

INTERAGENCY BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN



Operations Plan

November 2024 to October 2025

Adopted by All IBMP Partners on October 29, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The 2024-25 Operations Plan describes measures that the nine Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Partners will undertake under their authorities and jurisdictions during the period of November 1, 2024, to October 31, 2025. Adoption by the IBMP Partners is not an endorsement of the validity of other Partners' authorities or actions.

The IBMP Partners—The nine IBMP Partners are the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC), Montana Board of Livestock (MBOL)/Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), National Park Service (NPS) (Yellowstone National Park), Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and USDA Forest Service (USFS) (Custer Gallatin National Forest).

IBMP Objectives—The principal purpose for action described in the FEIS for the IBMP is “to maintain a wild, free ranging population of bison and address the risk of brucellosis transmission to protect the economic interest and viability of the livestock industry in Montana.” Guiding objectives include:

1. *Address bison population size and distribution; have specific commitments relating to size of bison herd.*
2. *Clearly define a boundary line beyond which bison will not be tolerated.*
3. *Address the risk to public safety and private property damage by bison.*
4. *Commit to the eventual elimination of brucellosis in bison and other wildlife.*
5. *Protect livestock from the risk of brucellosis.*
6. *Protect the brucellosis class-free status of Montana.*
7. *At a minimum, maintain a viable population of wild bison in Yellowstone National Park, as defined in biological, genetic, and ecological terms.*
8. *Be based on factual information, with the recognition that the scientific database is changing.*
9. *Recognize the need for coordination in the management of natural and cultural resource values that are the responsibility of the Partners.*

NPS has lead responsibility for implementing bison management actions inside the Park. MDOL has lead responsibility concerning disease issues in Montana, while MFWP has lead responsibility regarding public safety and property damage. These Partners may request assistance from other IBMP Partners. Property damage issues on private lands are the

responsibility of MFWP; MDOL may assist upon request. NPS personnel do not routinely respond to property damage calls received from citizens at the Yellowstone Communications Center unless a life threat or danger is reported.

USFS personnel are responsible for enforcing the regulations that apply on National Forest System lands as promulgated in 36 CFR, Part 261. Upon request from MDOL through the Gallatin and/or Park County Sheriff's Offices, USFS law enforcement personnel will provide public safety assistance related to on-going bison operations to the extent possible given capacity and other priority needs.

MFWP has primary responsibility regarding the regulated public state hunt, in cooperation with MDOL, as directed by state statute. The CSKT and NPT, along with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation (CTUIR), Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe, the Blackfeet Nation, Northern Arapaho, and the Crow Nation are all "Treaty Hunt Tribes" that have reserved aboriginal hunting rights.

IBMP Operations Plan Format—At the Fall 2023 IBMP Partners Meeting, the IBMP Partner Primaries voted to adopt a new format for the IBMP Operations Plan to improve understanding and cooperation. It consists of each Partner citing its individual authorities, planned operations, needs for coordination with other IBMP Partners, and metrics it plans to collect for the IBMP Annual Report. The headings within each Partner section are defined as:

- **Partner Authorities**—A bulleted list of each entity's authorities as a reference point to support self-reported actions. Reported as citations where possible.
- **Planned Operations**—As the Partners previously acknowledged, each Partner is obligated to operate under its respective authorities as to what actions it will perform during the upcoming season. Planned Operations will therefore largely reflect the individual authorities of the Partners. In other words, these are concise Partner statements about what each Partner is going to do during the IBMP Operations year.
- **Needs or Opportunities for Cooperation**—This is where the Partners list potential areas for cooperation among IBMP Partners as they perform certain Planned Operations. This can include, but is not limited to:
 - Communication and notifications at critical times.
 - Data sharing to ensure that a Partner's decision is fully informed
 - Sharing of resources (equipment or personnel) to accomplish a task.
- **Optional: Partner Reporting Metrics**—Numbers and narrative collected by Partners for reporting in the IBMP Annual Report.

CONFEDERATED SALISH & KOOTENAI TRIBES (CSKT)

CSKT Authorities:

- The CSKT wild Yellowstone bison hunt takes place pursuant to the *1855 Hellgate Treaty*, where the CSKT reserved the right of CSKT Tribal members to continue hunting, fishing and gathering on open and unclaimed land at all usual and accustomed places throughout the CSKT aboriginal territory, including the Greater Yellowstone Area.
- The CSKT wild bison hunt is not a function of IBMP operations, but as an IBMP partner and co-manager of the Yellowstone bison the CSKT commits to working with the other IBMP partners to achieve the goals of the IBMP.

CSKT Planned Operations:

- The CSKT wild bison hunt is a subsistence hunt. All CSKT Tribal members are subject to the CSKT Tribal member hunting regulations approved annually by the CSKT Tribal Council. The CSKT off-Reservation

wild bison hunting season runs from September 1 through January 31. Eligible CSKT hunters 18 years and older who have attended the required CSKT wild bison hunt orientation are eligible to receive a CSKT bison permit that is valid for two bison.

- The CSKT is a member of the Beattie Gulch MOA. When the MOA is in effect and it appears that a number of CSKT hunters may be in the Beattie Gulch area, the CSKT has committed to having CSKT Tribal Wardens present in the Gardiner Basin during the CSKT wild bison hunting season.
- The CSKT Tribal Council reserves the right to close the CSKT wild bison hunt at any time during the season with 48-hour notice to Tribal hunters. In the past the Council has enacted a closure in the West Yellowstone area. The CSKT has maintained a wild bison hunt closure in the Taylor Fork area in order to facilitate bison migration to that expanded habitat.

CSKT Needs or Opportunities for Cooperation:

- The CSKT will participate in the weekly hunt manager calls and provide hunt totals during each week of the CSKT hunting season. The CSKT Tribal Wardens will work in coordination with all other federal, state and Tribal law enforcement agencies to ensure a safe and successful hunt.

CSKT Reporting Metrics:

- N/A

INTERTRIBAL BUFFALO COUNCIL (ITBC)

ITBC Authorities:

- American Indian Tribes retain and exercise rights guaranteed by treaties with the United States government. Each Tribe exists as a sovereign nation with self-governing authority with an emphasis on preservation of cultures and traditional lifeways through buffalo restoration to Tribal lands. Tribal sovereignty is recognized in the United States Constitution and protected by the United States Supreme Court decisions.
- The ITBC, a Federally-chartered Indian organization pursuant to the Indian Reorganization Act, is comprised of approximately 83 member Tribes across 22 states, has facilitated the right of Tribes to access Yellowstone buffalo. Since 2020, ITBC has implemented translocation of 244 Yellowstone buffalo to 25 Tribal Nations in 12 states to reestablish buffalo on Indian lands.
- ITBC has an ongoing Memorandum of Agreement with the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes to facilitate translocation of live buffalo that have completed assurance testing on the Fort Peck Reservation.

ITBC Planned Operations:

- ITBC implements a translocation program utilizing a Request for Proposals the ITBC member Tribes for receipt of live bison that have completed the full quarantine process including the assurance testing program at Fort Peck. The Request for Proposals includes obtaining a commitment from Tribal Nations that propose to receive buffalo for preservation of the Yellowstone buffalo. Preservation includes a period of years of conservation of the buffalo before harvest. ITBC awards Yellowstone buffalo to Tribes that demonstrate sufficient pasture, sufficient handling capacity and a need for genetic diversity.
- ITBC will apply for all necessary transport permits prior to arranging transportation and will ensure compliance with any requests for assurance testing data.
- ITBC will continue to facilitate translocation of live bison through coordination with Fort Peck and receiving Tribes and in collaboration with all Partners on the Bison Conservation & Transfer Program.

ITBC Needs or Opportunities for Cooperation:

- ITBC will coordinate with Partners and the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes to implement the live buffalo transfer program.

ITBC Reporting Metrics:

- ITBC will report the number of buffalo transported from Fort Peck to specific Tribes.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK (MDOL)

MDOL Authorities:

- 81-1-101, MCA - Definitions
- 81-2-102, MCA - Powers of department
- 81-2-120, MCA – Management of wild buffalo or wild bison for disease control
- Administrative Rules of Montana – 32.3.224A
- Administrative Rules of Montana – 32.3.4: Brucellosis

MDOL Planned Operations:

- Maintain temporal and spatial separation of Yellowstone National Park bison from cattle and domestic bison based upon site-specific circumstances and distribution of YNP bison within the Northern and Western Tolerance Zones, including needed activity within Zone 2.
- Coordinate with treaty hunt tribes on potential use of hunting pressure to assist hazing activities within Zone 2.
- Utilize lethal removal of bison as a last resort to bison management within Zone 3 or to maintain temporal and spatial separation of YNP bison from cattle and domestic bison.
- Coordinate with FWP and treaty hunt tribes when the lethal removal of bison is required to accomplish bison management within Zone 3 or to maintain temporal and spatial separation of YNP bison from cattle and domestic bison.
- Complete periodic surveys to produce monitoring metrics that enable the Partners to document bison numbers (weekly by MDOL), distribution, natural migration routes, and proximity to or penetration of Zone 3.
- Participate in weekly hunt calls and provide Department updates as appropriate.
- Regular communication with IBMP partners regarding bison migration outside of boundaries of YNP to inform decisions of all parties regarding winter management of bison population. Consideration will be given to distribution of bison on landscape, severity of winter, environmental conditions, available space within quarantine pens, and hunt statistics.
- Provide support to USDA APHIS and NPS on administration of bison quarantine program, including providing staff as needed for completion of testing, review of testing completed, and certification of bison as brucellosis free by the State Veterinarian.
- Provide support to USDA APHIS and NPS on shipment of YNP bison to slaughter as needed, including providing staff for writing VS 1-27s, sealing trailers, providing escort of shipments, and receipt of shipments at slaughter facilities.
- Provide potential use of dump trailer for assistance with carcass clean-up.
- Approve slaughter facilities for receipt of YNP bison.
- Conduct reconciliation of YNP bison shipped to slaughter.
- Continued advocacy for brucellosis research that addresses limitations of currently available management tools, including diagnostic challenges and vaccine efficacy in domestic and wildlife species.

MDOL Needs or Opportunities for Cooperation:

- Updates from IBMP partners regarding status of trapping within YNP, quarantine capacity, hunt numbers, and bison distribution on the landscape.

- Collaboration with IBMP partners for potential hazing activities, including potential staffing or use of hunting to accomplish hazing objectives.
- Collaboration with state and tribal hunters for potential lethal removal of bison.

MDOL Reporting Metrics:

- Weekly bison counts in Northern and Western Management Areas
- Hazing activity within Northern and Western Management Areas
- Lethal removals of bison

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS (MFWP)

MFWP Authorities:

- MCA §87-1-201
- MCA §87-1-216
- MCA §87-2-730
- MCA §87-2-732
- MCA §87-5-715
- MCA §87-5-716

MFWP Planned Operations:

- Provide for public safety and property protection in accordance with bison management laws and regulations (AMP 1.1.b).
- Work with landowners who have human safety and property damage concerns as well as those who favor increased tolerance for bison, to provide conflict-free habitat in the Hebgen and Gardiner basins (AMP 1.3.b).
- Administer a regulated public state hunt in the NMA and WMA (AMP 2.2.b).

MFWP Needs or Opportunities for Cooperation:

- Possibly support MDOL by request to annually collect data to determine natural migration routes and timeframes (in the absence of hazing) for bison migration out of and back into YNP (AMP 1.1.b).
- Possibly support MDOL by request in hazing operations (AMP 1.1.a).
- Possibly support MDOL by request to annually document the numbers and dates that bison attempt to move north of Yankee Jim Canyon into Tom Miner basin or the Paradise Valley (AMP 1.1.b).
- Communicate management activities (per AMP 1.1.b) on public safety and property protection in the weekly hunt managers call as needed.
- Support MDOL by request on a voluntary compensation program to allow for adjusting the dates livestock are released on private land beyond May 15 (AMP 1.3.d).
- Should MDOL or other Partners engage in Management Action 1.3.b, MFWP requests that they report activities to MFWP for documentation.
- Possibly request assistance from MDOL for response to public and property issues (AMP 1.3.b).

MFWP Reporting Metrics:

- Document activities on public safety and property protection (AMP 1.1.b), as well as threats to human safety (AMP 1.2.a) in the IBMP Annual Report.
- Annually document the numbers, timing, and types of reported incidents for human safety and related to bison as reported to MFWP within the Tolerance Zone (AMP 1.3.b)
- Collect annual summaries of bison harvested by state and treaty hunters (AMP 2.2.b).
- Provide the annual summary of bison harvested by state and treaty hunters in the annual report (AMP 2.2.b).

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)

NPS Authorities:

- 16 USC 21 et seq., 17 Stat. 32.
- 54 USC 100101 a,b - The National Park Service Organic Act of 1916
- National Park Service Management Policies 2006:36, 42
- 16 USC, §1, Subchapter V, § 36
- 16 USC 36 (1923); 54 USC 100101, 100752)
- 16 USC §1, 1a-1
- 16 USC 2636 CFR, 1, part 10, §10.1-4

NPS Planned Actions:

- The NPS will manage bison within the park complying with the NPS 2024 Record of Decision on Bison Management which supports a wild and free ranging bison population and reduces the risk of brucellosis transmission.
- Advise the size and composition of the bison population to assist other agencies in making decisions about implementing hunts and agency reductions.
- Provide removal recommendations to partners by October 1st.
- Complete early and late winter parkwide aerial counts, weekly surveys of bison north of Mammoth Hot Springs and daily surveys of numbers of bison north of Landslide Creek (i.e., near the NPS bison facility).
- Participate in weekly hunt calls and provide updates on bison distribution, NPS bison facility operations, and numbers and disposition of captured animals.
- Communicate with IBMP partners at multiple levels to discuss bison migration outside the park and planned management actions.
- Coordinate with State and Tribal wardens, including attending morning hunt meetings, communicating with hunters, assisting other agencies in law enforcement, communicating updates on capture operations, and dispatching injured animals.
- Euthanize injured animals that return to the park, enforce park game transport regulations and non-retrieval of wounded animals within park.
- The NPS will a) capture bison when space is available in the BCTP; b) capture more bison than are needed for the BCTP and enough bison to ensure for a decreasing population whenever the early-winter bison population exceeds 5,200; b) regardless of population size, capture whenever the number of bison migrating out of the park exceeds capacity provided by Montana's tolerance areas; and use passive capture techniques to the extent feasible. The NPS will prioritize donating brucellosis-positive bison to the Tribal Food Transfer Program, release brucellosis-negative animals and other bison when feasible.
- Notify the Governor's Office of shipment of animals to slaughter facilities.
- Coordinate with CSKT to donate bison to the Tribal Food Transfer Program, including weekly coordination calls regarding numbers, meat processing facility availability, and planned shipments.
- Coordinate with CSKT, MDOL, and USDA APHIS to ensure transfers of bison to meat processing facilities are approved by MDOL and bison are moved under a VS-1-27 permit with escort.
- Assist MDOL to haze animals outside YNP on a case-by-case basis.
- Coordinate with USDA APHIS and MDOL on implementation of bison quarantine program, including testing, facility integrity, sharing records, research, and transferring animals to assurance testing.

NPS Needs or Opportunities for Cooperation:

- Updates from IBMP partners and Tribes on hunt implementation and harvests through winter

- Updates from MDOL on status of trapping, management shootings, and other reductions implemented in the State of MT
- Requests from MDOL for NPS staff for hazing events
- Updates from CSKT on program capacity and implementation of the Tribal Food Transfer Program

NPS Reporting Metrics:

- Status Report to the Superintendent
- Biweekly reports accounting for weekly bison counts north of Mammoth Hot Springs, net removals through winter, and summary of bison facility operations
- Seroprevalence of bison
- Status and numbers of bison in the BCTP.

NEZ PERCE TRIBE (NPT)

The Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) is a federally-recognized Indian tribe with headquarters on the Nez Perce Reservation in Lapwai, Idaho. The Nez Perce people, the *Nimiipuu*, exclusively occupied, since time immemorial, millions of acres encompassing a large part of what is today Idaho, Oregon, and Washington—stretching from the Bitterroot Mountains to the Blue Mountains. Nez Perce also traveled far beyond this homeland to fish, hunt, gather, and pasture—frequently going east to buffalo country, to lands now comprising the Greater Yellowstone Area to hunt bison (*qoq’álx*) and other species for subsistence, cultural, ceremonial, and commercial purposes. In 1855, the Tribe negotiated a treaty with the United States. In Article 3 of the 1855 Treaty, the Tribe reserved to itself:

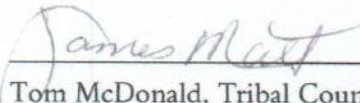
- [T]he right of taking fish at all usual and accustomed places in common with citizens of the Territory; and of erecting temporary buildings for curing, together with the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries, and pasturing their horses and cattle upon open and unclaimed land.
- Treaty with the Nez Perces, art. 3, June 11, 1855, 12 Stat. 957. Pursuant to the Tribe’s inherent sovereignty, 1855 Treaty, and Nez Perce Tribal Revised Constitution and Bylaws, the Tribe authorizes and self-administers an annual bison hunt on open and unclaimed land adjacent to Yellowstone National Park.

NPT’s treaty bison hunt is a function of the Tribe’s sovereign status as a co-manager of bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area and not a function of IBMP Operations.


NPT Planned Operations:

- NPT’s 2023-24 treaty bison hunt for the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) opened on August 11 and is currently scheduled to close on March 31. Nez Perce Tribal hunters who have completed an application and mandatory orientation are eligible to receive a bison permit issued by the NPT’s Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC). Nez Perce Tribal hunters are required to report harvest information to NPT Conservation Enforcement and/or the FWC.
- The NPT is a member of the Beattie Gulch Memorandum of Agreement (“MOA”). The MOA specifies mutually agreeable hunt protocols for Beattie Gulch as well as common safety regulations and provisions intended to prioritize enforcement.
- The NPT will regularly share harvest and other appropriate hunt information with the hunt managers during the NPT’s 2023-24 treaty bison hunt in the GYA.
- NPT will coordinate with the Treaty Hunt Tribes, other Partners, and the local community to enhance hunter and community education, safety, and approaches to ensure that bison occupy and use available habitat on Custer Gallatin National Forest.
- NPT will continue to provide non-lead ammunition to Nez Perce Tribal Hunters to ensure responsible hunting practices that help to protect the well-being of scavenging animals that may feed on carcasses left

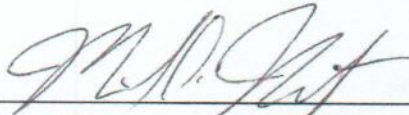
By their electronic signature per the IBMP Partner Protocols, the IBMP Partners hereby approve the above
November 2024-October 2025 IBMP Operations Plan:


Tom McDonald, Tribal Council Chair ~ Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes


10-29-24
Date


Ervin Carlson, President ~ InterTribal Buffalo Council

10/29/24
Date


Mike Honeycutt, Executive Director ~ Montana Board of Livestock

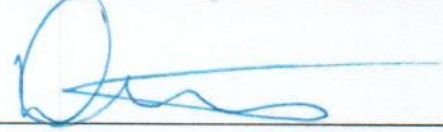
10-29-24
Date


Tahnee Szymanski, Montana State Veterinarian ~ Montana Department of Livestock


10/29/2024
Date


Ashton Picard, Chaplain ~ Nez Perce Tribe

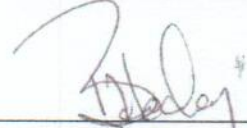
10-29-24
Date


Dustin Temple, Director ~ Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks


10/29/24
Date


Cam Sholly, Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park ~ National Park Service

10/29/24
Date


Burke Healey, Senior Leader for Policy & Operations ~
USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service

10/29/2024
Date


for Matt Jedra, Supervisor, Custer Gallatin National Forest. USDA Forest Service

10/29/24
Date