



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue  
Bozeman, MT 59718-5496

Greetings,

Thank you for taking the time to attend the recent bison scoping meeting that was held in Missoula. We estimate that approximately 50 individuals attended this meeting. Public scoping is an initial step in the development of a programmatic environmental impact statement that will examine the future of bison in Montana as wildlife. Attached you will find a compilation of all of the comments as they were recorded during the recent meeting in Missoula. We have transcribed the comments that were submitted during the meeting exactly as they were recorded. There are a few instances where the handwriting was not clear and the comments reflect this. Please review the comments and let us know if there are additional comments you would like to submit. Fish, Wildlife, & Parks will be accepting public comments via regular mail, e-mail, or online through June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The comments that were captured at each of the regional meetings and those submitted outside of the meetings will be available for review on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks website following the closure of the comment period.

We would like to thank you again for attending the recent meeting and hope that you will remain part of this process as Fish, Wildlife & Parks moves forward with the development of the programmatic environmental impact statement.

Sincerely,

Arnold Dood and Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

### **To Submit Comments or Gain More Information**

<b><i>FWP Website:</i></b> <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/bison/future.html#scoping">http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/bison/future.html#scoping</a>	<b><i>Written Comments:</i></b> MT FWP Bison Plan Scoping ATTN: Arnold Dood 1400 South 19 <sup>th</sup> Ave Bozeman, MT 59718	<b><i>E-mail Comments:</i></b> Bison_Management@ mt.gov
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## Missoula Public Scoping Meeting May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012

### Issues and Concerns:

- If bison are managed similar to other wildlife under the N. American model it could reduce many of the conflicts – has worked for years w/ other species.
  - Public trust principles applied to bison – public herd that belongs to all citizens/ and managed by FWP in trust.
- If not welcome – not here (strategic fencing, depredation hunts, experiment) pop status (ex wolves)
  - Key is landscape is large enough for ethical hunting
- Need a ‘real’ plan for managing bison to increase health of population
  - Overgrazing
  - Needs to benefit bison, landowners, tourism
- Is FWP going to have full-time rider to manage on public land? Something forgot to keep them there. Why they get off who is going to pay for the damage?
- Management impacts on land around the state.
- Who would regulate fences? Food? Private landowners should not be responsible for costs.
- Idea of containment – creative idea?
  - Fence out of hay stacks
  - Strategic forces (not all over)
  - Depredation hunt (faster responses)
  - Ability to take in certain situations
  - Containment not as fence in but as creative alternatives that allow free-ranging
  - Can NGOs help provide resources to reduce property damage
- Disease management for bison. Protect landowners from impacts. Fence bison in. Chain link. Husbandry for Bison. Cull bison.
- Who is going to herd them & who is going to take care of them?
- How can natural selection and process be allowed to run with so many private lands if bison are wildlife
- This isn't a deer. It's a big critter!
- Concern is that the bison are not managed in any way – like in YNP
- How is FWP going to control Bison
- How will FWP address bison that escape from area where they were restored? (wild)
- Allow migratory patterns.
- Bison won't stay on the CMR – they are going to leave, because it is not their habitat
- Vehicle collisions/human safety
- Need to examine impacts that fencing ‘out of bison’ could have impacts on other wildlife.
- Fencing – cost, what works, what doesn't, who pay for it?
- Fencing – what/if any design keeps bison in/out effectively?
- Bison don't stop at fencing
- Bison are destructive. No fencing will stop them. In winter they plow through fencing because they are hungry
- Concern with “clean” bison vectoring & contracting new disease.
- Help rancher vaccinate livestock.
- Disease transmission risks involved & how to minimize/address
- Brucellosis

- DOL has 2 sets of rules for commercial & wildlife Bison. What is science for tracing source of disease in wildlife <-> livestock.
- Look at sheep & cattle transmission disease to wildlife.
- Problem with vaccination with organic beef.
- Focus resources on disease issues with elk.
- Look at other states who are raising Bison. Would Hunter tests be accurate? Turner case was positive in 2010. Maintain disease (bangs) free status. Talk to people across the fence.
- -Disease zone status. Would it change?
- Concern over “disease-free” status – more outreach on this
- Genetics – YNP ‘pure’ – have not had most recent tests
- Support genetically viable population.
- Comingling of diff bison populations could impact genetics
- How will genetics be tested
- Look at management options to manage for genetics if herd size is smaller – introducing bulls (...if herd size is smaller->) has to be – prefer larger herds
- Hunting & predation might not protect genetics
- Herd should be hunnable.
- Fair chase is a big issue
- Definition of huntable
- Need to examine the agriculture in community - in the context of the demographics – x miles from CMR – and allow FWP to conduct distribution hunts
- Public hunting opportunities
- Hunting to allow for random selection. As opposed to selective culling
  - Moise, Windcave – manage like wildlife
- Should have fair chase hunting. I.e., CMR. Hunting should be primary mgmt. tool.
- Hunting- bison
  - Allow now see impact from elk on fencing during hunting concern over impact bison would have if hunted
- Hunting – concern that landscape is large enough to allow for fair chase and helps mitigate impact to landowners
- Spotted dog like a canned hunt
- Can hunters control numbers?
- Once you have established the program (wild bison) – then all of a sudden hunting is shut done. – Like the wolf.
- Review fact that FWP (*illegible*) established damage hunts – this should include an commitment it can be applied to distribution – (to follow the bison beyond the area designated for bison)
- Restoration location – some are appropriate other might not be
  - Politics involved
- Habitat – need appropriate habitat (which would reduce conflict/multiple types)
- Look at historic range.
- Grazing standards?
- Determine the appropriate place for bison
- Public lands make the most sense – for free roaming – Private land has an issue w/bison getting out
- Landowner problems will get that specific. More details – how much by (*illegible*) - potential damage – will help map out sufficient habitat

- Concern over minimum numbers of bison
- Establishing a pop size early on so people are comfortable early on so people know that FWP is going to bring back 10,000 bison to E. MT – my 400 bison – that can be managed effectively
- Private property rights
  - Grazing-already impacts from elk on hay stacks & fencing
  - Enjoy in general but not on personal land
  - Increased impact from
- Concern over bison moving from public/friendly land onto private property where they are not welcome
- Balance between national interests & private property rights
  - Have to address concerns and be adjustable overtime with management
- Potential impacts to Private Property Rights – oils gas/ timber/etc.
- Doesn't want to see loss of private property economic development (gas lines, etc.) Economic development before bison restoration.
- How can we have wild free, roaming bison w/out fences + still protect private landowners property
- Disease & impacts to cattle. & humans. Financial impacts.
- Impacts of less graze/hay. Property damage.
- Layout the entire history of FWP → game damage.
- What does anyone have to gain by putting the bison out in people's back yards? And who is going to be responsible for the damage they do? Who pays for that?
- If outbreak of disease occurs, ranchers need immediate compensation.
- Crop depredation on haystacks – would there be a reimbursement loss program & where would funding come from?
- Accountability for private property. losses – define who is accountable.
- Compensation for damages.g. crops/property
- FWP moved bison to F. Peck – would our committed 3 yrs for losses – are they going to do that when they call them 'wildlife'
- Increased wildlife grazing impact private grazing
- Concern w/ co-existence w/livestock
- Comingling w/ domestic bison
- Will wild bison impacts rights of domestic herds.
- Bison will be on public lands so weed impacts should be addressed. Not a private landowner.
- Tourism & hunting = WEEDS. Landowners are paying the bill.
- How bison benefit the ecosystems they are a part of.
- There is a reason why wolves went extinct and why bison went extinct
- Effects on other wildlife
- CRP – millions of acres of land that could be unavailable to other wildlife
- How will bison wintering patterns displace ungulates (deer, elk) & will this affect deer & elk hunting opportunities. (General hunting opportunities) & also make deer, elk more vulnerable to predation
- Concern w/co-existence w/livestock and other wildlife
- Economic impacts
  - Loss of grazing permits on public land due to bison -> could resolve in inability to maintain ranch which has impact on community as a whole (loss of community)

- Opportunity – tourism, education, research funding from National org that support restoration of native species (iconic species)
- How to develop a program that will sustain itself (bison must pay to stay)
- Take away grazing on CMR increases competition for other permits
- Iconic species – important to whole country – people visiting went to see bison see bison as icon of west could it translate to increase in tourism
  - Are these are last area?
- Bison are wildlife – hunting could bring in some \$ for damage and public support
- NGO's would step up if it looks like something like this could actually. MT has a lot of suitable habitat
- Economic concerns are always going to be the point with bison. Landowners and ranchers shouldn't have to take a financial hit. There has to be give & take.
- If the R&G Club would pay the rancher to have bison – to reward the rancher for providing for bison. As it is right now I get reward for providing for hunter, and the people in NY.
- Concern over changing land ownership
- Landowner acceptance
- Disease. Loss of ranching & hunting.
- Ranchers need to stay viable. People & families lives. They managed their ground. 24/7. CMR does have fencing & grazing. FWP needs to help manage lands it leases. Public needs to be heard. Wants public vote. Control visitors/users. Ranchers are always there not just weekends.
- Agenda 21: Concern that bison management may expand “no use” zones
- Hunter Access (for other wildlife) to private land due to landowner opposition to bison
- Public doesn't understand the potential negative effects of bison on farmers + ranchers (private lands)
- Need to work together to manage public land
- Role of ranchers in preserving MT – (hunting etc) – maintaining public land
- What baggage will come along for public land management (could it be use to shut down lands because of bison management concerns (or impose limitations)
- Some areas should be set aside for wildlife as priority.
- Grass is not only for the cattle. Wildlife has right.
- How might bison management impose limitations on public land – road closures, active forest management
- I lease BLM land, state land, etc. and soon the CMR will get our population – and the pressure will be to take the BLM land and state land. It's taking our lease.
- Landowner concerns and the top priority on the public lands where bison would be introduced
- There are places in MT that aren't suitable for bison
- People in Ag using the elk (*illegible*) are making a pretty penny from the animals in this State and that is not right.
- Minimum population → does it lead to ESA?
- Bison are wildlife. Keep balance. Address livestock concerns.
- Who decides what is a wild herd or a domestic herd (escaped Oregon herd and no clarity)
- How will state address escaped domestic bison (do they become wildlife)
- Legal classification/distinction b/w wild & domestic bison
- If bison are treated as wildlife then they become livestock. (Game farm)
- How are bison classified (livestock, game animal, etc.)? (More outreach needed to clarify this)
- This will be considered “wildlife”

- That concerns me – they won't be “domestic”
- Once they are considered wildlife they are allowed free roaming w/ no constraints. Who is going to pen the border of keeping them there? They the same as elk, antelope & deer – once they go to that wildlife status – we're all in trouble.
- Definition of free roaming
- Recognition that herds of Bison need to be managed as wildlife by FWP. Hunting is important mgmt. tool. All herds.
- How will the state manage separately/together or differentiate property (state, fed, private) conflict if bison are on all 3 (state, fed, private)
- Management by FWP seems to make sense to me . . . State management more positive and possibly get support.
- Put bison as a species under the management of a single organization.
- Control – how will FWP ever be in the driver's seat?
- Opportunity – regulatory (confusion) – how manages bison, what is their status – could be an opportunity to clarify regulations – people of MT can work through regulatory issues to clarify and decide what MT wants.
- Something will happen (regulatory responsibility)
  - It is about meaningful restoration to an appropriate habitat
- Current treatment of Bison. How do we get FWP management from DOL? To treat as wildlife. Move healthy animals only.
  - - Time bison are restored, as wildlife.
- The sovereign nation in Montana – How is FWP going to have any control over them?
- Cost & where will the money come from
- Opportunity for FWP to be able to do research on how bison would utilize the landscape
- Careful study of existing areas that do work (Utah herds) – could they provide a model for an alternative we gain knowledge
- -Compatibility (Henry Mt etc.) between bison & cattle. Do analysis.
- Unbiased study (-> new research warranted) of impacts on grasslands & forests bison vs. livestock/cows -> could we learn from the Am. Prairie Foundation?
- There is a large education step that needs to happen. Look at other places where bison exist – Henry MT – UT. How landowners concerns were dealt with. Can we learn from them? Can we do it better? Both sides need to budge a bit. It does not need to be an either or conversation.
- Analyzing needs to start with how wildlife in North America became a public resource, and not a private resource. Wildlife is a public resource and state to manage as a trustee → that process helps to restore almost everything. Need to finish the analysis as a hunter – pay – user pay process to include buffalo
- Like the idea of doing (*illegible*) EMT – Reg MT (*illegible*). Gain support or see if there is (*illegible*) to give it a chance
- Educate public on disease
- Public Education related to brucellosis & other bison management issues – need for more outreach
- Education is important. FWP needs to do a better job of telling people about disease potential. My husband and I are ranchers.
- Past problems/patterns of FWP not helping private landowners when wildlife come onto private land
  - How responsible will FWP in managing their bison
- Concern that management of other species might not work well (ex Helena whitetails)
  - Under N. American model

- Why does FWP have to be involved if you have all this support? Why don't you seek private \$ - NGOs – they are they – They have their own conservation easement – They have the wherewithal to satisfy those needs – Why does FWP need to get involved. FWP has a poor track record of trying to protect private land
- FWP has credibility problem. Illegal action with wolves. FWP lies. Bison has to stop now or they will be everywhere, FWP is threat. FWP is Rogue Agency. FWP needs to honor agreements.
- Trust – wants to see human concerns addressed – property damage
- A lot of fear + worry that is causing us to be anxious
- How can we differentiate between warranted + unwarranted fears
- Assess economic, cultural, ecological benefits of restoring Bison.
- Support working group/committee during plan development ->wildlife summit – could we institute something like that in MT?
- How much time, money & other resources would have to be invested before a hunt able population is established.
- How do we mitigate impacts?
  - Find a solution that is acceptable to all interests.
- Proper process not just politics
- FWP should develop clear criteria for what bison restoration should look like
- Look at multiple values of bringing bison back. Why has it worked in other states?
- Plan should incorporate impact zones. Are there ways to mitigate impacts? Economic analysis at all levels. Consider national & historic perspective from near extinction to recovery.
- Think there is already something that is going to occur
  - Skeptical of process.
  - Possibly pre-decisional.
- No common vision of what this is supposed to look like
  - Vision is currently elusive
- Communication (unnecessary fear + worry because of lack of communication – not solely by FWP)
- Communication is huge – from all parties
- Landowner - anyways - people looped in to the process for it to make any sense
- Transparency with in (arrow pointing to “Communication”)
  - Document listing cost of management
- Resolve the communication problem by all in MT (not legislature) communication is the tool; public process for a public resource for all
- Who requested that formal process? Will like to request an unformal process – will like to undo the process.
- FWP should have approved plan before any release of bison of restoration
- Defining fence / fair chase
- It is a learning curve for us – to reestablish the bison as a wildlife species
- Like wolf – we just keep coming to these meetings and we don't resolve anything. We forget keep moving
- I see the FWP is going off in all these different directions. I'd like to know why FWP is getting involved in bison. I don't understand it.
- In the pc center of the EA – bison factor - 3 categories
  - Discussion needs to be separated.
  - Yellowstone – moral society that we fools or the (*illegible*)
  - Res – sovereign district

- Public – would be separate for this
- Concern that efforts are already underway
- Concern over power distribution between local interests and national interests (influence)
  - Outside interest trying to influence/impact land management on private land)
- Primary rewrite decision → by best available private or public opinion. There should be a significant amount of non local input and local input – public law
- Who has the right to choose where the bison will be placed?
- Would USFWS step in if FWP won't able to follow through
- Would tribes contribute to restoration?
- Replace treaty rights w/another agreement
- Respect treaty rights and have tribes involved in restoration
- Study of Native American right to bison
  - Hunting rights? (% , unlimited, no rights)
- Native American rights to pursue traditional hunting forms (Jumps?)
- Clarification of treaty rights
- How do we factor in/control Native American harvest
- Management activities should adhere to civil rights act of 1964
  - Re: treaty rights
- Could help fix problem around Yellowstone
  - Disease
  - Regulatory
- Spotted Dog was bad in the sense of alternative and process
  - Increase bad feeling /if done properly could have been opportunities
- Mismanaged currently.
- Relationship to bison placement from quarantine facility.
- Ft Peck bison from Corwin Springs – Needed an EA – FWP say they will do an EIS – FWP always broke some rules on that. Putting my faith in FWP is not really there for me
- I have some concerns, agree that FWP was misled in the process with move to tribes All the things we were told weren't true.
- FWP needs enough budget to manage correct.
- What about more emphasis on farming bison out? Maybe there is a way – a cost effective way to protect populations.
  - There are some possibilities there.
- In today's current environment (economy, education, human concerns) don't feel this be a priority.
- Where will funds be generated to support program?
- Concern that the state cannot fund the effort to completion
- We hear all the time that FWP is strapped for \$. How come we have the money to do the education – and not other things – private sector would have to wait until it has the \$.
- Cost – Who is going to pay – L&C – history → more elk now than L&C –
- Why do we want bison?
  - Why don't we?
- Lawyers interested in this coming forward – we just went through a big process for wolves
- Reduce wolf population as part of restoring bison to certain areas.

- We live next to FT Billings Res
- Bison – They aren't a deer and they aren't an elk, and not a wolf. They are a 2000 lb animal that don't do well looking out for themselves
- Put it in a historical context – time 60m

## Alternatives:

- Locations – size considerations – bison not all over landscape but large enough landscapes – especially to help reduce impact on ag/ranching community.
  - CMR – size fits
- Address multiple restoration projects at one time not just one project at one time
- Large enough that they can access seasonal habitat
  - Seem to cross natural barriers
- Some natural barriers can work
  - Impact on grazing rights – affects whole communities
  - Should not affect neighbors
  - Increased competition for grazing permits btw ranchers/govt
- Nebraska/Kansas
- In favor of using Public Lands.
- In favor of free roaming and (*illegible*) bison on roads.
- Bison restoration to various areas, including tribal lands.
- Have Department of Livestock manage a restoration project
- Have treaties manage restoration (? on reservations)
- Fenced captive herd on a larger landscape (State land)
  - Does not address all issues but does bring them back to public land on a certain degree
- Contained area
- Focus restoration to bison corridor out of Yellowstone as the only place.
- CMR – they will get off - /will also have a federal process associated w/ it
  - Will have issues for ranching community.
- UL Bend has opportunities for wild bison (that landscape scale vs. spotted Dog)
- I spent 45 years with FWP – full disclosure. Local R&G Club since 2008 – worked specifically on CMR – to evaluate the restoration of free ranging hutable buffalo → in the context of Mt history - toward what we did to the buffalo and all wildlife. Since TR - we've restored wildlife that's what our culture and many people value. We can find some place – CMR – for buffalo. We don't think "it's" asking too much. Wild, state managed buffalo on primarily public land.
- CM Russell as a potential location – has a lot of good qualities & less potential conflicts
- Restore an ecologically significant, genetically viable bison pop to the area in and around the CMR.
- The Bitterroot – with lots of ag interests. But there are some places – like the CMR
- Not in favor of introduction