBMP Decision #1:** Spring 2026 meeting agenda approved.

History of the IBMP

Rebecca Bigelow (APHIS) presented a brief history of the IBMP, starting with the Record of Decision in 2000 and continuing through the completion of the Yellowstone National Park Bison Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement in 2024. She called attention to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report requiring greater transparency from the IBMP, and the citizens' working groups that were created through this action. The semi-annual public meetings of the IBMP were a result of those working groups.

Action items from the Fall 2025 meeting

The facilitator reviewed the action items from the previous IBMP meeting, held virtually in the fall of 2025.

- November 2024-October 2025 annual report was posted to the IBMP website.
- The Operations Plan is currently missing one signature, from the Nez Perce Tribe. Vote delayed until Nez Perce Tribe responds to request.
- 2025 lead partner Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks successfully handed off responsibilities to the 2026 lead partner, APHIS.

IBMP Action Item #1: APHIS to follow up with Nez Perce Tribe regarding signature.

Partner Updates & Introduction of New Facilitator

Partner updates

Partners and Treaty Hunt Tribes provided updates:

APHIS

Between APHIS and NPS efforts, 211 bison in total were transferred to tribes via the Bison Conservation Transfer program. In January, APHIS transferred 73 bison from quarantine facilities to the Fort Peck Reservation. APHIS also assisted YNP with transfer of 26 animals to Tribal food programs.

Brucellosis regulations updates continue to be considered; these efforts currently do not have a projected completion date.

APHIS noted that, with New World Screwworm (NWS) approaching the southern border, the agency has developed an NWS Response Playbook to support Federal, State,

Territorial, and Tribal animal health and wildlife officials, as well as NWS outbreak responders and other partner agencies. The playbook provides quick, practical access to the key activities, resources, and tools needed to conduct NWS surveillance and implement an outbreak/infestation response, and it outlines the adaptive response approach in which operational activities are dynamically adjusted from confirmation through control and eradication based on evolving field conditions.

United States Forest Service (USFS), Custer Gallatin National Forest

The agency is going through structural changes, and the region's headquarters is being relocated to Salt Lake City. Additional positions are coming on board sometime in the next year.

The Secretary of Agriculture's grazing action plan added five million acres of grazing land, now managed by the agency. The agency is increasing production across national forests and national grasslands through projects such as fuel reduction, timber plantings, etc.

Comments are due for the CGNF's Bear Palmer Project by June 1, 2026.

CGNF sees three million visitors per year.

National Park Service (NPS), Yellowstone National Park (YNP)

The NPS issued a Notice of Intent to do a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on management of Yellowstone's bison, with public comment closing on May 29, 2026.

The recreation season saw five million visitors to the park.

The park is doubling down on its responsibilities, and filling positions as best as it can.

Wildland fire response has been amalgamated into a new national agency and strategy emphasizing fire suppression.

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)

CSKT is opening a meat processing plant for livestock producers on the reservation and can assist with any transfer of animals from here.

CSKT Bison hunt 2025-2026:

- 298 permits to CSKT hunters
- 59 days in the field
- Annual hunter orientation requirements for new hunters
- Harvested a total of 17 bison
    - 3 bulls, 10 cows, 1 male calf, and 3 cow calves

InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC)

In 2026, no bison graduated from Fort Peck, with no animals transferred.

ITBC stated its support for reconsidering the quarantine length with the updated science.

ITBC emphasized the specific treaty obligations to multiple member Tribes.

Bison continue to be the heart of the Tribal economies.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

No regulatory changes to FWP's management authority or requirements.

FWP administered regulated state bison hunts this past season. FWP enforcement and wildlife staff continued working with West Yellowstone and Gardiner communities to address bison related safety concerns and tolerance opportunities.

Montana Board of Livestock and Department of Livestock (MBOL/MDOL)

Drought concerns are impacting the rebuilding or maintenance of herds in the states.

Inspectors are backed up. They currently have a three-year audit of their program.

A new veterinary laboratory is set to open in Bozeman this year, replacing the current facility which is outdated and has limited capacity. It will conduct diagnostic testing on wildlife, livestock, and companion animals.

From MDOL State Veterinarian, Tahnee Szymanski:

- Completed the annual inspection of the quarantine facilities in the Gardiner basin
- Saw two Montana brucellosis-affected herds, one of which was in Beaverhead County, and quarantined the affected animals
- Brucellosis seropositive elk have been detected in hunter harvested animals in the Big Horn mountains in Wyoming. As a result, MDOL worked with FWP on live elk surveillance on the Crow Reservation, the northern terminus of the Big Horn mountains. All 99 animals captured were tested for brucellosis, with all animals testing negative.
- Biosafety Level 3 facility in the veterinary diagnostic lab, which is important for management, diagnosis, and containment of certain high consequence diseases.
- Received a grant from the Farm Bill to improve disease detection in the state and the different agencies, and even Tribes, to have a robust disease detection process for things like Foot and Mouth Disease

    - The USDA Agency has been stockpiling vaccinations to treat the issue if it's detected
- New World Screwworm is an active concern
- Vascular stomatitis is another disease of concern that is active in AZ and CO, and which could spread north.

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes are not a signatory of the IBMP but actively participate by providing input to the IBMP. The Tribe has a continued practice of hunting animals continuously based on their 1868 Treaty rights.

The Shoshone-Bannock stated its opposition to the trapping or movement of bison mechanically and preference for free-moving animals.

Yakama Nation

The nation holds its hunt annually in March and sends several hunters to participate in the treaty hunts.

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)
CTUIR is an 1855 Treaty Right Tribe. They conducted three harvests in the area of the Gardiner District. Also included a number of harvests in West Yellowstone.

Introduction of new facilitator

The facilitator from the Ruckelshaus Institute provided additional details about their work and the role they expect to play in the IBMP's 2026 meetings. The Ruckelshaus Institute has an agreement with APHIS to facilitate the two meetings this year and to assist with the 2025-26 Annual Report and the upcoming Operations Plan. Partners and Treaty Hunt Tribes can expect additional correspondence from the facilitators through the end of the year.

This meeting's lead facilitator is also responsible for managing the new IBMP website. He noted that he is troubleshooting a couple of bugs that have affected navigation on the site and recently made some back-end improvements so that the site is discoverable via common search engines.

Discussion of the May 13 field trip on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest

IBMP partners, Treaty Hunt Tribes, and members of the public attended a field trip the day before the meeting to several sites on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest pertinent to bison management.

Sites included the Cougar Creek Bridge, which Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) is replacing for structural reasons; the replacement bridge will include features to help wildlife cross the highway. On Rainbow Point Road, the USFS discussed its North Hebgen thinning project and its effect on bison grazing. The field trip concluded at the base of Horse Butte with a discussion of the area's tolerance zones.

Clint Kolarich, District Ranger for the Custer-Gallatin's Gardiner District, provided an overview of the field trip. Kolarich noted that the field trip was proposed by Tom McDonald of CSKT. The highlight of the trip for many attendants was the visit to the Cougar Creek Bridge.

The public was welcome to join the discussion about the field trip. Notes from the discussion follow:

Opportunities to expand or enhance management in tolerance zones

A question was posed about using fire, both prescribed and cultural, to help manage lands in the tolerance zones. Fire has yet to be seen by partners as a tool to manage the bison.

A field trip participant mentioned the partial tolerance zone discussed at the field trip's final stop near Horse Butte, arguing that tolerance zones should be year-round rather than part-time.

Taylor Fork was presented as an example of an expanded tolerance zone that is considered effective.

The new US Wildland Fire Service

The discussion also addressed confusion around the new US Wildland Fire Service. USFS clarified:

- Discussion around the restructuring of the DOI, as processes are still being finalized. This is separate from USFS wildland fire programs.
- The agency's policy is 100% suppression, and they accomplish this very effectively.

- As an example of effective collaboration around fire response: There was a fire on the east side of the forest, outside of Red Lodge. USFS was able to work effectively with all partners to accomplish full suppression.

Wildlife crossings and MDOT project management

Shoshone-Bannock representatives voiced concern that MDOT did not reach out to Tribes for cultural input while planning the Cougar Creek wildlife crossing. The Tribe raised this concern to the MDOT planner who led the tour of the future crossing. The MDOT planner gave the Tribes' representatives the contact information for the agency's archaeologist, and the Tribe stated they intended to follow through with that contact.

Another attendee noted that there is great interest in these crossing structures for the communities that attendees come from. It's important to advocate for the research that can determine the applicability of this technology for Tribal and local communities in order to implement more of these. As stated by a different participant, there are roads throughout the forest, and there is a desire to install more crossings along them.

Discussion followed about MDOT's challenges in planning and constructing these crossings:

- During the field trip, the MDOT planner discussed a fence structure that will be built to guide animals toward the crossing by the creek. He was transparent about some of the challenges created by this fence, especially that animals will be at risk of getting caught on the wrong side of the fence (i.e. the highway side).
- Attendees at the meeting discussed this concern and the possible solutions, such as jump-outs and wildlife detection technologies.
- One attendee also noted a concern about the location of the fence. MDOT plans to place it among trees a short distance from the highway; it is very likely that fallen trees will damage the fence, requiring regular maintenance or reducing its effectiveness.

Additional comments about the field trip

Bison leaving the area near Horse Butte was another consideration that was presented during the session, but discussion was limited and no major recommendations were made.

Attendees found it very informative to be on the ground, helping participants understand the whole management system.

A question was raised about whether there were any issues enforcing the hunts in the tolerance zone. No definitive answer was given.

Presentation: BIA's Role in Bison Initiatives

Presentation by Troy Heinert, Bison Branch Chief for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), followed by discussion.

Presentation overview

Troy Heinert presented the background, mission, and main foci of the BIA's Bison Branch. The Bison Branch started in 2023, through Secretary's Order 3410. It is housed in BIA's Natural Resources—Office of Trust. Its mission is to support the conservation, expansion, and improved management of bison. The Bison Branch supports Tribal herds, including expansion of those herds.

The Bison Branch's work includes strengthening Tribal trust assets and supporting self-determination. It has supported the creation of 40 food processing plans, with another 17 that are currently in development. Some Tribes are even getting bison meat to non-native consumers. This does four things:

- Improves food production and food sovereignty
- Supports economic development
- Preserves cultural historical connections to bison
- Enhance management of tribal rangelands and resources

ITBC is a major partner for BIA's Bison Branch, helping make sure they are providing complementary services. Other key stakeholders include:

- Tribal nations and organizations
    - ITBC and the Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT), an organization of 12 Tribes with its headquarters in South Dakota, are two major partners of the branch and actively participate in working groups
- Government agencies
- Conservation organizations
    - Individual herds, Tribal herds, collegiate herds, and the Wolakota Buffalo Range
    - Helped with the Wolakota Buffalo Range herd fencing cost and project
- Local Communities and peoples
    - Local Tribal bison harvests are occurring all over Tribal Lands and are making their way to schools

    - Helps ensuring that future generations know they will always have access to bison

The Bison Branch also undertakes its own conservation and sustainability efforts. These include habitat protection and expansion, making sure there is room for bison and helping lawmakers understand how grazing ordinances can be framed for bison in addition to just cows (as is more typical); promoting genetic diversity by helping Tribes receive animals from diverse places; supporting cultural, school, and market uses of bison; preparing transportation for Tribes, for when Tribal herds grow beyond the local capacity.

The Bison Branch has awarded $1,836,259.91 to Tribal bison projects. When the federal government was shut down, USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits were supplemented with bison populations. In cases when a Tribe can't process animals themselves, the Bison Branch coordinates to transport the meat between Tribes in an amicable way.

Tribal bison investments include assisting with herd expansion and management, infrastructure and fencing, transportation and equipment, workforce and technical support, and cultural and educational activities. Tribes have 7-8-year-olds learning food processing and participating in this process. The Bison Branch is also helping Tribes explore ecotourism opportunities. Tribes are seeking to combat the issue of seeing food supplies leave the reservation only to be sold right back to Tribal members

Future plans for the Bison Branch include:

- Creation of a Bison Data Dashboard
- Expanded Technical Services opportunities
- Regional engagement
- Cross-agency cooperation: BIA, NPS, FWS, USDA, and other applicable agencies
- Increased bison management initiatives promote sustainable population control and ecosystem balance
- An expected new Secretarial Order

Discussion about the BIA's role in bison management

Discussion followed, starting with a question about changes to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) grazing permits. Troy explained that the BIA does not engage with that unless there's a direct impact to a Tribal lease.

Another question focused on bison on Horse Butte and the potential for Tribes to have hunting access in the fall. Troy replied that there are Tribes that are participating in that,

and there are agencies that are engaging with other Tribes that don't participate in bison management.

A resident of Horse Butte asked about Tribal management of bison in YNP. Troy reiterated that this was beyond the scope of the BIA's Bison Branch.

Presentation: Social Science Insights on Managing Bison as Wildlife

Presentation by Madison Stevens, Assistant Professor of Human-Environment Geography, Montana State University, followed by discussion.

Presentation overview

Madison Stevens began with a question: What makes bison so different from other wildlife? What does this mean to their place in the landscape today? There are over 400,000 bison in North America today, but the vast majority are managed as livestock. The "wild" bison are in Department of Interior herd.

Stevens's work seeks to understand how people make decisions about wildlife and wild places, by understanding what factors support or hinder long-term, sustained tolerance of wildlife and wilderness. Her active project looks at how Tribal-led processes navigate settler-colonial systems regarding bison management.

The work she presented at this meeting mostly involved the Blackfeet Nation and communities across the broader High Plains, featuring interviews with Blackfeet elders (*n*=75) and participant observation of relevant meetings. She used geospatial analysis, participant observation, and qualitative coding of interviews to draw her conclusions.

This project revealed four key themes.

- Theme 1: Yellowstone plays a unique role in the broader bison story
    - As the "last reservoir of the great wild bison population across the plains," it is an important source of genetic diversity
    - Has cultural and economic value for Tribal nations
    - It's a uniquely challenging landscape, due in part to its geography, having a "pinch-point" through which bison move and extend out of the western side of the park
    - Many of the systems used to manage wild species were developed when these animals were no longer present, meaning they're not always appropriate now that the animals are

        - IBMP is an effective collaboration process that manages bison as wildlife, including their disease risk
            - There has not been a documented case of a bison infecting a cow, but that doesn't mean that it is not possible
            - A narrative that has been perpetuated by some conservationists that somehow brucellosis in bison is somehow manifested differently than in other species
        - Every agency involved had different goals and values
        - Managing wildlife across jurisdiction boundaries
            - We have reached an effective process that allows animals to do so, but it is jurisdictionally complex
            - Agencies and partners have diverging interests and priorities for the animals
- Theme 2: Yellowstone casts a long shadow
    - Historical and political baggage
        - A recent statewide survey found that perceptions of bison are positive at the state level, but perceptions of management are mixed
        - High-profile cases bring in pot stirrers. It's not always about the animal; it's about interpersonal and social conflicts
    - Decisions about bison can be considered government overreach
    - Managing for sovereignty through treaty hunting
        - Treaty hunt is a key strategy to manage bison movement
        - Expression of Tribal jurisdictional authority
        - Try to practice something culturally relevant in these ugly conditions
        - This is an issue that divides both native and non-natives alike
    - YNP can display new opportunities for public land management
- Theme 3: Meaningful progress happens through compromise and collaboration
    - IBMP's adaptive management is an example
        - Tolerance zones
        - Reducing conflict by retiring cattle leases around the park and establishing conservation easements for winter grazing
        - "Trying to figure out how to work together"
    - Another example is the Bison Conservation and Transfer Program (BCTB)
        - Has enabled ~500 disease-free bison to be relocated to Tribal lands across the US and Canada
    - Relational infrastructure is a crucial enabling factor

        - The fact that people are sitting at the table and getting along and figuring out how to work together can be attributed to people's skills and is driven by relationships
- Theme 4: Managing for abundance with institutions designed for scarcity is difficult
    - Can we enable broader use of the tolerance zones
        - Hunt Coordination
        - Habitat Improvement
    - Balancing trapping and quarantine with hunting opportunities
    - How to continue adapting and avoid backing into jurisdictional corners?
        - Particularly difficult during times of heightened political tension
- Key Takeaways
    - Collaborating and adaptive management have significantly changed the landscape for bison
    - A large toolkit of approaches towards management
- Next steps
    - More interviews with IBMP Partners
    - A collaboration project that studies wildlife management

Discussion about social science insights on managing bison as wildlife

A short discussion followed. As before, the public was invited to ask questions and participate in the discussion.

The partner from CSKT stated that the Tribes had 1300 animals prior to the Allotment Act, and during that time, the bison managers involved are equated with ITBC. Over 70 years ago, CSKT were involved in reducing the number of bison.

A question was posed about allowing Tribes to hunt within Yellowstone National Park. The partner from the NPS noted that it is illegal to take an animal within the boundaries of the park, and it would take a congressional act to change such a designation. The Blackfeet seek to go about this use of animals in a way that fits within existing infrastructure and practices.

Seeing a large number of elk in the Madison Valley raised a question about the discrepancy in disease management between the two species of concern. Stevens discussed the concept of "social carrying capacity," noting that the public is generally more comfortable with larger numbers of elk than with bison. Bison are thus easier to manage.

Public Comment

The facilitator began the public comment period by reading the guidelines for public comment from the IBMP Partner Protocol:

> All IBMP Partner Meetings are open to the public and are recorded. Meetings allow a total of 30 minutes for members of the public to address the Partners (members of the public are typically allocated about 3 minutes per person, though the amount of time can vary depending on the number signed up to speak).

Audio of the full public comment session is available online.

Public commenters

- Carol Shestag, concerned citizen at Hebgen
- Karrie Taggert, concerned citizen at Hebgen
- Lauren Zallar, resident at Hebgen
- Stephen Fleck, Horse Butte resident
- Eric Apilow, Buffalo Field Campaign
- Eleanor Davis, resident
- Nancy Ostlie, Gallatin Wildlife Association

Review of Winter Operations to Date

Partners with updates on the winter operations provided those during this time. Time was left to discuss proposed adaptive management changes; no changes were proposed.

Winter operations updates

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

FWP administered a regulated state bison hunt. FWP issued 70 bison licenses bison: 25 in West Yellowstone, 40 in the Gardiner basin, and an additional 5 in the Absaroka backcountry.

FWP compiled harvest data for both state and treaty hunters throughout the season. During hunt calls, FWP collected hunt summaries: as of the May 5 hunt call, 13 animals were harvested in the northern management area and 67 in the western management area. Additionally, one male bison was harvested in the Western Management Area by an unidentified hunter.

FWP staff responded to public safety concerns associated with bison presence and hunting activity. In the West Yellowstone area, FWP addressed landowner concerns about

gut piles attracting predators near residences. In the Gardiner Basin, roadside wildlife viewing and hunting activity led to traffic congestion and motorist safety concerns

No vehicle collisions with bison were reported from June 1, 2025 through the present, though bison had been observed near roads.

Montana Board of Livestock (BOL)

BOL is assisting livestock managers inside of and adjacent to the tolerance zones.

Yellowstone National Park (YNP)

This was a mild winter, the fourth mildest on record. NPS is still seeing animals move, driven by snowpack.

They were seeing only 20-30 animals north of Mammoth until March, when it went up to 90 animals. There were only six days when the bison managers saw animals outside the park boundaries on the north side.

All 13 animals killed in state hunting programs were harvested and processed. Along the Madison River, there were 100-150 bison moving back and forth, supporting harvest through the winter.

NPS trapped 34 animals on the north side from March to May, typically a single adult male or a small group of adult males. Three were moved into quarantine and 30 into meat transfer. CSKT received a portion of the animals, and BIA was another partner that moved the animals to the Crow Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Northern Arapaho, Northern Cheyenne, and Little Shell Band of Chippewa.

Today, tracking the harvest reports, NPS has close to 4900 bison in YNP at the end of winter. NPS transferred 138 bison to Fort Peck. The target population range for bison in YNP is between 3,500 and 6,000 animals.

YNP bison manager Chris Geremia presented historical data. Notable is the fact that the park is still getting major winters, but they are less and less frequent. To respond to this, NPS recently issued a Notice of Intent for a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.

Custer-Gallatin National Forest (CGNF)

Has specific programmatic movement, but the work is dedicated to supporting other agencies.

APHIS

Like CGNF, the agency's work is dedicated to supporting other agencies.

Proposed adaptive management changes

No proposed changes.

YNP noted that they will have no major changes and will be managing for a decreased number of animals.

> **IBMP Decision #2:** No adaptive management changes.

Presentation: Brucellosis Research Updates

Presentation by Tahnee Szymanski, Montana State Veterinarian.

The presentation covered ongoing work to expand MDOL's knowledge about brucellosis. In December 2024, HHS and USDA removed three *Brucella* species from the list of Overlap Select Agents and Toxins. MDOL was successful in advocating for the delisting of the bacterium as a regulated agent and toxins, allowing for further research on the disease.

A working group, Brucella Research and Ungulate Health (BRUH) has been created with a number of state and federal partners, universities, and private veterinarians. The initial meetings had 30 people in attendance.

Annual BRUH meetings are important to facilitate updates on the work undertaken between partners. MDOL is developing a Best Management Practices document that includes identifying program and research needs.

Additional updates:

- Paul Cross of the US Geological Survey has helped identify a NIFA grant to fund a $2.5 million project that can help accomplish the goals of the department
- The 2026 annual meeting of the International Brucellosis Society will be in Bozeman this fall, which allows for a joint session between the BRUH working group and the international society, facilitating collaboration
- MDOL is advocating to ARS maintain a focus on Brucellosis, working with ARS to incorporate Brucellosis research into their funding cycle
- Detection and quarantine
    - If MDOL finds positive cases, they're typically pregnant females; they go to Iowa for examination and quarantine
    - We don't have a good live animal test that can confirm transmission, only based on exposure

After this presentation, APHIS expressed appreciation to the MDOL for keeping Brucellosis at the forefront of their research priorities.

Planning for 2026/27 Winter Operations Plan and 2026 Annual Report

The facilitator provided next steps for the 2026/27 Operations Plan and the 2026 Annual Report:

- Partners can expect the next agenda and the draft annual report for input by email later this summer, i.e. late August to early September
- With no changes to the Winter Operations Plan proposed today, it will be discussed again in the fall meeting before being sent out for signature

Administrative Items

The meeting closed with next steps. A discussion followed about best practices for documenting public participation in IBMP partner meetings.

Meeting report

The draft report for the Spring 2026 IBMP meeting will be distributed to partners for review two weeks from the meeting, target is May 28, 2026. Partners will have an additional two weeks to request revisions, target date June 11, 2026.

Fall 2026 meeting details

The next meeting will be on October 28, 2026, in Butte, MT. APHIS recommended Copper King for the meeting. MDOL remarked that Copper King is a good location.

Partners were invited to submit agenda items for the fall meeting anytime during the summer. The facilitator noted that there has been an application from the Blackfeet Nation for membership in IBMP, the vote for which will be on that agenda.

Public attendance/sign-in

Based on some confusion around the public comment sign-in sheet, Tom McDonald from CSKT noted the need to continue having separate sign-in sheets for both public comment and general attendance. By formally documenting the members of the public present at the meeting, IBMP is able to demonstrate that it is holding public meetings as recommended by the GAO report.

The secondary facilitator suggested putting out a sheet for attendees to sign on their way out. There were no objections and the sheet was placed on the table by the entrance. See Appendix for the list of public attendees who signed in.

> **IBMP Decision #3:** Attendance sheet placed at meeting room entrance.

Regarding recording public comment, APHIS noted that FWP had committed to recording the meetings in a previous meeting.

APHIS recommended updating the partner protocols to ensure clarity of these processes, both for recording public comment and documenting public attendance.

> **IBMP Action Item #2:** APHIS to initiate an update to the partner protocols documenting process for recording IBMP meetings and public attendance.

Appendix: Public attendees

Name	Organization
Nancy Ostlie	Gallatin Wildlife Association
Shana Drimal	Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Angela Delayn	Buffalo Field Campaign
Erik Abeloz	Buffalo Field Campaign
Nathan	James Bug Mall
Michelle Uberuaga	National Parks Conservation Association
Ella Clayton	Buffalo Field Campaign
Chelsea Delalla	Buffalo Field Campaign
Gwendolyn Bradway	Buffalo Field Campaign
Brett French	Billings Gazette