



Memorandum

November 26, 2013

To: Administrative Record
From: Interagency Bison Management Plan Members
Subject: Operating Procedures for the Interagency Bison Management Plan

APPROVAL (completed electronically, per Partner Protocols)

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Western Associate Regional Director Date

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Division Manager Date

InterTribal Buffalo Council, President Date

Montana Board of Livestock, Executive Officer Date

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Region 3 Supervisor Date

Montana State Veterinarian Date

National Park Service, Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park Date

Nez Perce Tribe, Chairman Date

U.S. Forest Service, Forest Supervisor, Custer Gallatin National Forest Date

Introduction

This document outlines the actions necessary to implement the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) as set forth in the federal and state Records of Decision signed in 2000 and modified by adaptive management adjustments in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011-2012, and 2013. The principle purpose for action described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the IBMP was “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.” The signatory agencies agreed to nine objectives that would guide them in accomplishing this purpose:

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 state of Montana from risk of reduction in its brucellosis status.
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 signatory agencies.

Members involved with the IBMP include the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC), Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), National Park Service (NPS), Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Operating procedures for the IBMP were originally developed in December 2002 and have been updated in November 2007, 2009, and 2012. The updated operating procedures outlined in this document will remain in effect until replaced by subsequent updates. All actions described in this document are consistent with the analyses of impacts included in the federal and state Final Environmental Impact Statements for the IBMP that were completed in 2000 to comply with the National and Montana Environmental Policy Acts.

Jurisdiction and Legal Mandates

The federal and state agencies agreed on a plan to manage bison in Yellowstone National Park and Montana as set forth in the IBMP and the associated Records of Decision adopted in 2000. The CSKT, ITBC, and NPT joined the IBMP after the plan was approved, and work within the management framework described in the plan. The NPS has lead responsibility for implementing bison management actions inside the park, while MDOL has lead responsibility for implementing bison management actions outside the park. The NPS and MDOL may request assistance from the other IBMP members. Property damage issues on private lands will be the responsibility of MFWP. MDOL may assist upon request of MFWP. NPS staff will 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 FS law enforcement needs.

MFWP has primary responsibility regarding the public bison hunt in cooperation with MDOL as directed by State statute. The CSKT and NPT have responsibilities regarding their respective hunts of bison on certain federal lands in the Yellowstone area of Montana pursuant to treaties with the U.S. Government.

Media Relations/Public Information

Each agency, tribe, or tribal organization associated with the IBMP will independently manage their media relations concerning bison management, with news releases or media contacts being handled by designated individuals. However, the IBMP members may also cooperatively represent and support management activities under this agreement with joint press releases and other associated media.

For all activities occurring within the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park, the NPS will take lead responsibility and coordinate media information. For information on bison management procedures within the State of Montana, the MDOL will take lead responsibility for coordinating media information on state actions. The CSKT and NPT will take lead responsibility for information on bison management procedures within tribal lands.

The CSKT, NPT, and MFWP, will coordinate media information, regarding their respective bison harvest and hunts.

MFWP will coordinate media information with American Indian tribes or others who receive bison that have completed quarantine. The NPS will coordinate media information with the other IBMP members regarding bison transferred to quarantine, research, or slaughter facilities.

Organization

The IBMP members expect to cooperatively support bison management activities such as hazing, shooting, capture, research, and monitoring operations for bison (Table 1). However, each agency, tribe, or tribal organization does not provide support for every management operation. The level of participation and support by personnel in bison management actions as set forth in the IBMP remains subject to each IBMP members' supervision, jurisdiction, specific authority, and administrative oversight (Table 1).

An Incident Command System will be used to implement actions/operations associated with the IBMP within and outside the park. Bison management operations within the park will be under the authority of the Chief Ranger (or designee) and positions in the command structure will be filled, as necessary, to ensure effective mission accomplishment. Bison management operations occurring outside the park will be under the direction of an on-site Operations Chief from MDOL (or designee). The NPS will not participate in bison operations outside of the park unless an on-site MDOL Operations Chief (or designee) is present, except for life threatening emergencies or imminent bison-livestock comingling.

Under a unified command structure, each IBMP member involved may designate an Incident Commander to represent them in command decisions. However, at no time will there be more than one Operations Chief, regardless of the number of Incident Commanders.

Managing Bison Abundance and Brucellosis Prevalence

During June and early July of each year, the NPS will conduct counts and age and gender classifications of bison in the central and northern breeding herds. The NPS will use long-term weather forecasts, summer population estimates, and population and migration models to predict numbers of bison migrating to park boundaries during the upcoming winter. The NPS will annually develop a removal objective for bison based on several factors (abundance, disease, distribution, and demographic age, herd, sex goals) that will be approved by the IBMP by adoption into Appendix 1 (for winter 2013-14). . They will recommend annual removal objectives for bison based on abundance, disease, distribution, and demographic (age, herd, sex) goals. These analyses and objectives will be shared with the other IBMP members for their consideration and comment. The CSKT, NPT, and MFWP may use this information when setting or refining their respective permit or harvest levels. As winter progresses, the NPS will use aerial and ground counts, snow model projections for the park, and revised long-term weather forecasts to refine predictions of the timing and magnitude of trans-boundary movements by bison and support decision-making during winter operations.

The IBMP members intend to use the adaptive management process to reduce shipments to slaughter while broadening the number of management tools used to reduce bison numbers as necessary. The IBMP members plan to focus efforts to manage numbers and distribution of bison through public and treaty harvests in Montana. They may also use selective culling (shipment to slaughter) to remove bison up to the removal objectives for that year, with these culls occurring before pregnant bison are late in their third trimester. Smaller selective culls (shooting, shipment to slaughter) may also be implemented to prevent brucellosis transmission to nearby livestock or due to imminent threats to human safety or property damage concerns. In addition, some bison may be transferred to research or quarantine facilities in Montana or elsewhere.

The NPS will monitor bison abundance and movements through the winter. The CSKT, NPT

MFWP will work with the SBT and CTUIR to compile information on hunter harvest. The NPS will incorporate the harvest information with data regarding management culls, predation off-take, and winter-kill.

Monitoring and Reporting of Bison Movements and Management Activities

Timely monitoring and reporting of bison sightings and locations is necessary to facilitate operations managing the distribution and abundance of bison on winter ranges outside Yellowstone National Park. Inside the park, the NPS has the lead responsibility for monitoring the prevailing environmental conditions and the timing, numbers, and locations of bison movements. When appropriate and feasible during winter and spring, the NPS will conduct aerial and ground surveys of the number and distribution of bison throughout the park and nearby areas of Montana. This information will be used to determine migration routes and timeframes, and predict future movements of bison to the park boundary and into areas of Montana. The NPS will annually document the number of bison moving into the boundary areas and the number and type of management activities needed to manage bison distribution inside the park.

The MFWP will have the lead responsibility for monitoring environmental conditions and bison movements outside the park, with assistance from other IBMP members. When appropriate and feasible, MFWP and NPS will conduct ground surveys of the number and distribution of bison. The MDOL and NPS will annually document the timing and number of bison migrating from Yellowstone National Park to areas designated for their use in Montana, the number and sex of bison that attempt to leave agreed-upon tolerance areas, and the number and type of management activities needed to retain them within the agreed-upon areas.

MFWP will work with landowners who have human safety and property damage concerns, as well as those who favor increased tolerance for bison, to provide habitat in areas designated for bison use in Montana while reducing human-bison conflicts. MFWP will annually document the numbers, timing, and types of reported incidents for human safety and property damage related to bison, with support from MDOL. The USFS will annually track the status (e.g., number of acres, location, etc.) of active and inactive grazing allotments on public lands. MDOL will work with livestock producers to protect against disease transmission from bison to cattle. MDOL will work with livestock producers with regards to vaccination, testing, and livestock operation changes.

The NPS, MFWP, and MDOL will communicate information on environmental conditions and bison movements to other IBMP members in a timely manner. This information will be used to prepare for and implement management actions, as well as to gain experience on how bison use habitat in and outside of Yellowstone National Park. The IBMP members may agree to additional monitoring provisions on a case-by-case basis. During the winter season, the lead

agency for the IBMP¹ will prepare bi-weekly reports that summarize bison monitoring, hazing, capture, vaccination, shooting, and other management actions within these operating procedures and the IBMP, which will then be promptly shared with all IBMP members and eventually posted on the IBMP website (ibmp.info).

Bison Distribution

Bison numbers and their distribution outside Yellowstone National Park are under the authority and discretion of the state veterinarian, and will be managed consistent with the IBMP. MDOL and MFWP maintain jurisdiction for management of bison outside Yellowstone National Park in Montana. Subject to the criteria set forth in the IBMP, and as modified by adaptive management adjustments in 2005, 2006², 2008, and 2011-2012, the distribution of bison outside Yellowstone National Park during winter and spring will be limited to certain lands adjacent to the park in the Hebgen and Gardiner basin areas (as described in the following paragraphs). In addition, unlimited numbers of bison are allowed to occupy the Eagle Creek/Bear Creek area, Cabin Creek Recreation and Wildlife Management Area, and the Monument Mountain Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness year-round without interference.

In the north management area, bison will be allowed on national forest system lands and other lands north of the park boundary and south of Yankee Jim Canyon (see attached map) each winter and spring, subject to end-of-winter hazing back to Yellowstone National Park by May 1. At the discretion of the state veterinarian, the actual date may be earlier or later based on prevailing conditions (e.g., snow depth, vegetation green-up). The extent of haze back within Yellowstone National Park remains at the discretion of NPS. Bison will not be allowed north of the hydrological divide (i.e., mountain ridge-tops) between Dome Mountain/Paradise Valley and the Gardiner basin on the east side of the Yellowstone River and Tom Miner basin and the Gardiner basin on the west side of the Yellowstone River (see attached map). Bison attempting to move north of this hydrological divide will be hazed to other available habitat within the tolerance area, captured, hunted, or if necessary, lethally removed.

In the west management area, untested bison will be allowed to migrate onto and occupy the Horse Butte peninsula (between the Madison and Grayling Creek arms of Hebgen Lake) and the Flats (the area east of South Fork Madison River, south of the Madison Arm, and west of Highway 191) when cattle are no longer present (see attached map), subject to end-of-winter hazing back into the park with a target date of May 15. At the discretion of the state veterinarian, the actual date may be earlier or later based on prevailing conditions. The extent of haze back within Yellowstone National Park remains at the discretion of NPS. During November 15 through April 15, up to 30 female bison (or a mixed group of 30 males and

¹ The lead agency is rotated annually. The CSKT, ITBC, and NPT will collectively serve as the lead agency from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014. The NPS will serve as the lead agency from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015

² Some disagreement exists among the Partners whether the AM changes documented in 2006 (see <http://ibmp.info/adaptivemgmt.php>) were applicable to that season only.

females) will be allowed on the Madison Arm. After April 15, up to 30 female/mixed group bison will be allowed east of the Madison Arm Resort. After May 15, no female/mixed group bison will be allowed on the Madison Arm. During November 15 through May 15, up to 40 female bison (or a mixed group of 40 males and females) will be allowed north of Duck Creek and east of Corey Springs. Groups of female/mixed bison will not be allowed north of the Narrows, west of Corey Springs, or south and west of the Zone 2 boundary. Bison attempting to enter these areas will be hazed to the Horse Butte peninsula, other habitat, captured, or if deemed appropriate or necessary, lethally removed.

Hunting Bison

The CSKT, NPT, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation (CTUIR), and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes all have reserved, through treaty, the ability to harvest bison that exist in southwestern Montana. These hunts are managed by the Tribes for subsistence harvest opportunities and, consistent with the language of the treaties, occur on open and unclaimed lands.

MFWP, through state laws, develops and manages sport harvest of bison in southwest Montana. The CSKT, NPT and MFWP have been meeting annually for several years to coordinate harvest efforts. In the last couple of years the CTUIR and the SBT have joined those discussions. Three of the five bison harvest managers (CSKT, NPT, MFWP) are members of the IBMP. The harvest managers meet and cooperatively discuss harvest concerns separately from the IBMP discussions.

The IBMP members, through the adaptive management process, have agreed that the harvest of bison will be a preferred method for managing their abundance and distribution. The Harvest Managers have tentatively set the harvest goal, for the total of the five sovereigns, for the 2013-2014 season, at 300 bison.

Bison in Montana created an opportunity to hunt them and the treaty tribes and MFWP responded by establishing harvest management plans. Each treaty tribe and MFWP addresses harvest management through different measures unique to their own concerns. Each year that MFWP has authorized a hunt they have set a quota for state-licensed hunters, with permits allocated between two hunting districts in the Gardiner and West Yellowstone areas.

Each summer, the CSKT, NPT, and MFWP coordinate with each other and the CTUIR and SBT regarding bison harvest objectives by time of year, location, age, sex, and breeding group. The CSKT, NPT, and MFWP also discuss safety concerns such as no shooting zones, access, enforcement, and sharing harvest data. MFWP, the CSKT, and the NPT enforce regulations for their respective hunters by sending enforcement officers to the hunting areas.

State-licensed hunting will primarily be permitted from November 15 through February 15, with some additional late-season harvests of bull bison. The majority of the harvest associated with

the peak numbers of animals migrating outside Yellowstone National Park, but before the onset of calving. State licensed hunting will occur on public lands and private lands with permission of the landowner outside Yellowstone National Park in agreed-upon tolerance areas for bison. The MFWP Commission will enact a 24-hour notice of the state's hunting closure, when determined to be necessary, to implement other management actions such as hazing, capture, or lethal removal. MFWP will consult with the four treaty tribes regarding the implementation of a closure of the state hunt. Hazing bison wholly within areas closed to hunting will not require a hunt cessation unless deemed necessary to ensure the safety of staff.

The NPT restricts the number of permits it issues until the end of the MFWP season. The NPT expects to amend its regulations for the 2013-2014 hunting season, to address safety issues caused by the concentration of hunting activities near Beattie Gulch.

MFWP, CSKT, and NPT will annually coordinate documentation of the number of bison (by age and sex) their hunters harvest in each hunting area. MFWP and the MDOL will conduct an evaluation of the state-regulated bison hunt at the conclusion of the season and propose adjustments to future bison hunts, as necessary. Recommended adjustments will be discussed with the treaty tribes. The CSKT, NPT, and MFWP will coordinate with the USFS to explore recommendations for accommodating hunting within appropriate additional areas where bison are tolerated that could accommodate additional bison hunting opportunities.

Hazing Bison

Hazing is used to manage the distribution of bison by preventing dispersal beyond Zone 2 area boundaries. It is also used to prevent the comingling of bison and cattle and the shedding of *Brucella* bacteria by bison on ranges that will soon be occupied by cattle. In addition, hazing will be used to move bison away from private lands where they are not wanted or away from areas such as homes or highways where they are causing safety or property damage issues. In all cases, bison may be hazed as they approach a non-tolerance boundary.

Hazing efforts will be done in the least intrusive manner necessary to accomplish the management objective. Hazing may be accomplished by personnel using ATVs, snowmobiles, on foot, horseback, and/or helicopters, and may include the use of cracker shells or rubber bullets. These methods may be used singly or in combination, subject to applicable restrictions. The safety of the public and personnel will be the primary consideration in any hazing operation and at no time will the safety of the public or personnel be compromised.

The use of a helicopter for hazing bison will be at the discretion of the state veterinarian, with consideration for personnel, bison, and other wildlife. The MDOL may, at times, haze bison off of national forest system lands during spring when bison are moved back into Yellowstone National Park. To the extent practicable, when hazing is planned on national forest system lands, MDOL will notify the USFS Line officer or designee 24 hours in advance of when, where, and how hazing operations will occur. At times, helicopter hazing operations that start in Montana

may continue into Yellowstone National Park where the bison will be left or picked up by NPS personnel on the ground for continued movement. MDOL has agreed to follow U.S. Department of Interior aviation regulations and policies and wilderness regulations while operating within the boundary of the park during these operations. Also, the NPS and the USFS coordinate with MDOL to avoid flying the helicopter near areas with active eagle nests and wolf dens, as well as observed bears and bear management areas. Furthermore, NPS rangers may at times ask the MDOL to cease helicopter hazing operations within Yellowstone National Park to allow bison to rest. APHIS personnel will not participate or support aerial hazing actions.

Hazing operations will be coordinated with the administration of the hunt. The NPS and MDOL will make efforts to integrate management of hazing actions with treaty and state-regulated hunting in Montana. Hazing of bison will be minimized in areas where bison are tolerated outside Yellowstone National Park during the hunting seasons established by the treaty tribes and MFWP. Hazing during hunting seasons will be designed to maintain separation with cattle, ensure human safety, prevent property damage, or prevent the movement of bison outside of agreed-upon tolerance areas or onto private property where bison are not desired by the landowner.

The NPS is the lead agency to implement hazing within Yellowstone National Park and the Chief Ranger (or designee) will determine the timing, location, and duration of hazing. NPS may stage groups of bison within YNP to reduce the need for multiple hazing operations. MDOL is the lead agency to implement hazing outside of Yellowstone National Park in Montana with assistance from MFWP. The NPS and MDOL may request assistance with hazing from other IBMP members.

The IBMP members will coordinate in April to compile and update knowledge on bison movements and distribution, snow conditions, vegetation green-up, stream flow in the Madison River, logistical issues (e.g., staff, horse, and helicopter availability; traffic control; visitation and road closures), and cattle turn-on dates and locations. The IBMP members will assess this information and discuss a step-wise, integrated plan for hazing bison from the Gardiner and Hebgen basins back into Yellowstone National Park. The current target dates for bison to be back into the park are May 1 from the Gardiner basin and May 15 from the Hebgen basin. While maintaining a focus on brucellosis risk management, end-of-the-winter haze-back operations could occur earlier than the target dates if forage and other conditions at higher elevations in Yellowstone National Park are suitable or later if conditions preclude safe and effective movements of bison to habitats that will hold/sustain them (e.g., adequate snow melt or vegetation green-up). The Montana State Veterinarian will determine the start dates of hazing operations to return bison to the park. The distance bison are hazed back within Yellowstone National Park remains at the discretion of NPS.

To reduce the need for multiple hazing operations, MFWP will take the lead in exploring private land management options as they arise or are proposed by individual landowners to prevent bison-cattle mingling and property damage. These options could include conservation

easements, livestock grazing plans, and strategic fencing to separate livestock and bison. The IBMP members will evaluate whether strategic fencing is appropriate and, if so, at what locations along bison migration corridors

Capturing Bison

Bison have been captured to reduce the number of brucellosis-infectious bison, reduce the overall population abundance, or prevent dispersal beyond Zone 2 area boundaries. Bison may still be captured (1) for disease testing and vaccination, (2) because they have repeatedly resisted hazing to keep them within agreed-upon tolerance areas, (3) because there are already large numbers of bison in the tolerance areas after the hunting seasons are completed, or (4) to reduce abundance if hunting is unlikely to completely achieve annual removal objectives. If possible, the capture of bison will occur in ways that allow bison to migrate into Montana to enable tribal and state hunting, and to meet overall harvest objectives.

Captures to reduce bison abundance could be implemented approximately weekly before mid-March (when pregnant bison are late in their third trimester) through removals of relatively small groups (e.g., 25-50) of bison. If necessary to reach removal objectives for a given year, larger groups of bison could be gathered into capture facilities and consigned after the majority of public and treaty hunting is completed in late February or early March.

The NPS is the lead agency to implement bison capture within Yellowstone National Park and will maintain a capture and handling facility at Stephens Creek in the northern management area. The NPS will be responsible for capturing, processing, and caring for the welfare of bison in and around the Stephens Creek area, but may request assistance with capture and operating facilities from the other IBMP members. The NPS will conduct brucellosis and pregnancy testing, with assistance from MDOL, APHIS, or contract veterinarians.

The MDOL is the lead agency to implement bison capture outside the park and could maintain or erect one or more capture and handling facilities. The MDOL will be responsible for capturing and assisting with processing and sorting bison outside the park, but may request assistance with capture and operating facilities from the other IBMP members. MDOL or federal veterinarians may conduct brucellosis and pregnancy testing, though it may be necessary to use one or more contract veterinary practitioners on some occasions.

Brucellosis Suppression

Any strategy aimed at reducing brucellosis infection in Yellowstone bison would benefit from the identification and removal of actively infected bison, while retaining negative and possibly recovered bison and vaccinating all eligible bison to increase herd immunity.

If, for whatever reason, it is necessary to retain pregnant, likely infectious bison (rather than shipping them to slaughter), then NPS or MDOL staff will attempt to separate them from

susceptible bison and hold them in isolation until they have calved and the risk of brucellosis transmission has abated. Thereafter, these bison will be released from captivity when conditions are suitable for them to migrate back into Yellowstone National Park.

MDOL and NPS, with assistance from APHIS, may conduct trap-side serologic testing of all captured female bison (aged calf to adult) and use FPA results to identify bison that are likely infectious based on age and FPA antibody levels. These bison could then be removed from the population up to the removal objectives for that year. Seropositive bison that have a lower risk of being actively infectious (based on age specific antibody levels) will be retained in the population, if the removal objectives for that year are anticipated to be reached. Tests will be run at the Yellowstone Wildlife Health Program laboratory in the Heritage Resource Center, when possible, with an alternate site in the trap-side building at the Stephens Creek facility. When bison are tested for brucellosis at a capture facility, back tags and/or other identification will be used to mark and separate bison selected for removal. All tested bison will be marked with at least one small, brown, metal ear tag.

Bison selected for removal from the population based on their FPA results will be separated from other bison, as facilities permit, by sex, size, and age to prevent injury. All bison consigned to slaughter will be delivered to appropriate facilities as soon as practical after capture and processing. The use of FPA as an indicator of active brucellosis infection in bison improves as animals are tested closer to parturition. Thus, some infectious pregnant bison may be shipped to slaughter during the third trimester of pregnancy. The NPS will consult with the treaty tribes, and coordinate with the other IBMP members, regarding the distribution of bison shipped to slaughter. The NPS has signed agreements with the CSKT and ITBC to provide them with bison for direct transfer to approved slaughter facilities and subsequent distribution of meat, hides, horns, and other bison parts to support tribal nutrition and culture. Similar agreements may be reached with other American Indian tribes or tribal organizations in the future. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to dispose of “surplus” bison (16 USC 36) or destroy animals that may be detrimental to the use of parks, monuments, or reservations (16 USC 3).

The ITBC, American Indian Tribes, MDOL, or NPS will contact one or more slaughter establishments (based upon the size, number, and sex of the bison captured) to determine the number of bison each facility may be capable of handling on a particular day. The NPS with help from the other appropriate IBMP members will load all bison consigned to slaughter from the Stephens Creek facility into transportation vehicles. A local representative of the State of Montana and/or APHIS will certify the numbers, sexes, and age categories (e.g., calf, adult) of bison loaded and secured in each trailer with tamper-proof seals. APHIS Veterinary Services Form 1-27 will be completed by these representatives for all shipments. Copies of the form will be provided to the NPS, and if appropriate the ITBC or American Indian tribes. The NPS will provide APHIS, the State Veterinarian of Montana, and if appropriate the ITBC, or American Indian tribes with the results of testing for brucellosis from each bison that is transferred. If the ITBC or American Indian tribes will be transporting bison, then they will assume ownership of the bison at capture facilities in or near Yellowstone National Park once a transfer is approved by

the NPS and the bison are loaded and secured into trailers or other vehicles that the NPS agrees are appropriate for transporting bison to the intended slaughter destination(s). The NPS will provide the ITBC or American Indian tribes documenting the transfer of ownership of the bison.

The bison will be transported by the ITBC, American Indian tribes, or other IBMP agency directly to the slaughter destination agreed-upon with the NPS. As necessary, MDOL and the NPS will assist ITBC or American Indian tribes with arranging the secure transport of bison. A meat inspection agency representative will certify that bison are delivered to slaughter facilities. Slaughter facilities will be notified of any passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags in bison prior to delivery. The collection of blood and tissue samples at slaughter establishments is an important part of brucellosis surveillance and will help validate/modify criteria for selective culling. Thus, NPS staff will coordinate with ITBC, MDOL, or American Indian tribes to make a good faith effort to send some groups of bison to smaller, local slaughter facilities in Montana (e.g., Big Timber, Columbus) to facilitate obtaining samples of high quality. The APHIS, ITBC, American Indian tribes, NPS, and State of Montana will use their own respective funding sources to accomplish their respective tasks.

Bison at the Stephens Creek facility that are not consigned to slaughter may be temporarily held and released when winter weather moderates in spring or earlier to provide operational space and shorten confinement. All calf, yearling, and non-pregnant adult female bison released from the capture facility after the conclusion of the hunting seasons (approximately March 15) will be vaccinated for brucellosis via syringe with a safe vaccine (Strain RB51), regardless of their disease testing status (i.e., seropositive or seronegative).

Animals vaccinated with *Brucella* vaccine should not be consumed within 21 days of vaccination. The hunting season coincides with the opportunity to vaccinate adults during November through February. Thereafter, many females are in middle to late gestation when some studies suggest vaccination could induce some abortions. Bison may be vaccinated and held at the Stephens Creek facility for the duration of the 21 day meat withhold period, or be vaccinated and released after the cessation of hunting season. The NPS may conduct studies to evaluate these potential effects by vaccinating some adult females, including animals vaccinated as calves and yearlings that should therefore be less likely to abort. The NPS may also vaccinate and mark young bison less than 2 years old, and provide booster vaccinations to older bison during mid-gestation, to evaluate if these animals are less likely to subsequently have a vaccine-induced abortion. These studies may include vaccinating females during middle to late gestation with reduced dosages of vaccine to evaluate if that reduces the risk of abortions, but still stimulates protective immune responses.

The IBMP will continue to try and resolve the conflict between the vaccination and the hunt to make them compatible actions.

Lethal Removal of Bison - Risk Management

The NPS is the lead agency to implement lethal removal operations within Yellowstone National Park, while the MDOL is the lead agency outside the park for brucellosis transmission risk management purposes. To the extent practicable, when lethal removal of bison is planned on national forest system lands, MDOL or MFWP will notify the USFS Line officer or designee 24 hours in advance of when and where the removal will occur. MFWP is the lead agency for lethal removal of bison for private property and public safety reasons. The NPS, MDOL, and MFWP may request assistance from employees or personnel from other IBMP members. For example, assistance from the USFS law enforcement may be requested for public safety assistance. Requests for assistance before a shooting operation occurs will be as timely as possible to plan for carcass salvage. When possible, lethal removal officers will operate in teams (e.g., 2 teams with 2 persons per team, for a total of 4 persons).

All reasonable attempts will be made to salvage carcasses that result from management actions according to MCA 81-2-120(2) (Appendix 2) for human consumption or research purposes. The MDOL will be responsible for field slaughter, dress, and transport of bison carcasses that are removed outside the park, but may request assistance from other IBMP members. After veterinary inspection, carcasses that are deemed unfit for human consumption will be condemned. MDOL will coordinate with the other IBMP members, regarding the distribution of products (meat, hides, etc.) from bison killed during management actions. Indian tribal governments and/or charitable organizations would receive carcasses fit for human consumption for distribution through their social service system. Indian tribal organizations or their designees may receive the bison heads and hides. Bison carcasses, heads, and hides may also be sold as provided for in Montana law (MCA 81-2-120(3)). In addition, some bison carcasses may be designated for research purposes and transported to appropriate facilities.

The MDOL and the landowner shall determine whether to leave bison offal on-site on private land. Only designated personnel shall remove offal, fetuses, or stillborn calves. Every attempt will be made to remove offal from sites near residences or used for livestock operations when grizzly bears may be present to avoid human-bear conflict. All gravid uteruses and stillborn calves will be disposed.

Transfer of Bison

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to ship “surplus” Yellowstone bison to other authorities (16 USC 1V § 36) and destroy animals that may be detrimental to the use of parks, monuments, or reservations (16 U.S.C. § 3). Many Yellowstone bison are infected with brucellosis, a non-native disease that induces abortions, , and poses a risk of transmission to cattle, which limits tolerance for migration of bison to essential low-elevation winter ranges in Montana and prevents relocations elsewhere to enhance restoration of the species. In light of this limited tolerance for migration of bison out of Yellowstone National Park, as well as the limited amount of winter range and forage for bison inside Yellowstone National Park and the need to

manage and cull likely infectious bison, the NPS finds that there will occasionally be bison available for distribution and that there may be such bison available from time to time for the foreseeable future. Prior to transferring Yellowstone bison to other parties and/or locales, the NPS will coordinate with the other IBMP members.

The NPS will consider transferring some bison to the ITBC or American Indian tribes for direct transport to slaughter facilities and subsequent distribution of meat and other products to support their nutrition and culture. Movement of bison in Montana will be done in compliance with Montana Governor's Executive Order, No. 16-20111.

All research activities conducted by the IBMP members will satisfy applicable permitting processes. The IBMP members will mutually keep each other informed of progress and results. The MDOL and APHIS will be responsible for the collection of blood and tissue samples from bison captured outside the park. Inside the park, the NPS will be responsible for collection of blood and tissue samples. These agencies may also collect blood and tissue samples from bison at slaughter facilities. Results of all analyses will be shared with the other IBMP members.

The NPS with assistance from the other IBMP members will evaluate operational quarantine as a method to provide a source of live, brucellosis-free bison for tribal governments and other requesting organizations to start or augment conservation herds. The NPS, MFWP, and APHIS will provide annual summaries of bison sent to quarantine and bison transported from quarantine to suitable restoration sites.

Vaccinating Cattle

By June 15, APHIS and MDOL will determine and document the vaccination status of all at-risk cattle in or coming into the Hebgen and Gardiner basins. These agencies will use existing regulations and/or incentives to ensure 100% of adult cattle in the Hebgen and Gardiner basins are calf-hood and/or adult vaccinated. If the vaccination status of adult cattle in these areas is not 100%, then vaccination or other to-be-determined actions will be taken to achieve 100% status as determined by the Montana State Veterinarian.

Safety

The safety of all personnel and the public is paramount in all aspects of bison management operations. No actions will be taken which compromise the safety of any personnel. Personnel involved will take all precautions to protect the security of operations. Bison may be lethally removed at the discretion of the Operations Chief if the safety of personnel is in jeopardy. Conditions attached to hazing, lethal removal, and/or retrieval of dead bison on private lands will be made clear to the hazing or lethal removal teams and those individuals responsible for slaughtering, field dressing, or transporting bison carcasses. Under the leadership of the MDOL, when feasible, reasonable attempts will be made to notify affected private landowners prior to operations.

The IBMP members will continue education and awareness of the social, public safety, and private property impacts of bison tolerance in areas with residences or used for livestock operations. They will also continue to explore ways to reduce or eliminate human safety or property damage problems related to bison on a case-by-case basis.

Access/Approval to Operate on National Forest System Land

The MDOL will notify a representative from the USFS prior to the time when bison are to be hazed, captured, shot, or otherwise removed from national forest system lands. The MDOL will make every attempt to notify a representative from the USFS to obtain authorization for the use of motorized vehicles on national forest system roads, trails, or areas otherwise closed. The MDOL will as soon as possible contact a representative from USFS after any above action if prior notification is not made. This authorization may be either written or verbal, to be followed by a timely written authorization. The USFS may also provide direction, including requirements for the retrieval and field dressing of dead bison on national forest system lands. IBMP members involved in hazing, capture or removal operations will follow protective measures for bald eagles, grizzly bears, and wolves that are in place on National Forest and Park Service lands.

Assurance of General Security

The MDOL will contact NPS, USFS, MFWP, and if necessary and appropriate, Gallatin and/or Park County Sheriff's offices and the Montana Highway Patrol to ensure that necessary and appropriate actions are taken to provide for the general security of all personnel involved in hazing, capturing, shooting, or processing bison outside the park. Security of the west boundary capture facilities will be the responsibility of the MDOL. A security agency may be contracted by the MDOL and/or other IBMP members to provide general security, if necessary.

Security for bison management operations inside the park will be the responsibility of the NPS. The Stephens Creek administrative area, which includes the corral operations infrastructure and pasture, stored government equipment, park vegetation nursery, a park residence, a law enforcement firearms range, and the bison capture facility, is closed to the public year-round due to public safety issues and the need to protect government property, equipment, livestock, and infrastructure. Lands surrounding the Stephens Creek administrative area may be temporarily closed during periods when the capture facility is operational and captured bison are being held, handled or processed and associated hazing operations are ongoing. When implemented, this temporary closure provides for public and employee safety and ensures that hazing actions are effective, safe, and humane. Hazing actions in the northern management area are extremely dynamic and it is impossible to sweep the area to remove members of the public before operations commence.

Maintenance of Records and Accountability for Bison Removal

The MDOL and NPS will be responsible for the accountability of bison management records for activities outside and inside the park, respectively, including hazing, capturing, testing, and vaccination.

Adaptive Management Review, Evaluation, and Modification

Each year, the IBMP members will meet to review, evaluate, and modify, if deemed necessary, the operating procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the IBMP. These procedures may be modified at any time, with the agreement of the IBMP members, to facilitate and/or improve the operations procedures to accomplish the objectives of the IBMP.

Table 1. Resource levels that may be necessary to conduct an array of bison management activities described in the Interagency Bison Management Plan and subsequent adaptive management adjustment documents.

Operation Size / Resources	MDOL	MFWP	NPS	APHIS	USFS	NPT	CSKT	ITBC
<i>Media relations / Public information</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
<i>Monitoring bison movements / distribution</i>	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Human safety and property damage</i>	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hunting								
Biologists (modeling / recommendations)	NA	√	√	NA	NA	√	√	NA
Game wardens	NA	√	NA	NA	NA	√	√	NA
Law enforcement officers	√	NA	√*	NA	√	NA	NA	NA
Hazing								
Helicopter	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Horses and riders	√	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA
ATVs	√	√	NA	√	NA	NA	NA	NA
Snowmobiles	√	√	NA	√	NA	NA	NA	NA
Law enforcement officers	√	√	√*	NA	√	NA	NA	NA
Shooting								
Law enforcement officers	√	√	√	NA	√	NA	NA	NA
Lethal control teams	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
ATVs	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Snowmobiles	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tissue sample collectors	√	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA
Capture								
Horses and riders	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
ATVs	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Snowmobiles	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Law enforcement officers	√	√	√	NA	√	NA	NA	NA
Testing personnel	√	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bison handlers	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vaccination	√	NA	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bison transfer and transport								
Inspectors	√	NA	NA	√	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vehicles, trailers, and drivers	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	√
Distribution of meat, hides, etc.	√	NA	NA	√	NA	NA	NA	√
<i>Research and disease surveillance</i>	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Quarantine operations</i>	√	√	√	√	NA	NA	NA	√
<i>Monitoring cattle turn-on and/or vaccination</i>	√	NA	NA	√	√	NA	NA	NA

* Inside Yellowstone National Park

Appendix 1. Executive Summary of MANAGING THE ABUNDANCE OF YELLOWSTONE BISON, WINTER 2014³

Pursuant to the Interagency Bison Management Plan, Yellowstone bison are managed towards an end-of-the-winter guideline of 3,000 animals. Managers at Yellowstone National Park also want to maintain more than 1,000 bison in the central and northern breeding herds, similar proportions of males to females (range = 40-60%), and an age structure of about 70% adults and 30% juveniles (range = 22-33% juveniles). Managers want to allow bison to seasonally migrate, while avoiding annual reductions in bison numbers of more than 1,000 due to brucellosis, property, and safety concerns near wintering areas in Montana. It is important to consider that bison from central Yellowstone migrate to both the northern and western management areas during winter. Thus, some unknown proportion of the harvest or culls in the northern management area consists of bison from the central herd, which likely averages more than 10% under current population conditions.

Current Population Conditions: During June 2013, there were about 4,600 bison in the Yellowstone population following calving, including about 3,200 bison in northern Yellowstone and 1,400 in central Yellowstone. Harvests and culls during winter 2013 (October 2012-April 2013) totaled approximately 237 bison, including 83 from the western management area and 154 from the northern management area. Harvests were biased towards males (57%) and did not reflect the recommended guidelines of removing 400 females and 25 males from the northern management area and 25 males from the western management area. As a result, herd abundance and age and sex structure did not progress towards desired conditions.

Removal Recommendations: Without harvests or culls, we predict an end-of-winter population of approximately 4,335 bison in 2014 that increases to nearly 6,000 bison by the end of winter in 2016. The removal of 600 bison, including 300 females (45 yearlings, 255 adults), 165 males (25 yearlings, 140 adults), and 135 calves, from the northern management area during each of the next three winters would improve the chances of meeting the desired population and herd conditions. We do not recommend any removals of bison from the western management area. However, if managers decide to harvest bison in this area then harvests should be limited (e.g., less than 50) and focused on bulls. These management recommendations increase the chances of an end-of-winter population of 3,000-3,500 bison more than 13 times over a no harvest/cull alternative within three years.

Movements and Implementation: Under average snow and standing vegetation conditions, we predict approximately 600 bison will move to the northern management area by late winter, and 100-200 bison will occupy the western management area from December 2013 through March 2014, with numbers increasing in April and May 2014. Current migration predictions are highly uncertain (e.g., maximum migrations may exceed 2,000 bison in the northern and 1,000 bison in the western management area), but the precision of estimates will increase as information

³ For full document, see <http://ibmp.info/library.php>, document titled "IBMP 2014 Bison Harvest Plan".

becomes available on snow conditions and bison distribution during early next winter. Removals could be implemented through public and treaty hunting in Montana (300-400 bison) and capture at the northern boundary capture facility followed by shipment to slaughter, terminal pastures, or research facilities (200-300 bison). Gather-and-consignment could be implemented weekly before March through non-selective removals of small groups (e.g., 25-50) of bison. If necessary to reach removal objectives for a given year, larger groups of bison could be gathered into the northern capture facility and consigned after the majority of public and treaty hunting is completed in late February or early March.

Appendix 2. MCA 81-2-120. Management of wild buffalo or wild bison for disease control

(1) Whenever a publicly owned wild buffalo or wild bison from a herd that is infected with a dangerous disease enters the state of Montana on public or private land and the disease may spread to persons or livestock or whenever the presence of wild buffalo or wild bison may jeopardize Montana's compliance with other state-administered or federally administered livestock disease control programs, the department may, under a plan approved by the governor, use any feasible method in taking one or more of the following actions:

(a) The live wild buffalo or wild bison may be physically removed by the safest and most expeditious means from within the state boundaries, including but not limited to hazing and aversion tactics or capture, transportation, quarantine, or delivery to a department-approved slaughterhouse.

(b) The live wild buffalo or wild bison may be destroyed by the use of firearms. If a firearm cannot be used for reasons of public safety or regard for public or private property, the animal may be relocated to a place that is free from public or private hazards and destroyed by firearms or by a humane means of euthanasia.

(c) The live wild buffalo or wild bison may be taken through limited public hunts pursuant to 87-2-730 when authorized by the state veterinarian and the department.

(d) The live wild buffalo or wild bison may be captured, tested, quarantined, and vaccinated. Wild buffalo or wild bison that are certified by the state veterinarian as brucellosis-free may be:

(i) sold to help defray the costs that the department incurs in building, maintaining, and operating necessary facilities related to the capture, testing, quarantine, or vaccination of the wild buffalo or wild bison; or

(ii) transferred to qualified tribal entities that participate in the disease control program provided for in this subsection (1)(d). Acquisition of wild buffalo or wild bison by a qualified tribal entity must be done in a manner that does not jeopardize compliance with a state-administered or federally administered livestock disease control program. The department may adopt rules consistent with this section governing tribal participation in the program or enter into cooperative agreements with tribal organizations for the purposes of carrying out the disease control program.

(e) Proceeds from the sale of live, brucellosis-free, vaccinated wild buffalo or wild bison must be deposited in the state special revenue fund to the credit of the department.

(f) Any revenue generated in excess of the costs referred to in subsection (1)(d)(i) must be deposited in the state special revenue fund provided for in 87-1-513(2).

(2) Whenever the department is responsible for the death of a wild buffalo or wild bison, either purposefully or unintentionally, the carcass of the animal must be disposed of by the most economical means, including but not limited to burying, incineration, rendering, or field dressing for donation or delivery to a department-approved slaughterhouse or slaughter destination.

(3) In disposing of the carcass, the department:

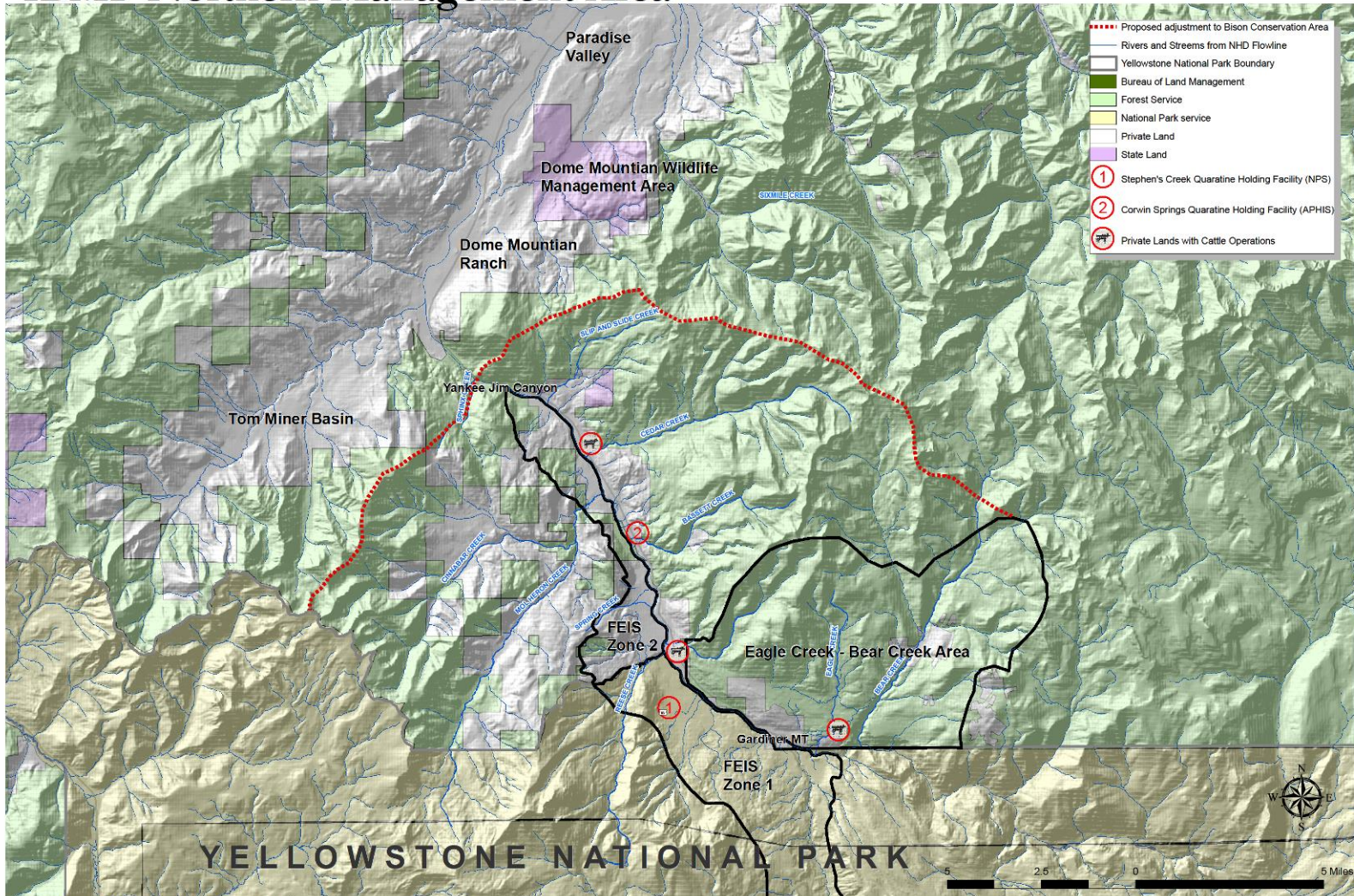
(a) as first priority, may donate a wild buffalo or wild bison carcass to a charity or to an Indian tribal organization; or

(b) may sell a wild buffalo or wild bison carcass to help defray expenses of the department. If the carcass is sold in this manner, the department shall deposit any revenue derived from the sale of the wild buffalo or wild bison carcass to the state special revenue fund to the credit of the department.

(4) The department may adopt rules with regard to management of publicly owned wild buffalo or wild bison that enter Montana on private or public land and that are from a herd that is infected with a contagious disease that may spread to persons or livestock and may jeopardize compliance with other state-administered or federally administered livestock disease control programs.

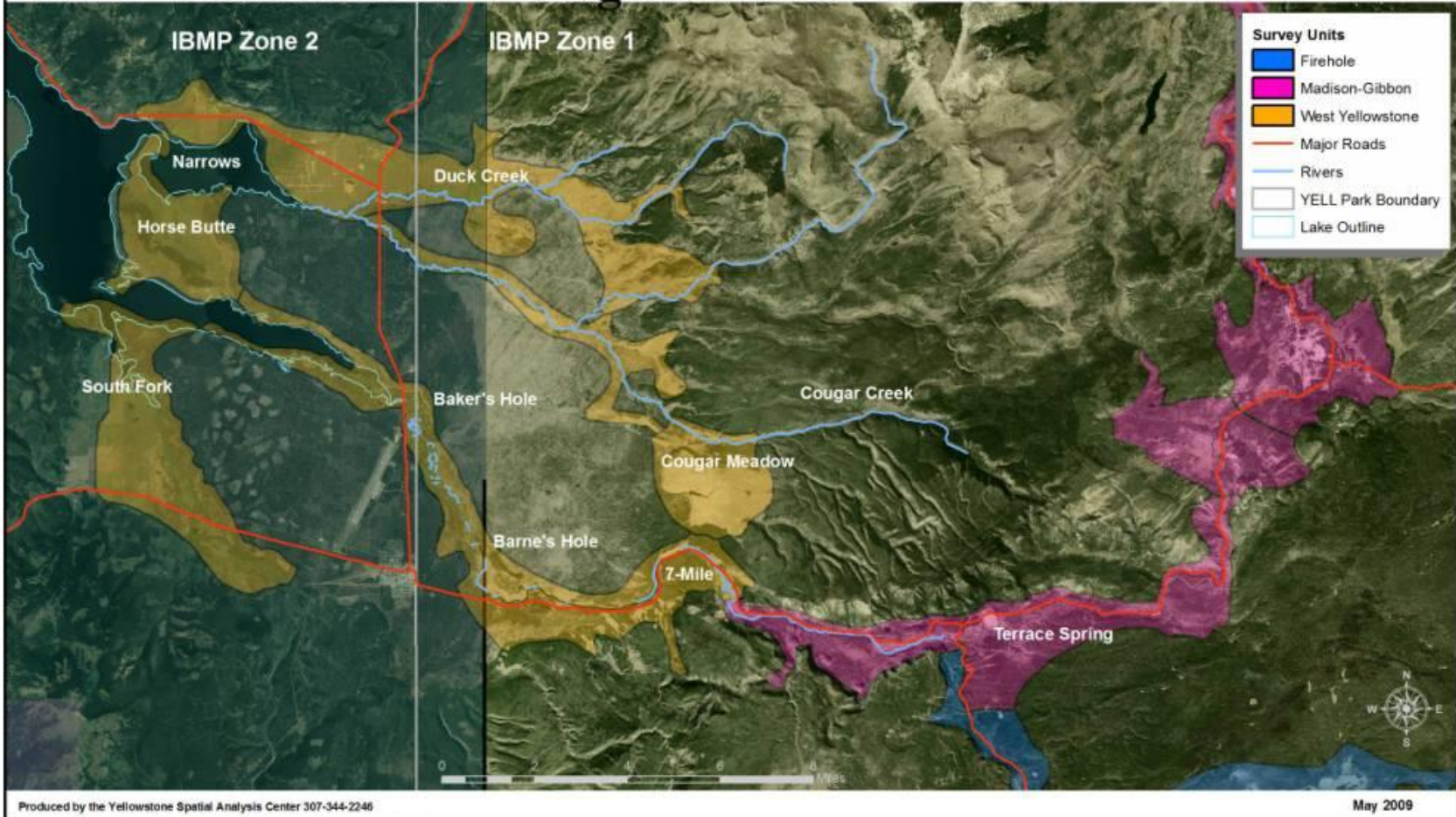


IBMP Northern Management Area



Produced by the Yellowstone Spatial Analysis Center 307-244-2246
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IBMP Western Bison Management Area



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