Preliminary Perspectives

The evaluation of any potential bison program is an ongoing process, as new information and science pertaining to bison and their management continues to emerge. Because our understanding of how bison will use different landscapes in Montana is limited, any program that could be developed would need to be adaptable as our knowledge base increases.

In summary:

- Wildlife programs that are cooperative and involve citizens early in the development process are the most successful.

- Bison conservation programs are being developed and implemented by nongovernmental organizations, Native American tribes, and others within Montana and the surrounding region.

- National management agencies, such as the USDI, are facing pressure to examine the status of bison and explore options for conservation.

- Free-ranging bison that are managed through hunting programs in other regions have posed minimal risk to human safety.

- Based on the experiences of free-ranging programs within other regions, bison and cattle can coexist on the landscape.

- Bison do not breed with cattle in a natural environment, and there is little evidence of bison preventing cattle from utilizing vegetation and water sources.

- There is the potential to obtain bison from source herds that are known to be free of reportable disease.

- The experiences of other programs have shown that hunting can be an effective management tool to control the number of bison and their distribution.

- Bison can be a source of conflict on private agricultural lands where landowner tolerance may be lower.

- The management of the YNP bison and the bison in the quarantine program continues to be controversial.

- The management authority and legal statutes within Montana continue to be controversial.