Thank you for taking the time to attend the recent bison scoping meetings in West Yellowstone and Gardiner. We estimate that approximately 50 individuals attended each meeting.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and the Montana Department of Livestock (DoL) are in the process of completing public scoping for the evaluation of the proposal to allow some bison to occupy suitable habitat year-round in Montana on lands near the border of Yellowstone National Park. The public scoping period ends on August 24, 2012.

Public scoping is an initial step in the development of an environmental analysis document by engaging the public in the identification of issues and concerns related to the proposal. Comments collected from the public are used to further explore issues of concern and to develop thoroughly vetted alternatives.

Attached is a compilation of all the comments as they were transcribed at the meetings. A number of comments were related to how the National Park Service manages the bison herd in Yellowstone National Park, the Interagency Bison Management Plan, or the quarantine feasibility study. While these comments were reviewed, they are more appropriately directed toward other processes or programs. All of the comments and alternatives will be examined as we proceed with the environmental analysis process independent of the number of comments received.

We would to thank you again for attending the recent meetings and hope that you will remain part of this process as FWP and DoL move forward with the development of an environmental analysis document.

Sincerely,

Pat Flowers
Regional Supervisor, FWP

Christian Mackay
Executive Officer, DoL

West Yellowstone Scoping Meeting – August 20, 2012

Comment: Summer resident in WY. I totally support year round tolerance of the buffalo. We have private land on the South Fork of the Madison and we don't mind buffalo coming on our property at all and we'll take our fences down when year round tolerance happens.

Comment: I too am also supportive of year round tolerance of the bison in the State of Montana. I think this is an important first step towards managing bison as a valued native wildlife species similar to how we do for elk. As we've seen in the Henry Mountains of Utah and Saskatchewan Canada, bison can co-exist with local communities and a vibrant livestock industry.

Comment: I also am in support of the year round tolerance area; also, that the speed limit should be lowered on Hwy 20 and Hwy 191 year round. A highway crossing corridor needs to be provided for bison and all wildlife crossing the Madison River. The proposed year round tolerance area is a critical first step towards maintaining the genetic viability of the herd of buffalo allowing them lower elevation habitat for grazing in the winter.

Comment: I am supportive of year round tolerance of the bison. I also believe we should have highway crossings provided. In the proposal for year round use by bull bison in the Gardiner Basin, how do you propose to keep the cows from migrating there also?

Comment: Big Sky resident. I definitely support expanding the range for the bison especially into public land. I would like to know more about how this might affect the other wildlife and also how a private landowner might be reimbursed if there were damage.

Comment: This is nothing but an illegal expansion of Yellowstone Park. There is nothing that has taken in private property rights. We take extensive damage in the spring from bison trampling wetlands that nothing should be on until the grounds dry up - destroying fences and injuring and killing livestock. We are rarely if ever reimbursed for property or private personal damage. My horse has been gored and almost killed; two dogs in the Basin were killed by bison. Without seeing a plan to know what private property owners can expect from bison destroying their ground and property. The Park is beyond the carrying capacity of bison now. When the Hebgen Basin is filled beyond the carrying capacity and then the expanded region is filled beyond the carrying capacity, when will they start managing bison numbers or will they just keep expanding? I can find nothing in the proposed plan where the Park Service is going to do anything about eradicating the brucellosis disease, so as they are looking at expanding the bison range of Yellowstone bison this will do nothing but greatly expand a herd of animals that run at approximately 50% positive for the disease affecting larger and larger areas of the State and the State's cattle industry.

Comment: Summer resident of West Yellowstone. Congratulations on this proposal and thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment. My main issues are impacts to public safety and on private property. With regard to public safety, buffalo are dangerous if not given enough

space, however, people who live in the Hebgen Basin are used to dealing with potentially dangerous animals including grizzly bears, moose and bison and take precautions to mitigate the danger, including carrying bear spray, practicing bear awareness and giving large ungulates adequate space. Allowing buffalo to roam free year round actually enhances public safety because it would prevent the Department of Livestock from conducting buffalo hazing activities. There have been numerous incidents that these activities resulting in hazing agitated buffalo through neighborhoods and past occupied houses, this happened to me on my own private property, passing through a gate on my property. The DoL hazed a bull bison through the same gate. The point is it is very difficult to practice avoidance when you have people hazing buffalo right past your residence. This is complicated by the fact that when you are hazing the bison it makes them agitated, irritable and unpredictable and this exposes people that use the river (fishermen and floaters) to the danger of having buffalo herded right into them. They don't have a chance to avoid them. It negates all these good practices to be safe.

The other thing I wish to talk about is private property rights. I welcome buffalo on my property but I recognize that others do not. I have been informed by the Forest Service that if I want to keep cattle from their grazing allotment off of my property, then I need to fence them out at my expense. Since buffalo are considered livestock in Montana landowners who wish to exclude buffalo from their property should fence them out rather than relying on a subsidy of having the DoL haze them out of the vicinity at public expense. Allowing free roaming buffalo would enhance private property rights by preventing the DoL from hazing buffalo onto and across private property without the landowner's permission.

Comment: Landowners up Taylor Fork--guest ranch--safety of guests; reaction of horses to the bison--they are a wild animals that will obey laws of nature (survival) main motivation is getting food- When we have horses up there year round we are feeding them--winter of 96-97 it was a big winter and there were 3 bison that came down the Gallatin --came up Taylor Fork ended up in our feeding area--tried to drive off did not work--He came in and gored our horse and had to be stitched up--he was starving to death --we had hay--There is that concern in the winter
In summer there is a lot more activity--it is going to get congested (dude ranches and public) --a lot of public comes in to ride in the area--probably are unfamiliar with bison and will need to get educated about how to behave around bison (like bears) some will obey and some wont--fences-safety and general proximity- How many fences and damage will occur before something happens (agency response)?

Comment: At what point do we as land owners or FWP (how much damage has to occur) before we or FWP step in--Can a private landowners step in--Can you initiate a hazing activity before they come onto your land (preventative).
Are they bringing bison into the area or are they allowing them to migrate into the area?
How many bison is too many bison for an area--who does the assessment---is the habitat suitable for bison? What happens if they are starving--what is the acceptable carrying capacity for the habitat?
Will they allow hunting initially from the start or once they have reached a certain number?
Will land owners be given preference for tags?

Comment: Main interest is to see if there can be enough expanded habitat outside park so that hunting can be a viable management tool so that the park does not need to ship to slaughter to reach there population goals--it seems that it would be more socially acceptable to manage bison through hunting to maintain populations--if using hunting you need to have enough habitat outside the park so that bison can use the area for enough of the year to allow hunting to be a viable tool to manage populations.

Comment: 1. A fear that lots of work and expenses can be put into this proposal and then have treaty hunting eliminate bison from this landscape. Due to current treaty rights --no population quota has been initiated by the tribes.
2. How do we get the bison to utilize the proposed area? Is hazing looked at as being used to create a migration route between areas?
3. Would this eliminate the consideration of bison being put on the endangered species list?

Comment:
Would take a big view of the landscaped prepared--compared to original landscape they have access it would be a 4x increase of landscape--If we increase landscape allowed access to are we making a bigger problem as far as the resources the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) partners have to manage the bison- My group feels strongly that the bison need to be managed as all wildlife as-population (hunting quotas), disease, effect on landscape, how they use the landscape--if looking at giant areas do the IBMP partners have the resources to manage that increased landscape.

Comment: Had some run ins with 1 bull bison in 96-97- bison that did migrate went right down the road ways (plowed roads)- hard time seeing how they will use the expanded area- Are these buffalo intended to be there year round or will they be hazes back in? I feel they will not use these areas but will use the lowlands along the creek bottoms as they do now.
Also concerned about lack of resources to manage bison (don't have enough now)--do they have the money to cover the increased areas?

By increasing management area they are increasing the private lands were there will be conflicts.

Comment: Within my neighborhood on Horse Butte we have an issue that has been coming up with liability- Where is the private property owners' responsibility to cover them? We are concerned about liability issues. We need to clarify liability issue.

Government Accounting Office audit found that the partners were still at step 1- The IBMP partners are required to find suitable a habitat.

This issue is just being addressed we can't expect the money to be here right now since we do not know what to expect.--If something were to come about money would be found. Need to do public process to learn more about what we will need.

Bison of Yellowstone National Park (YNP) are acclimated to people. When I went to look at what Utah does with their bison-it is interesting because those animals are so wild they are like

deer etc they run- If we do find that suitable habitat I think eventually these animals will -they will go where the food is- but once they get their fill they will move on to other areas that are not as populated.
--I saw shocked about the terrain they will use (from Utah)- does not have to be low land- I was shocked at what these animals were getting into- They have to be able to climb to get into this high habitat- they stay up in that high area-

Comment: Been down to Henry Mountains country and it is surrounded by desert--no grass in desert- talked to cattle man in area and they are not in favor of bison- said bison do stay up in mountains because there is nothing for them to eat in the flats- they had to create water etc for their cattle. Not surprising the bison are staying up so high-they are on an island of high mountains.

Have lived up Taylor Fork all my life--know what winters are like up there- just as severe as YNP- when do have tough winter bison will have to go to low country--they will be hungry- Very high snow--will have to come down to survive. Any animal will take easiest route to preserve energy--in summer there is bison habitat all over the place but it will shrink to 10% of what it is in a normal winter and even more in a tough winter--will have to pull bison out to save them--we are going to kick the problem down the road. We will have same problems no matter what the drainage (really about too many bison- need to cull out if have to many bison)- know culling is unpopular but it is what needs to be done. I do not like culling my animals but it sometimes needs to be done--it is what you take on when you take on managing animals- responsibility of having to cull them if they are lacking feed etc.

Comment: Large increase in increase in amount of land (4 or 5 times what it is now) how will we possibly be able to manage that- Using helicopters now. Moving bison back and forth and back and forth--waste of time right now.

In winter low lying areas is where they will go--in our case that is our private land… Almost all private land is in and around creeks and rivers which is where people want to live and there the animals (bison) want to go.

Is the habitat suitable? Are bison intended to be at 10,000 ft they are originally a plains animals--they are slowly adapted to YNP- but it is not there original range- I do not think this is suitable habitat

What benefit do bison bring to this situation?

Comment: Greater Yellowstone Coalition has helped offer some co-existence assistance to people in the Gardiner basin (fencing supplies, etc.) along with 4 or 5 other non-government organizations that will help supply material so people can make their property less appealing and making it a place where bison do not want to be--that kind of thing would be available on the West side--not the kind of funding the FWP has ever provided. Can you incorporate into an environmental assessment how mitigation assistance from non agencies can be used?

Might be useful to focus any expanded habitat to horse Butte and the flats around the airport since these people are used to encountering bison now- I think a big improvement could be made if bison could have expanded use and more year-round use of horse butte (these citizens are used to dealing with bison and there may be more tolerance in the area) Horse Butte could be an important place to start with expanded tolerance.

Having a bigger area could be a resource concern but if agencies were not wasting money on what they are doing now (hazing back and forth) they may have more resources to manage bison on a larger landscape--could be a good lesson for the Taylor Fork - make sure what you want to do is in alignment with what bison naturally want to do on the landscape.

Comment: 1. Is there designated winter range? Can that map be produced?
2. I feel like there is discrimination in hunting opportunities (FWP and treaty hunting and FWP allocated tags for Mt reservation)
3. Can bison pay its way?
4. I do not want to see slaughter as an option in the management of bison.

Comment: Concern with expanded habitat comes with the risk of Brucellosis being transmitted to both cattle and Elk- IBMP does not like to talk about the elk. People say there is not documented case of bison transmitting to cattle, but it has been shown to be scientifically possible. What we do see is elk transmitting it. We need to be very aware of the interactions between those 3 species. What will this do/affect they way that other state vets will look at our cattle/more restriction/ will other buyers shy away from our cattle.

Our members are concerned that we may be expanding a disease concern further and further into the state. Would like the see FWP and DoL look further into this issue (there is a lot that is unknown) there is a lot that cattle ranchers are dealing with as far as perception from outside the state.

Would like to see -if more tolerance for bison- would like to see it happen with no increase in risk for brucellosis transmission- it will be hard but know it can be done.

Comment: 1. concerned about the lack of openness between the tribal organization and the IBMP partners- there are participants from tribes on the IBMP panel, but in regards to the hunt there is no communications to how many they are taking, how many they can take, what are the limitations--I am concerned about the lack of communication between the tribes themselves and the tribes with Fed/State agencies.

2. Would like to ask that the IBMP partners refer to the IBMP exec summary that (p. 12?) states that any state looking to sanction any of MT ranchers ability to transport that it is the state vets responsibility to educate those other state vets that that action is unnecessary.

Comment: Concern with wolves and other animals- seems ridiculous that we keep taking away wolves adding wolves, taking away bison adding bison. What will the wolves do with the bison?

When we added wolves we saw other species drop. When you add bison what effect will that have on the rest of the ecosystem.

Comment: Flow of information- need to improve the flow of information to the public. Example: always though the carrying cap of park for bison was 3,000 animals, just learned that that was a political objective when the actual capacity on most years scientifically is around 7,500.

Comment: Population- in discussion of Citizens Working Group, we talked about expanding habitat as a way to deal with population. If that is what we are doing- if this is being proposed to accommodate the existing pop that is one thing, but if we are going to expand habitat and then let pop grow then expand again and grow this is a large concern of our members.
Expanded habitat is meant to address winter habitat rather than year round- the carrying capacity for the park is more related to summer habitat and not winter. I know this proposal is aimed at looking at year round habitat, but I think the issue is winter habitat and that is what needs to be addressed.

I think there is a lot of difficulty right now in the relationship between FWP, Landowners and hunters- Private landowners are an essential part in providing habitat for many species- It is going to be a very delicate balance that will need to occur to maintain good relations and improve relationships between landowners, sportsmen, and the agencies. This needs to be kept in mind as they move forward.

Comment: Buffalo were here before we were. Let them roam. I'm in favor.

Comment: Can only speak to Northern portion of the proposal. Concern is that they may not survive. Major concern: herd size too large to survive winter, they will migrate down the Gallatin. Safety problem with them migrating down the highway. Permitted ranches, and permitted outfitters, bison would run down the fences; would have horses and bison on the road. Tourists don't want to see a bison put down while visiting, but safety issues could arise. Bison were there, but could they sustain themselves there? Would they starve, migrate, etc? FS would close an area for safety reasons (bison), wouldn't want to see that happen. Don't need another reason for the trails/areas to be closed or restricted. All of this can be mitigated; we need to know what the mitigations would be.
The proposal is to introduce buffalo into an area where the elk are becoming scarce, where are the elk? We should worry about the elk first.

Comment: We live on Horse Butte, in the part where we have 50+ bison in our yard every day. We love having the bison around us every day, but would like clarification on a couple of things. Clarification on personal liability on individuals coming onto our property that get hurt, esp. tourists. Who is in charge of carcass removal? And determining Bear Management Areas? And wolf management areas? For Ex: Our home was in a restricted area due to bear conflicts. On a Tourism level, how are we going to educate the people that come here as tourists? There is not sufficient signage, or literature, or classes: Yellowstone Park does classes every morning. For

financial sustainability for West Yellowstone and area in the winter, we have to maintain access to snowmobile trails and a safe grooming program.

Comment: Parade Rest Guest Ranch Manager on 287. Against it. We have buffalo in or around our ranch 10-12 months out of the year. It's unsafe, they're destructive, and the agencies have enough issues trying to manage the areas that they are not allowed in at this time. They are in direct competition for our pasture land and continually find ways to get on our property and get to our purchased feed/hay. The safety of our guests as they do not understand they bison are wild animals and not to be played with and are there on their own. They come through our land to access the public lands adjacent to us. Maintaining our fences is a continuous battle. Bison on horse trails are a huge safety issue. The Park Service needs to manage a herd number by what they can sustain on their land.

Comment: Chairperson of MT chapter of Sierra Club, also here as an individual. The Sierra Club strongly supports the proposal. A member of citizens working group, supports that this proposal goes forward. This is our chance for us to do right by bison, and the American West. We live with grizzly bears, mountain lion, elk, we can live with bison. Brucellosis issue is non-existent in this area, no cattle in this area. Never been a documented case of bison passing to cattle. This is a win-win situation for Montana, this is a historic opportunity for us to see bison roam freely across our public lands.

Comment: Concern is property damage by a wild herd of bison. Property damage to residences, home, fence gates, electric transformers, and landscaping around the residence.

Comment: If a decision to allow year round habitat - concern that the area be defined in a way consistent to natural movement of the bison. Concern that there will be unnecessary management action (hazing). Boundaries should be less artificial (political), more on the needs of migrating animal. Look at areas that satisfy those needs.

Comment: Public safety - live at 20895 Hebgen Lake Rd, across from Firehouse. 20 acres deeded land. Bison are very destructive to property. Spend 6-8 days/year fixing fences. Pay taxes on land. Bison killed a dog, almost killed mine. Concern for wife (who is elderly) and bison on property threatening her. Let bison run on public land, not on mine.

Comment: Public safety. Concerned with own safety on my land. Concerned about wife and rest of family, including grandchildren on my own private land. It is unnerving to have a bull bison 10 feet from garage door.

HWY safety - cannot stress that issue enough.

Comment: Private property - any plan should include working with private landowners who are not interested in having bison on their land to provide fencing materials. State can afford it and conservation groups will kick in too. Still would be challenges, but can be worked out if people can keep talking with each other. Agreement should be something everyone feels like concerns are addressed, everyone should work together. Don't want people to feel unsafe in their own

home and property just as much as I want bison to be able to roam outside the park - those two things should be given equal importance.
Hwy issue is twofold - there are a lot of things can be done to allow better migratory progress. Are modifications that can be made to highways - ways road are plowed. Secondly, in my experience - 8 yrs of being on highways with buffalo and watching movements - by far most dangerous circumstances are when they are hazing. Something to say about year round habitat making highways safer and less property damage.

Comment: My understanding that this is a year round proposal (idea) that bison will remain in this area. It is difficult to comment at this point without knowing what numbers are. 100? 25? 1,000? Those numbers will have a lot of influence on issues. There needs to be a limit set on the number of bison. Need to talk numbers - then how those numbers are going to be met. The idea that we'll allow this population to grow infinitely and call that management doesn't cut the ice with me. Need to set the number. Then can talk increase or decrease and involve the public.

Comment: Highway safety - personal experience. Drive back and forth to town once or twice a day. Hit and killed three bison already. Not speeding, dark - highway is black. Fortunate enough to not get hurt. But have come across serious accidents. Tourists will be vulnerable. Black Angus and black buffalo are hard to see in the dark. Great increase in accidents if free roaming bison on roads. Even if they are just crossing roads they are exposed. Familiar with hitting buffalo on road.

Comment: Would like to thank FWP for taking step in right direction. Area thrives off tourism. Bison are a big contributor to that tourism $. Share concerns about hwy safety. Thing eliminating hazing process will keep bison off road more than constantly moving bison back and forth. If people have problem with bison they can move anywhere else in the world. They are a treasure not a nemesis. Ancestors had great pride in bison. Why were only 29 bison killed last year in hunt? Learning to live with wildlife is part of the process.

Comment: There are so many unknowns in what it means to have year round habitat. How long will they stay out of the park? Breed inside park and that instinct will stay. Come out in spring cause it's green then go back into the park. Doesn't think we will have large numbers outside the park in August. We move forward and it's an experiment. Don't think we need to start with hard and fast limits. No idea what will actually happen. Will have to be an experiment. Need to see what happens and take it one step at a time.

Comment: Cost to FWP. My opinion is you've got plenty to do right now. Probably more than you can accomplish. I see this bison business being taken on to the detriment of other species. There is an end to the amount of money the department can spend and legislature will see to that. So would be good idea to display in environmental assessment (EA) the cost FWP has anticipated.

Comment: Majority of IBMP is funded by federal funds. Not really a burden on state dollars. Could be more revenue if we started hunting them. Plus tourism dollars. Like to see Madison Valley be the Serengeti of Montana. That's why I live here. Most unique treasure - bison don't

exist anywhere else. What do we want to be remembered for in the state? This isn't just our treasure, it is the world's treasure.

Comment: Really interested in idea of what happens if whatever boundaries are drawn - what happens to bison that leave those boundaries? Don't like governor's term "Drop Dead Zone." Want that to be really clear in proposal and how will this be managed if bison move beyond those boundaries, which they inevitably will. Should be regular assessments of boundaries if working or not working. Shouldn't have to go through long drawn out process if need to redraw boundary. Make it easier to have more habitat, not harder.

Think that this proposal needs to be considered along with Forest Service (FS) - livestock grazing. Right now we have decisions whether livestock will be grazed on public lands. Those decisions will impact this decision. Disheartens me that FS is not a more active voice in this process. Might draw a line in the wrong place. Important state has those conversations with the Forest Service.

Comment: Private landowner - has business where we rent horses, needs all his acreage to manage his horse business. Free buffalo on private ground could cause more expenses, if they eat my grass, and when you're dealing with small margins in business, I don't want to have to deal with it. Damage to fences is an additional concern. I just repaired fences this spring when a buffalo went through, I don't like to do it. The state should buy hay and repair fences - if so, then great. If not, private land should be out of it.

Comment: Clarification and concerns on effects to public safety as regards to traffic.

Comment: The bison are a wild animal - no one has responsibility or ownership over them. This makes it hard to decide who should compensate for private land issues. I believe bears, deer, moose, elk all carry threats similar to bison, and being close to Yellowstone, this will always be a concern. My tax money should go to putting in better fences for private lands and safer highways. Public and USFS lands should be available to all wildlife. Private landowners should take such actions necessary to make them feel secure.

Comment: I think managing wild bison from YNP on a larger landscape that includes a lot of public land would benefit all interests. At the same time, there are legitimate concerns about private lands, and there are ways to mitigate those concerns.

Comment: I am excited about the proposal in general. I believe the adaptive changes should be taken on by the humans involved: we need to be adapting to the native species in this area returning to their native habitat. I want to remind that bison used to roam the entire continent - there are thousands of people with an interest in bison thriving, in particular Native American tribes that used to depend on them. Buffalo Field Campaign (BFC) and agencies have worked to address public safety issues, including traffic control and fencing.

Comment: My concern is that there is no real management plan in place, no "end game". The population keeps growing, and there are no natural predators. If bison go into neighborhoods, I

have concerns about public safety and our children. I do not think people who live in the area understand wildlife clearly enough to stay safe. I want to see a game plan. It is great that we have more, but should be specific to an area. Government manages other animals, you remove them from public areas, but you are not managing bison. Then they will be all over the place and drastic measures are finally taken because they weren't managed before - the population was allowed to continue to grow into private properties.

Comment: Fencing is a big issue. We run calf/cow pairs for natural grasslands and weed control. I don't know how I can manage bison within my cattle herd: what are my ground rules? We have a little window for grazing and small margins. We have fenced off the creek and the lake so cattle get water from a trough. This allows native plants to come back, erosion control, but this came at a cost. If bison numbers increase, how will this change what I am trying to do? Bison will push through fence and go up Red Canyon, this causes natural erosion and damage. We are trying to do things that are responsible, this is a conflict. Do I have the right to haze? Where can I push them? We are in a tight spot surrounded by the highway, lake, and mostly private property. What can help me? If a bison gores my cattle, do I have the right to shoot the bison?
Biggest point - what can I do when bison are on my land?
Question: as bison increase and have presence on shorelines, will they increase the blue-green algae that cattle were accused of doing? Isn't that why cattle were removed from Horse Butte in the first place?

Comment: Private property - I see destruction every spring. Where can I push these bison? I WILL push them off my property. I pay a huge liability to operate on the USFS. What happens when bison run loose and I have people out there? What happens if that bison hurts a person or a horse? Who pays? Where is the public safety and safety on private land? The liability issue is big. If they let this pass, and someone gets hurt on private land, the private landowner will end up culpable and that is not right.

Comment: My concern is they are lumping all options in one area. I would like to see sub-areas that would work well, and other areas that would be more challenging or not work. I would also like to see specific mitigations for different types of harm for private or public property, including avoidance (e.g., exclusion) as a mitigation measure.

Comment: I think it is important to remember it is only the last few hundred years people HAVEN'T been living closely with bison. YNP is a campground and people are always in proximity with bison going through campgrounds - that is why people go there. I spend a lot of time near bison and other wild animals - how to act is a respect and understanding thing. Part of the management plan should be educating people how to act around wild animals. It is not hard to stay safe. Also - it is a huge responsibility to understand it is your responsibility not the government. The government does not own wild animals. The Park wants 3,000 bison - this is not sustainable. If we want bison, they have to be able to access habitat. YNP in winter is not habitat. Bison are migratory they are going to get to winter range and calving grounds and then will migrate back to summer range. This doesn't exclude ranching - we can coexist. I would like to see a sustainable, huntable herd.

Comment: In the EA, I think it is important to explain in detail all of the benefits that will come with managing bison on a larger landscape outside the Park (i.e., hunting, economic, ecological, cultural, management advantages, etc.)

Comment: I would urge the government agencies involved to consider what level of responsibilities they have to the private landowners. Consider conservation easements as a part of this proposal. I believe bison are excellent for habitat and ecosystem and for weed control. They have less impact on erosion than cattle. I think education on public safety is a huge issue. I think it is possible to be safe. I think they will be great for the economy if they can become a viable population.

Comment: Education is important, but people come through quickly. How to educate? If I have a guest at my campground get gored, is it my responsibility? This is a real issue, and I don't feel like I have any tools.

We've talked about the right number of bison - but all we do is give them more land. There is no end game. What is the optimal number of animals, and how do you keep them there? The number on the north shore is different than Horse Butte and the South Fork. They are finite, confined pieces. There is a highway corridor with private land on both sides. You can't hunt the north shore of Hebgen because there are too many properties. Give me answers: what is the optimal # of bison and how are you going to maintain it there? Can the Park hunt? Do I have rights like a rancher with wolves? This bison isn't being treated like a mountain lion or a bear, but it is being treated like a deer. Bison should be treated more like a dangerous animal. I need tools to deal with this dangerous animal. I like them, they are part of the landscape, but I need tools. No one is giving numbers.

Comment: Bison are not going to be going up Red Canyon and up to Cabin Creek. Bison are going to take the path of least resistance, and that is going to be private land. Private landowners will be taking the burden of responsibility. Bison do not eat at the high meadows of YNP - path of least resistance. The question I have: why don't we have bison in Helena or Great Falls? They were historic habitat too! We don't because they are private lands - so why put them with us here in West?
I believe that someone at a higher political level has already made this decision and this whole meeting and process was a sham.
I am concerned they will keep moving this line as the population expands.

Comment: I want specifics on how buffalo exclusion structures around private property - what will they be? Please specify how you will keep buffalo out of Kirkwood Shores.

Gardiner Scoping Meeting – August 21, 2012

Comment: The state of Montana will have to work with U.S Forest Service (USFS) to introduce fire in a manner that will restore natural migration of buffalo. A lot of the habitat is densely forested and migration corridors into Taylor Fork, for example, are impenetrable. People who buy property in Montana should be cognizant of the wildlife therein and the habitat the species need to persist. (See Montana versus Rathbone, 1940). The public roads are constructed in a manner that threatens the wildlife crossing them. Safe passages need to be considered that improve safety for wildlife and people. Montana has a public trust duty to perpetuate all the indigenous wildlife species in the state for future generations to enjoy. Haze back dates, zone management boundaries prevent the viability of bison in Montana. The livestock lobby put Brucella abortus on the bioterrorism agent list, which prevents scientists from developing an effective cattle vaccine. Year round habitat should support the bison populations needs: wintering range, spring calving habitat, summer range, migration corridors. Bison are indigenous to Montana, and have persisted in the Yellowstone region from 10,000-12,000 years. Montana's decision to insure that the population remains wild and free roaming for an equivalent period of time (Dr. Mary Meagher).

Comment: Will the environmental assessment give statistics on whether year round bison presence will increase interactions with wolves and other predators. What might this mean for predators in the area and impacts on people? Curious if environmental assessment (EA) will give statistics about brucellosis in elk (prevalence rates). I support having bison year-round in Horse Butte. Statistically, how many bison can be expected at Horse Butte?

Comment: Resident of Grayling Creek. Concerned about population growth of bison, and history of that (too many bison compared to historically). This is an effort to expand Yellowstone Park. Concerned about private property being included in this. How do residents deal with buffalo when they have horses? Acreage number doesn't relate to where the bison will be - bison will be in the valleys, in the areas where people homesteaded. Bison wipe out young trees on private property. Concerned whether more bison and calving will attract wolves and grizzlies into where people live. Concerned about human safety. Concerned about highway collisions with bison. Concerned about bison transporting noxious weeds back into Yellowstone Park Concerned about this process and that there is not opportunity to speak at this meeting and whether these comments will carry weight. How will it affect other animals if we have to build a bison proof fence. And who is going to pay for fencing. At what point will the population numbers be addressed. At what point will the expansion stop. What is the carrying capacity of this area? Mary Meagher had a description of bison subspecies, one native mountain bison which was in the park in 1909, the other plains bison were brought in (introduction). Now we are propagating non-native plains bison.

Comment: I live in Horse Butte. We used to have a few bison and always knew they would be off property by May 15. This year still had groups of 12 in my yard. I have grandchildren who were trapped in bunkhouse and couldn't get out. The bison head butted swing set, knocked over bird bath, flower pots, took out bottom steps of deck, took out three mature trees, and a jack fence doesn't stop them. Also back later, on July 15, still have same group. They calve in

meadow so now all the calves come back. Concerned about bear, we had a grizzly bear next door that took out garage door twice. I do not want to see bison at Horse Butte year round. They are dangerous to children, to grandparents, pets, and I would like the border of Yellowstone to stay where it is, do not move it to Horse Butte. There is a wildlife warning when you go into the park. Who is going to give a wildlife warning when you go into Horse Butte?

Comment: Resident of Gallatin Gateway. The bison carry brucellosis, this can cause ungulate fever in humans, which can cause meningitis and other deadly diseases to humans, and also transmit it to other animals who can carry it, like elk and deer and moose. From the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website, brucellosis is listed as bioterrorism agent, class B. I would like some analysis in this EA of the dangers of the expansion of a bioterrorism agent into the state of Montana and a cost analysis of if we were to have an outbreak in Montana. A cost analysis on the highway impacts, damage comparison with and without bison, human survival of impact with bison as compared to other wildlife impacts, such as elk and deer. We have had some gorings in YNP from bison, park gives info on how dangerous bison are, can we do some sort of analysis on casualties from bison if they are allowed to roam outside YNP. Outside the park there is wetland between Duck Creek, can we do some analysis on bison affect on wetlands? Cost analysis on property damage, private property such as buildings, homes, autos, trees, vegetation etc? I would like to know who is going to pay for damage, is it the state, feds? When they are out of the park is this going to be solely the state, or will this go to private landowners/homeowners? Cost of fencing for private property owners who do not want bison on their property. FWP is supported by hunting fees, tags, licenses. What will be the affect to hunting in Montana if landowners close their land to hunters because of opposition to FWP bison policy?

Comment: I do not see any proposed allowable bison numbers in scoping notice. I am pro-bison on public land. I also think concerned citizens should be informed how many bison will be allowed in these areas being considered. This should be included in the EA.

Comment: I'm very glad you are considering expanding bison habitat. I hope some of these problems can be worked out with private landowners. I would like the EA to include information on how humans can contract ungulate fever other than bison. I've lived in Florida for a long time. We live with alligators that are everywhere, and we've worked it out. So I'm hoping that in Montana people and bison can work it out too. Public education helps a lot, as does compensation.

Comment: This action should not even be considered as it violates the MT constitution and MT code. Whether or not you agree or disagree with bison in the area we should be very concerned that these agencies are willfully going to violate and impact private property rights. By allowing this transgression it sets a precedent. What rights are you willing to give up for whatever the government wants next time?
The allowance of bison bulls staying on the landscape in question puts the most contrary individuals out among the public. Is this reasoning because the agencies are incapable of moving them back to the park? And further, if bison bulls are not a disease problem them why do we

have to test the bulls in our cattle herds to satisfy the rules. There seems to be a discrepancy in the rules for convenience.
The argument that there is no known transmission of disease between species is bunk, there is still a risk according to APHIS and the CDC and we livestock owners have to follow these rules. The state should be held to this same standard.
This action would and does absolve the Park Service from responsibility to control bison numbers. We are setting ourselves up for another uncontrollable situation in that drought has impacted the grazing land radically both in and out of the Park and it won't take much of a winter to force the bison out in large numbers.
Thank you

Comment: Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA): This action tonight violates MEPA. You're scoping document is in violation of MEPA, the purpose and need are not stated in the document. Legal issues down the road. If there is a need for this it needs to be stated.
Bison in Yellowstone are known carries of brucellosis. Brucellosis is listed on the CDC as a bioterrorism agent, class B. Humans can contract brucellosis and get undulant fever and can be fatal. Long term consequences include meningitis. I request the FWP EA include an analysis of the affect of brucellosis as a bioterrorism agent and its affect on human populations.
I'd like an analysis included on the transport of noxious weeds by bison because of their characteristics, their heavy coat, and hide.
I'd like an analysis of highway safety issues such as increased damage or fatalities from bison and their size in comparison to other highway animal impacts (elk, deer, moose, etc.)
This year we had two bison goring incidents in YNP, I'd like to have an analysis as to the increased risk as to public safety from bison goring or human injury because of increased exposure to population.
I'd like to include in the EA an analysis of bison affect on wetlands and riparian areas. This should include displaced bird and animal nesting areas.
I'd like the EA to include all past reports of property damage including buildings, homes, structures, fences, autos, personal property.
I would like the EA to include all evidence submitted in both ongoing FWP lawsuits (i.e. SW Stockgrowers/Farm Bureau vs. FWP, & Citizens for Balanced Use vs. FWP). This evidence is an important information source that would strengthen the analysis of issues.
I am opposed to further efforts of expanding bison range outside YNP as the bison issue is currently a federal issue and by expanding range, bison will become a burden on the private property owners and the tax payers of MT.
I'd like the EA to include an analysis as to the affect of private property owners posting their land and prohibiting public access for recreation and hunting. FWP is funded through wildlife game licenses and tags. If private property is put off-limits to hunting then please address the following points.
1.) Where will FWP receive its funding?
2.) How will FWP manage wildlife populations in MT?
3.) What will the relationship between private property owners and FWP become?

How will FWP contain bison within the new proposed tolerance zone and at what cost? Please include in the EA a cost analysis of both management and containment.

Comment: This meeting shouldn't be held tonight under the 5th amendment, the court deal isn't finished. The money should go to game management. Making a plan and we don't have any range for it. Unkind to the animals to run them around and put them in a spot where there is no food. No one knows how many bison can go there, how can we have a plan, what problem are we solving? Where is the evidence that the bison were ever there. We need to manage the forage, and range first. All it is is cactus and cheat grass. The range is already overgrazed. There are a lot of people affected by this. It's not going to happen.

Comment: I support the proposed action. I see bison as valued native wildlife. I would like more examination as to why we treat bison differently. Bison is the only big game animal that is not currently on the landscape. Mostly speaking in terms of the Gardiner basin. I would like more info on Brucellosis; transmission from bulls (bison). Bison on the landscape in MT enhance this place, maybe a study on tourism & bison. I'd like to see discussion on the economic value of wildlife tourism. I'm convinced that people are drawn here by the wildlife. I feel the wildlife enhances my property. There is a lot made about the issue of public safety, but we live with a lot of other dangerous wildlife: bears, snakes, deer, elk (on the road). A skunk would be a problem. Some examination of how we would learn to live with bison.

Comment: I support the proposed bison habitat expansion, and I believe it is an important 1st step towards managing bison as a valued native wildlife species in the state of MT. This proposal is in response to new scientific understanding of how brucellosis persists on the landscape, the significant relaxation of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) brucellosis regulations and is supported by the consensus Bison Citizens Working Group recommendations. Wild bison are a part of the public trust and belong in the state of MT. Not only are wild bison an asset to the State, but people travel from around the world to have the opportunity to see this North American icon. Some have argued that allowing bison to utilize the vast public landscapes in the state of MT is a violation of private property rights, but the reality is that many private property owners in the area think it is their right to have public trust wildlife on their land. Not allowing bison to utilize public lands in MT is a violation of the public trust. Thank you for the step in the right direction.

Comment: Gardiner Basin resident. I have been following this issue since the get go and I have a few concerns that I do want to share. First off, I am troubled by the lack of concern for private property rights throughout this procedure. I think the agencies involved overstepped their bounds when they laid claim to 20,000 acres of private land. I understand that they made arrangements with some of the landowners, such as Church Universal and Triumphant but for most of us we were not included in the process. I think we are basically looking at a violation of the 5th Amendment, which says the government does not have a right to take private property for use without just compensation. The agencies involved have enclosed bison expansion on many of us who live here who do not agree with their agenda. I have a problem with that.
My second point is the range that they are proposing is 75,000 acres of bison habitat. Most of this is unusable ground, 20,000 acres of private land and much of this land is hillside which bison do not utilize. Instead of 75,000 acres I would be surprised if we are looking at a tenth of that as possibly adequate bison range. Much of the low area which is the area that bison prefer

involves developed property. In the spring time bison that are found east of the river are generally on the Hwy 89 right of way or on the road itself. This is not proper habitat. There is only about 100 acres of land on the easement yet half of the bison find themselves there. By March there is no feed left in the lower elevation. This is an unrealistic expectation of range that would be available to bison.
My third point is having bison in developed areas along the highway pose a danger to both residents and visitors in the area. The Agency's proposal to extend the range to year-round compounds the problem. The bison are a safety threat to the area currently in Yellowstone Park bison clog roads routinely and vehicle accidents happen almost daily this time of year. The bison take up residence in the Gardiner area, we should have similar expectations of accidents and also congestion. I think with the bison in the area those of us who live here are not granted the same enjoyment of our private property and a peaceable place to live as are residents of Park County and Montana.
Finally, bison haven't wandered freely in Montana since the 1800's. The bison that were in Yellowstone National Park were actively managed till the 1960's, more as cattle than as wildlife. I think the expansion proposal is a political ploy by Governor Schweitzer which impacts the residents of our county and it's main goal is to allow him to go down in history as the Governor who introduced bison to Montana. It is a political maneuver that I don't agree with.

These comments are in regards to the questions posed in the Scoping Notice that we were handed at this meeting. Question 1) How would the year-round presence of bison affect public safety. In response to Question 1) I think it would be detrimental to public safety. We would have more accidents due to the presence of bison in the area. Vehicle accidents, in particular, would increase.
Question 2) What are the effects to private landowners in the vicinity of the year-round bison habitats? I think we'd have negative effects in our ability to move around our community. I think we'd be endangering tourists coming to the area who are unaware of adaptive measures that need to be taken to neither endanger themselves nor the residents. Question 3) Would the year-round presence of bison provide for additional bison hunting opportunities? I believe that bison hunting opportunities will decrease instead of increase. I expect there to be a public outcry about the brutality of bison hunts and I expect that activity to be shut down again as it has in the past. Question 4) Would the bison move back into YNP over time without hazing activities? and Question 5) Would there be a measureable change in seasonal bison movements if there was year-round habitat available? I think we'll end up with a resident herd that stays year-round in the Gardiner area just as resident herds of elk have established themselves on the Dome Mountain Ranch and the West Creek Ranch north of Yankee Jim Canyon. Question 6) How would the year-round presence of bison affect local livestock operations? I am very concerned that the year-round presence of bison in the Gardiner area will be expanded to include Paradise Valley and other cattle producing areas. I feel that the entire cattle industry in Park County and in Montana as a whole is threatened by allowing bison outside of Yellowstone Park. Question 7) How would the year-round presence of bison affect other wildlife and habitat? In response, the presence will affect other wildlife and habitat, the feed that they graze will be unavailable to elk and deer. The fires of 1988 redistributed elk and bison to new habitat and the reintroduction of the wolves has had a similar effect. Also, the increasing numbers of bison in Yellowstone National Park have affected both Park range lands as well as range lands outside of the Park.

Question 8) What is the likelihood that bison will move beyond the proposed boundaries, what are consequences of these movements, and how will they be mitigated? IBMP appears interested in expanding the range of bison; I think they will move bison beyond the proposed boundaries of the range. I think the desire is to see bison repopulate Montana to the extent that they were here before. This is a romantic and unrealistic reality.

Comment: Gardiner Basin resident. I agree with everything that Peter has said and I want to add that in the winter time there is no access to the property that they claim that bison can habitat on the east side of the river and that as far as hunting, right now even though the FWP allows a limited number of permits, Indian tribal treaties prohibit Montana resident hunters from taking bison before the tribe has access to them. An effort to sell this plan to the public, they claim there will be hunting but there was already hunting back in the 90's that was stopped because of bad press. What's to keep that from happening again? If bison are allowed to roam year round the cattle guard at Joe Brown area (Hwy 89 mm 13.2) would be a hazard to motorcycles. About 10,000 cyclists a year go through here on their way to Yellowstone Park. I think our property rights are being sacrificed in the Gardiner Basin, if you are allowing buffalo to roam free then they should have access anywhere in the State of Montana, and that is not going to happen. I think the Governor has sacrificed property rights and ranchers' rights in favor of tourism.

Comment: I applaud this proposal to allow bison year round access to their lands on their seasonal migration routes, without hazing them. However, I'd like to see not just bulls but cows and calves allowed year round in the Gardiner Basin. Science has definitively shown that even cow bison have not and are unlikely to transmit brucellosis to cattle. To quote Dr. Thomas Roffe, Veterinarian and Chief of Wildlife health for the US Fish & Wildlife Service, "Wild bison have not transmitted brucellosis to cattle and data shows bison are a low risk vector for transmission. The data, habitat use, and proof of infections all point to elk as the number one problem of brucellosis transmission". So that means even cows with their afterbirth are at extremely low in their risk for transmission. We have two cattle ranchers in the Gardiner area, they have gone on record to say they welcome bison and can live with them. APHIS new rules mean Montana will not lose its brucellosis free status even if cattle were to be infected.
Let the bison migrate naturally. Bison have been travelling these routes, in and out of what we now call YNP for centuries. Bison biologists have seen recognizable patterns of migration out of Yellowstone and back into the Park every year.
Are there safety risks with bison? Yes, and those of us who live with bison take precautions and we manage to live safely with them just as we've managed to live safely with grizzly in their migration route, and with deer and elk during the rut and many more wildlife. Are there inconveniences in living with free roaming bison? Yes, they are a nuisance at times. You have to watch them, there are inconveniences with living with all wildlife and there are major inconveniences for every living creature who lives with human populations; I felt most in danger from distressed, swirling bison and from galloping frenzied horses when I was stuck in a line of cards on Route 89 while the DoL and National Park Service hazed 15-20 bull bison. The men were trying to make bulls cross the river at a spot where bison cannot safely cross, the bank is too steep and the bison would break their legs. The bulls were afraid. They wanted to eat where they were; they do depend on food and to cross they wanted to travel south to their usual crossing point, which they did later. The men on their horses were very brave and skilled, they

were doing their jobs. However, the management endeavor was foolish, dangerous and cruel. Impossible management decisions can be dangerous for everyone that is why I welcome this new proposal and encourage you to allow all bison into Gardiner Basin. Whether we like it or not, Gardiner does and always has relied economically on wildlife tourism. The town evolved as the northern gateway to Yellowstone Park. Bison are part of our community in Gardiner; the roads we travel were cut by bison long before first peoples and then our ancestors took them over, long before we paved them. Bison are our neighbors - wild, different sometimes similar to ourselves. I have seen a cow bellowing and sniffing her dead calf while her small herd created a roadblock to keep cars away from the grieving mother. I have seen bison revisit the bones of their dead. Let the buffalo roam as they were born to.

Comment: Seasonal Gardiner resident. First I would like to thank you guys for finally taking a step in the right direction and recognizing bison as a wildlife species in the State of Montana. I would also like to state that I would like you to recognize that there are also both sexes that all need to roam free in the State of Montana. I would like to say that bison are ecologically extinct in our country. I am concerned about private property rights also but residents don't complain when there are elk or deer in their yard. Local residents have the right to pick and choose what is wildlife. If you can't live in an area with wildlife maybe you should move elsewhere, bison are native here in this nation. I would like to see you treat bison like you treat all other wildlife in this State. We are scared of everything that doesn't live in our little boxes, then maybe we should live in our little boxes.

Comment: Gardiner Basin resident. I live in the Gardiner Basin and the Department of Livestock has been generous in helping to prevent damage to family property by providing fencing material and immediate contact information, and I appreciate the way that they've chosen to take preventative measures in bison management in this case, though I will point out that the only time that damage was done to our fencing and property was when the bison were being hazed by the DoL as opposed to being encouraged up the drainage by the Buffalo Field Campaign. Allowing only bull bison to occupy the Gardiner Basin year round should prevent any conflicts the two cattle ranchers in the area may have. Bison will continue to migrate naturally as always and as has been documented by biologists. In terms of safety, living with bison requires the same personal adjustments that it requires for my daughter and I have to live with grizzly bears in our yard, rattlesnakes in our yard, and cow elk with calves in our yard.

Comment: In favor of bison being here. Live right at arch, in our yard all the time. Some thought to compensation for property damage.

Comment: Bison that are hazed are irritated over time and become more dangerous to residents of Gardiner Basin. Believe that there needs to be an analysis done of this. Impact of hazing on behavior of bison. In favor of bison being out there but not bison being hazed. They are different animals.

Comment: Believe bison should be able to be in Gardiner basin and roam freely throughout the state. 63% of this district is public land and bison don't get to use it. I live on Old Yellowstone Trail which is ground 0 for hazing. Have only seen bison do damage when they are being hazed.

When they are hazed they get agitated. Have had 40-50 in yard at times, have never caused any damage or prevented me from getting to my car.

Comment: I am for giving bison the right to roam. Also live on Old Yellowstone Trail. The only damage that I have seen cause is when DoL hazed bison. I have also watched others move bison with patience and it worked fine with no damages. I strongly feel that the school and the parents need to educate children on the dangers of all wildlife, not just bison. But that would go a long way to mitigate fear.

Comment: Too many bison. Get bison down to 2,000.

Comment: Agree with pro-bison comments that have been made. Bison should be able to run free. We are privileged to have bison here.

Comment: Overall pro-bison. Have seen speeding cars kill more livestock and people than any bison.

Comment: Living at the arch we have bison spill onto our property all the time. They have never done any damage. But when they are being hazed by Park over DoL dragging shuffles on pavement and honking horns, they get agitated and start bumping into vehicles and being a threat.

Comment: Over last 10 years fences have been developed that constrict bison movement to road corridors, especially on hwy 89 by Slip and Slide Ranch, where government has leased land - bison are constricted to road ditches and highways. Fences that are there to hold bison for research studies should be removed. Not only to allow space for bison but to allow movement to all other wildlife species that depend on it. Right now moving east to west is near impossible. It goes completely outside any kind of wildlife principles to do that. Puts wildlife on hwy. Son has hit a bison and destroyed truck. Repeatedly watch people hit wildlife on hwy due to fences on land where they shouldn't be. Government paying for fences and they should be removed. This analysis should include the effect of the fences from Corwin Springs all the way down Yankee Jim Canyon.

Comment: Feel like bison should be able to roam freely in area. Efforts should be made to educate people about how to behave around bison. As others have said, when bison are hazed, pushed, yelled at, have horses pushing them, that's when they cause damage. To think bison are dangerous on their own, in my experience is not the truth. And I feel like all the money spent on hazing could be much better put to use to spend on livestock community and stock growers. Right now as it stands, people that are pro bison are angry to see them pushed and blamed for hurting things. People that don't want bison around - bison are still around but they are not getting help (i.e. vet bills, better fencing). Money is being spent in a way where neither side is benefiting

Comment: These particular bison represent the last continuously wild, purebred free roaming bison in the lower 48. It was here is Yellowstone that they were saved from extinction. As such, they represent the people of the U.S. and how we treat them reflects on who we are as a nation.

Comment: Agrees especially with Todd about fences. Bringing animals right down to roadway which is a hazard to all of us and the animals.

Comment: Favor of bison all through the Gardiner Basin but need to improve the movement corridors for these animals and eliminate the hazing. Open up movement corridor (pathway) to the Dome Mountain winter range where there is a lot of public land.

Comment: For the tourists that come here and want to see animals, it's supposed to be a natural environment. Families come through Gardiner and see a bison walking down the street. Where else can they get an experience like that? Also the money they bring into the community.

Comment: Tourism dollars way out weigh the risk of brucellosis. Bull bison pose no risk of brucellosis transmission and should be allowed to roam as far as they can north of the park. They should never be hazed, which they are. And they should never be killed, because right now they are. If bulls get down to Tom Miner, they get shot, when all they are trying to do is migrate. They even get hazed off private land where people don't mind them being there. Wish they would just leave them alone because it's not doing anyone any good to move them off the hill and back into the park. When it comes to disease, a bison isn't a bison.

Comment: As a way of education for IBMP should be working with MT Hwy dept. Think of zones that are entrances and exits to national parks. Going 35-40 mph then all of a sudden to 70-mph. Some type of zones of speed control for all national parks to allow people who have been visiting a park where speed is regulated. It saves wildlife and people.

Comment: Hazing process is very ineffective and very costly and very disruptive where I live on Old Yellowstone Trail. There can be multiple agencies with Law enforcement, wranglers and horse trailers moving bison on Old Yellowstone Trail. Sometimes where you can't pass down the road. So it's very disruptive and very dusty to an area that is normally very quiet. So ineffective that the next morning the bison are back around.

Comment: In the end I am completely pro bison. I would like to see them taken out of the bailiwick of DoL and managed by FWP. Would like to see them treated as a wild animal allowed to roam as elk are allowed to roam and hunted as wild animals.

Comment: As a way to call the bison herd, Montana is a rich heritage in hunting. Hunting goes all the way back…please consider greatly expanding public hunting for bison to focus on the cows. There could be hundreds of permit sold where now they are not as a revenue source. As a part of this plan, please consider greatly expanded opportunities for fair chase hunting for bison. People that live in the Gardiner Basin would greatly appreciate being able to harvest at least one bison in their lifetime. Department would gain a lot of good will if they recognized the

contribution of the local landowners to supporting the bison herd. Landowners would appreciate being able to hunt and harvest at least one bison.

We love seeing these bison out here.

Comment: I am completely pro bison and would like to see bison managed by FWP and be allowed to use public land that is around us. All the other agencies should stick to their agendas and let FWP manage wildlife.

It should be considered that the Gardiner Basin is not a ranching community and that many people that live here are pro bison and love the park and that's why they're here. So - do consider residents of the Gardiner basin more than people who are not residents of the Gardiner basin. A person from (Big Timber or White Sulphur) shouldn't have as big a say in what happens in the Gardiner Basin.

Comment: I am here as a bison advocate-living here since 99 in Gardner I feel that the buffalo do wander out of the park when they need to need to be given a little room outside of the Park to find a little grass to eat which is essentially at there greatest time of need (winter time) especially when the Park has a large amount of snow. Buffalo are very similar to elk, bear every other animal that comes and goes. I would like to see not the detriment to ranchers and farmers but I would like to see more tolerance and co-existence especially in the winter time. I would like to see not limited tolerance but tolerance period.

Was the court hearing last week in Livingston about 1 set of tolerance and is tonight about a different type of tolerance? Bulls vs. mixed groups?

Comment: The proposal to allow year round access for bull bison would have to follow all of the criteria set forth in SB212- containment, monitoring for disease (can still have it)- funding sources etc. And I would like o see a plan for what they think they are going to do when the bull bison don't stay and they come farther. I think there should be some sort of range study that looks at the availability of forage in the area they are allowing bull bison as well as the topography.

For livestock producers the fact that we are regulated heavily and have severe consequences for brucellosis infections creates a great deal of stress and concern. There are marketability issues- as long as there is a double standard and we suffer the consequences of diseased wildlife it is hard to find tolerance.

Comment: 1. Wide spread perception that bison come out the park solely as a response to severe winter. While that is important I would like to see the EA recognize that many of these bison are coming out in early spring (after first green forage which is very important nutritionally for late gestation parturition and early lactation.

2. I would like to see the state recognize and consider its role in cooperation with the park service in achieving the park service goal of leaving the bison (genome) unimpaired for future generations. FWP should analyze how it might able to cooperate in achieving that national goal.

Comment: I hope that the EA covers in detail how the bulls will be separated and how the cows and calves will be remanded to the Park (this is a concern)- I would rather see them all be able to use the expanded habitat.

Comment: IS there any research on how leaving everything as it is affecting local businesses in the future? Market research-

I can understand the ranchers a bit because we had mad cow disease so I understand the fear that there might be something there that can affect my business, but I think that if you live here you already have bison proof fences. Has a bison passed the disease to cows in the wild? The money issue has not been researched. It is sad if in the future people will not come-this is the last bit of wilderness that we have-this is why people come here in 100 years- there has to be a way with that much money to keep bison and reimburse farmers--Fencing options might be there. Maybe we can find more tolerance on both sides because the bison do not have a chance to go somewhere else. Bison are wild and that is what we love about them and if they only go into here they lose what makes them special if we over manage them. We have 5 wisset in Hamburg and they look like cows. - while on the other hand I've come here for 8 years (spend $70,000) to come here and some of my friends do not come because they hear about these issues. I can't believe there is not a way to find a solution.

Comment: How does the state of MT deal with cows that are infected with brucellosis?

With more tolerance and less funds spent on hazing etc- if there are more fund available--but it goes beyond financial burden for ranchers. Has any money been in the past or could money be given to ranchers to reimburse them for all there expenses if a brucellosis case occurs- though there is also the stigma. Would financial reimbursement make up for a lot of the reason that they would not want to have bison roam out of the park (from a rancher's perspective).

Comment: They put so much money into bison activities why not use it to reimburse the ranchers.--All the bison money is better spent on helping the ranchers. The bison should have more tolerance-just let them go where they want but if something happens we should reimburse those that are impacted.
Are there studies on the financial gains and losses from the different management?

Comment: One of the reasons why people feel so strongly about YNP bison is their genetics and I would respond that whole financial reimbursement of producers sounds like a fix it --we have just as much invested in our herd genetics- we pick for specific traits so a brucellosis infection in our herd would greatly affect our genetics.

One of the reasons why I think people love MT so much is the open spaces and in my opinion agriculture contributes a great deal to those open spaces. If we can't find a way for us to all co-

exist ag will be gone and if it is gone that open space changes. I don't know what it changes to, but being in the Paradise valley for 30 years I have seen a lot of changes.

Comment: The open spaces comment in the Paradise valley is a definite concern. Open space can have 1 kind of wildlife and can have another kind of wildlife-maintaining open spaces with ranching does not solve all of our needs.

In all of North America this is the only herd that has a chance to be a wild bison herd south of central Canada in terms of facing natural selection, large enough to maintain genetic diversity.

The issue of eradication of Brucella continues to come up (I believe it is impossible) but if eradication is to come up it should be with a plan and a realistic evaluation of the cost and logistics of trying to eliminate Brucella from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). I do not want us mentioning it without realistically evaluating the possibility for that.

Comment: Questions
If a cow (domestic) gets infected with brucellosis is there a way to tell the source of that brucellosis?
Use of NF for bison habitat- I feel strongly as a taxpayer that those lands should be used for bison.
Where I come from we have a lot of Forest Service (FS) that has been withdrawn from Timber to save an endangered woodpecker so I know that the FS can choose to do that.

I have been wanting to come to MT for a number of years to see the pure blood bison and I have not because of the horror stories of the way the bison has been treated-this proposal changed my opinion and is why I am here spending my money in Montana.

Comment: One thing I come here for is for wildness and to see the buff but I also come here for the people. They are always friendly they make things happen they are not narrow minded- If you can do something you can probably do it first here. Why not dream bigger- have big herd and save the genetics- use the money to help the ranchers. The alternative is that you don't this and less people come and there is less tax money and it will make MT not as appealing for people to come. The big Madison Valley park like the Serengeti- I do not come to MT to visit a farm. I am not against them but first you have to keep your wilderness wild. The helicopters take away from that.

Comment: I firmly believe that slaughter of buffalo should not be an option. Slaughter of anything is not what--we humans are better than that- I don't like it or understand it.

This is the last continuously wild genetically pure herd--so slaughter should not come into any policy makers thinking.

I am not a hunter personally, but that to me is a more dignified killing of buffalo then carting it off to wherever and slaughtering them.

Comment: You only have about 3,000 left and what happens if they get sick and die.
How many cows have been affected in the last 100 years by a wild buffalo and how much was spent by the DoL to manage them- I bet it is a lot. There must be enough money.

Comment: We need to get the Forest Service to work with DoL and FWO to work on the grazing allotments on this habitat. This should not just be State of Mt agency issues--you need to bring in the people who are stewards of the land (Forest Service).

Comment: It appears to me increasing the area available to bison is going further task the limited resources of the Interagency Bison Management Plan partners. Any further tolerance for bison outside the park must not increase the risk of transmission of brucellosis from bison to cattle. A lot of people argue that there has never been a transmission from bison to cattle in the wild however scientific studies have shown it's possible. And elk transmission must be taken into account if bison are allowed to occupy a larger area how will that impact transmission between bison and elk and elk to cattle. How will other state vets view the expansion of bison habitat with regards to brucellosis exposure and the shipment of cattle out this area into there states? This proposal should not result in unrestrained growth in the bison population to the point where we have to look for even more habitat even under this proposal we have to manage bison to not exceed the available habitat. I don't think the real issue is year around habitat the focus should be on winter habitat. It should be noted that right of land owners play an important role in providing habitat for wildlife species and so that role should not ever become a burden. When working on this proposal consideration between landowner and sportsman should be made.

Comment: Support the full expansion of habitat both in West and Gardiner. Bison are native wildlife and should be managed. Its residents' personal responsibility to live with wildlife on the landscape not the tax payers responsibility. Conservation groups and the government do have a role in this process. I am encouraged by the increased opportunity to hunt bison. The proposal is perfectly consistent with FS obligations to maintain wildlife on national forest.

Comment: Assess range land and crop land impacts with year around occupancy.

Comment: As the last grazing permit holder in the proposed area has there been a discussion regarding the interaction bison and cattle Cutler/Sphinx

Comment: Glad we're having this discussion and interested in what the expanded opportunities for things such as hunting and is this a shift in resources by the state agencies. Would like to look at the analysis how this change or any alternatives may be analyzed to meet the original goals of the IBMP particularly in light of the Aphis rule change about Brucellosis infected cattle herds. Would like to see analysis of what role elk play in the impact analysis (i.e. the risk from brucellosis exposed elk and whether current policy is unnecessarily placing more of the burden on the bison when elk are more the concern). Would like clarification and review how this change might influence bison population and explain the basis for population targets in the current IBMP addressing the criteria the bison citizen group raised. Refer to the Citizens Working Group and the exchange that went on between the citizen group and the IBMP partners.

Comment: In support of the proposal there are some difficult issues that can be addressed by conservation groups such as fencing. Were in the tourism industry and most guest like bison and wonder why Montana people do not like bison. And the bison are part of the reason people come to their business and want them managed for more free roaming. Would also like to see expanded opportunity for hunting in the state. Would like the wildlife tourism as official stake holder.

Comment: I'd like to thank FWP for having this scoping meeting because it's very presence signifies increased tolerance for bison. In Gardiner, we live on the doorstep of the nation's first national park. The presence of wildlife is one of the main things that make this such a desirable place to live. Gardiner was likely always winter range for bison and is a natural place for them to go during later winter and spring. As a resident and land owner in Gardiner, I support the year round presence of not just bull bison as proposed, but also cows and calves. As a tourism owner, we would like to be included more as a stakeholder for wildlife management.

Comment: Do these proposals abide by MCA title 87-1-216? Those are the legal authority issued to the FWP as outlined by the legislature of Montana. It is my opinion that free ranging bison as proposed without restrictions as proposed violates the MT constitution article II section 3, article II section 10, article sec. 29, and the 5th amendment of United State's constitution. Also believe the primary function of government is to protect public safety and their private property and these are the only imminent issues followed by bison disease and population control once these are addressed other bison issues can be evaluated. It's also my opinion that the socialist and the capitalist involved in this proposal are ganging up on the individual small property owners to remove their private property and take away their freedom and their dignity. The proposal cultivates an atmosphere of anti culture and anti culture for safety within local establishments and government offices which is mandates for compliance by the MT Safety Act of 1993. For example the Gardiner football field is an area that is neglected by the school board forcing our students to unsafely play school activities in an unsafe environment within the filth generated by the bison. I believe the roads and civic structure of Park County were intended for the use interstate commerce and trade in the area and not for bison management. I stand against the concept of accepting bison crushed by cars as prudent bison management. I believe that exposing bison which are part of our national heritage to the hazards of the free ranging concepts is not worth a tourist dollar or government land reform, there has to be a better way.

Comment: I think we need to make a way for animals to live with us. I am in favor of bison being able to roam on their old grounds. I would be happy for them to be on my ground.

Comment: Part of living in MT is living with wildlife. If we can't carve out space for some bison, we are less Montana. My wife and I have 5 acres outside of town, having bison out there has added to the enjoyment of our property. We have other wildlife too.

Comment: Let them roam. Bison need to roam, especially in the Gardiner basin in winter. I don't think they'd stay in summer, but they need to have someplace outside the Park to go in winter. I have 5 acres in the area, and I have had bison on there in 2010-2011, so I have had

bison on my land with minimal damage. I loved having them there, and want them again. They belong on the land outside the Park.

Comment: We are the visitors - it is the bison that are home here. I have 3 properties here, and greet them every late winter and spring. They are welcome on my property and I want to preserve our landowner right to have them there. My property neighbors Stephen's Creek (YNP) and I am adamant about preserving their right to winter graze.

Comment: Has an angus ranch in north-central Montana, so I make my living by growing grass and feeding it to cows. My cash crop is grass and hay. Elk come down and eat the hay and grass in large amounts, as well as mule deer and white-tailed deer. Wildlife shouldn't be eliminated, but we should have a right to preserve and protect our property. This is a viable business, and losses can be substantial. As a producer, it is a burden to have too many wildlife - some are OK, but too many are a problem. They have ruined 30 tons of hay! I don't have public land leases (except one MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation section). Wildlife should be preserved, and we do enjoy them, but there is a place for them. My neighbor had bison and sometimes they'd get out and we'd round them up - that is OK. In YNP, instead of expanding the herd, I think from a livestock point of view - cattle herds with disease get quarantined or destroyed. There have been 4 other herds of bison where brucellosis has been eliminated (Custer, Wind Cave, Elk Island, Wichita) after 8-21 years. If we clear up brucellosis issue, people would be more receptive for bison to spread out. It is poor management to allow diseased animals to spread and move.

Comment: Thank FWP and DoL for starting this process. Step in the right direction for bison and livestock industry. Now, I challenge you to rethink the current zoning (1, 2, 3) and move bison in the same direction as all other wildlife (bears, elk, moose, etc). I think the science clearly shows that once a bison has calved, they have no risk of brucellosis transmission. If elk outside of the risk period don't get hazed, then why do we haze back bison outside of the risk period? With the zoning, I appreciate that you're cooperating with landowners, but they shouldn't be "drop dead" zones if the bison are still in a tolerable area (public land or supportive private land). I would strongly encourage if the government has to intervene and capture bison, I would hope you would transplant these into the upper Gallatin either within the Park or in the Gallatin in Montana (Gallatin WMA). Do this as early as this winter: don't slaughter, use as reintroduction stock.

Comment: I am a business owner; don't have the right to say what we should allow. Bison have been a wonderful attraction for people, and we should let them roam, but I recognize private landowners may have different thoughts.

Comment: Concern we have is the aggressiveness of bull bison versus typical herd on a year-round basis. Aggressiveness may come out when they are doing other things besides foraging. As more people want bison-excluding fences, there may be more bison on the public highway, which may lead to bison-vehicle interaction. I think the winter of 2011 showed that FWP and DoL need to assign 2 full-time people to the Gardiner area to react to bison issues. People of Park County don't need to fund the Sheriff's office to do FWP or DoL's job.

What is the plan for separating the females off? Is it a natural separation?
We have concerns about public health and safety.
The drift fence at the head of Slip and Slide Creek - we need it.

Comment: I feel the bison have been here thousands of years, and we have intruded into their space. Seems that we should find a way to live with them without intruding into their survival. This is a magical place and bison are part of the gift of the environment. We should honor their presence, not punish them for it, by holding up their dignity and our own as well. I never understand why elk are allowed to be free-roaming but bison are penalized constantly.

Comment: Retired researcher Mary Meagher says bison are difficult neighbors. Road kill is a real concern for wildlife and people, especially in movement corridors. Dialing the nighttime speed limit down would be helpful with or without bison, but even truer with bison. We take measures for bears to keep them and ourselves safe, so there are measures we can take to keep us and bison safe too. It is worth looking at those.

Comment: Brucellosis - if we're worried about it – stop targeting the bison and target the animals who infected the Park county herds before: the elk. We either need to talk about managing bison or the disease. If we're talking about the disease, we CANNOT exclude elk and the other wildlife which also carry it. As far as public health and safety go, I am more worried about running into a grizzly than a bison. I can work with bison on my property and am not afraid. If I surprise a griz, I could be eaten. It's about time MFWP was able to manage bison like they manage grizzly, elk, deer, etc. We need to stop singling out the bison as a bad, damaging animal.

Comment: You cannot get rid of a disease in animals or humans. This isn't about brucellosis, it is about grass. Tourism is the largest revenue-producing industry in the state. I house people from all over the world - specifically coming to YNP for wildlife and specifically bison. As far as fear of damage, there has been no damage to 20+ cabins on our combined property. On my land I have an RV, travel trailer, shed, satellite dishes on poles, trees, fencing, and I have had ZERO damage. We want to protect the business of the cattle producers, but there needs to be a reality check as far as the science, the danger, and the evidence backing that science. There are only a few places in this state where bison will be allowed. We are talking about wild bison. Commercial bison is another issue.

Comment: I don't live in Yellowstone, but I read that in Canada there is the Wood Buffalo. The highway up there shows lots of collisions with bison. But I know there is issue with hunters hunting bison or elk with brucellosis. They don't do enough to educate hunters about brucellosis. Average hunter may not carry gloves, and wouldn't know whether it had brucellosis. You should consider it to have the disease until proven otherwise. But then gloves go in the pocket and they get touched later when cleaned - it can be transmitted through open wounds, so you could expose someone else, especially if you have immunological problems. Jerky - you have to cook the meat. Freezing and smoking won't kill it. Unless there is good information about it - it should say how hot you need to cook the meat (150, 160 degrees, whatever). Keep the hunters safe. Up in Canada, out of 56 bison killed, 15 had brucellosis and 9 had tuberculosis. Hunters didn't take

proper precautions - especially when cutting through joints and lymph nodes, contaminating the meat. These diseases were isolated from the lesions. Hunting keeps them there, but increases probability of infection. Doctors don't check often for brucellosis - we should make sure they are aware and do.

Comment: Brucellosis - reveal in the EA the number of brucellosis cases in Montana and the USA and where they come from. I DON'T want you to do to elk what you do to bison. We don't want one more cow to get brucellosis. FWP and DoL cooperate with landowners to do that under the IBMP. Do that while managing bison as wildlife. You can't vaccinate all the skunks to protect your dog from rabies. Few cattle in the Gardiner Valley (56) - so protect livestock industry from brucellosis. Education is fine - as a hunter I accept the risk of disease. I support the Designated Surveillance Area concept - this has done a lot to bring rationality to the state if a herd in the GYE gets brucellosis. There are opportunities to work together. The cattle producers in the Gardiner Basin - we are seeing we can coexist with wildlife. On a larger landscape, this works with elk too. That's a good thing. Opportunity to live together.

Comment: Importance of education: hunter education and living with wildlife. People who buy property, who live here. MFWP does it with bears, let's do it with bison.

Comment: Since we do not have a documented bison to cattle brucellosis transmission in the wild, we need to stop making brucellosis transmission the big issue.

Comment: We sit with professional veterinarians - this is not about brucellosis. There are all kinds of disease in wildlife, and that will never be eliminated. I have a dog - I inoculate against rabies, I don't shoot skunks. Let's help Stockgrowers manage their cattle with inoculation. The responsibility has to be with the animal owner. As far as grasslands and hay fields - that is not a huge problem because bison can only be in small areas of the state, and there will be ability to address issues which come up.

Comment: Bison habitat and other wildlife. There are studies showing that moose don't get brucellosis a lot, but if they do, it usually kills them. In Canada, they are a dead-end host. If injected with brucellosis, they die. You generally don't see seropositive moose because they die. Moose have been in the Park for years, though. But populations have declined. Based on feces, looks like lower pregnancy rate, hunger and starvation. Coyotes - if they eat fetal matter they can excrete brucellosis and wolves too. You could be introducing new animals to the disease if bison are out there year-round. You can't keep other animals away from it. Should be further studies on effects on other wildlife. White-tailed deer and mule deer don't get it. Other animals eat that browse and grass - bison could displace other animals.

Public safety - I think that those concerns are right about roads and highways. Fence where you need to and slow people down. Hunters need better education.
Landowner relations and complaint procedures - everyone is looking so closely at YNP, but people are trying to do this in eastern Montana too.

Agencies liability and landowner rights - if you go talk to eastern Montana, folks with leases on the CM Russell National Wildlife Refuge, they don't want to be paid for damages, they just don't want the damage in the first place. Bison or elk would tear through our fences. With elk, no one helps me put the cows back. We don't want these issues in the first place.

Private property - not just folks with leases, it's actually self-owned land with people making payments. We don't get "cheap leases" in my area!

Bison hunting and tribal rights - I've spoken with a Blackfoot representative who owns bison. These tribes have herds. If they want to hunt bison here, that is not a problem at all. We are not obligated to have bison on private property for them to come hunt on my place.
Brucellosis - separation of wildlife and livestock has been successful, but now people seem to want to stop? Whether elk or bison spreading disease, they need to be treated. Just like Elk Island in Canada, or what you do if white-tail get tuberculosis (like Minnesota). It is possible to eliminate disease from an island. YNP is an island - you could do it here. APHIS website has this as a goal - why aren't we seeing this action happen?

Comment: I would like MFWP to take the citizen working group's recommendations into consideration for this EA.