

IBMP NEWS RELEASE
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**INTERAGENCY
BISON
MANAGEMENT
PLAN**

AGENCIES

**STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES COMPLETE
FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN**

A partnership of state and federal agencies (National Park Service, USDA Forest Service, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Montana Department of Livestock, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks) that manage bison in and around Yellowstone National Park recently completed a five-year status review of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP), implemented in December 2000.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



The review looked at the accomplishments to date and evaluated them against the adaptive management procedures outlined in the IBMP. The adaptive management approach is intended to evolve in a deliberate and defensible manner as new information is obtained. Under the IBMP's adaptive management strategy, future management actions can be adjusted based on feedback from implementation of the proposed risk management actions. This allows the agencies to gain experience and knowledge before proceeding to subsequent management steps.

USDA
ANIMAL AND PLANT
HEALTH INSPECTION
SERVICE



As required by the IBMP, the review was done to determine if the goals of the IBMP are being met, evaluate the status of the objectives outlined in Step 1 of the plan over the first five years of operations, determine if those tasks have been completed, and assess whether the agencies can progress to the next step as outlined in the IBMP. Step 1 encompasses a set of fourteen tasks, including cooperation among the five agencies, maintenance of spatial and temporal separation between cattle and bison, protection of private property, and conservation of wild, free-ranging bison.

USDA
FOREST SERVICE



MONTANA DEPARTMENT
OF LIVESTOCK



A report on the status review, *Interagency Bison Management Plan for the State of Montana and Yellowstone National Park: A Status Review of Adaptive Management Elements*, confirms that the agencies are effectively working together and have met the main goals of the IBMP to keep bison and cattle separated, protect private property, and manage the bison population in a way that protects both Yellowstone's wild and free-roaming bison population and Montana's brucellosis-free status. The report shows that additional objectives have been met as well. The agencies are cooperatively monitoring bison abundance and distribution, and research has documented that the RB51 vaccine satisfies safety criteria for vaccination of eligible bison and this has begun.

MONTANA FISH,
WILDLIFE AND PARKS



The report determined that the agencies are not yet ready to move to Step 2 of the IBMP. All 14 tasks in Step 1 must be completed before moving to Step 2. In addition, Step 2 in the West Special Management Area (SMA) will begin when a safe and effective remote delivery mechanism is available and the state of Montana is in a position to implement a remote vaccination program there. Step 2 in the northern SMA begins when cattle no longer graze private lands outside Yellowstone National Park on portions of lands known as the Royal Teton Ranch (RTR) in Zone 2 during the winter and when a bison management plan has been developed by the agencies in cooperation with RTR. Several

Step 1 tasks that are required before moving to Step 2 have been initiated, but not yet completed. Researchers have begun studies on the *Brucella* bacteria's persistence and disappearance in the environment, as well as bison fetal disappearance on the landscape. The development of a remote vaccination program for bison inside Yellowstone is underway, with an Environmental Impact Statement issued and a Record of Decision expected in late 2006. In addition, a bison management plan for the RTR property adjacent to the northern boundary of the park has not been completed.

The five state and federal agencies will continue to work together to accomplish the remaining Step 1 objectives, implement the basic goals of the IBMP, and focus on key adaptive management elements that will improve the agencies' ability to meet those goals.

Copies of the report, *Interagency Bison Management Plan for the State of Montana and Yellowstone National Park: A Status Review of Adaptive Management Elements*, are available at: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/technical/planning/bison/bmpstatusreview.pdf> or by calling 406-587-6703.

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