

## Briefing Statement

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**Agency:** Yellowstone National Park  
**Issue:** Transfer of Bison to American Indian Tribes  
**Date:** April 11, 2011

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**Objective:** Use the U.S. Department of Interior (USDI) Secretary's authority (16 USC 1V § 36; Disposition of surplus elk, buffalo, bear, beaver, and predatory animals) to ship "surplus" Yellowstone bison to other authorities such as terminal pastures or suitable restoration sites to (1) support the nutrition and culture of American Indians, (2) enhance conservation of the bison genome, and (3) reduce the number of bison sent to domestic slaughter facilities.

### Need:

- Under the 2000 Interagency Bison Management Plan, approximately 3,200 Yellowstone bison have been sent to slaughter after migrating into Montana (to prevent brucellosis transmission to cattle) and zero live bison have been provided to American Indian Tribes or used to establish conservation herds.
- Sending bison to slaughter is highly controversial, but is done to manage abundance on low elevation winter ranges in Montana, remove likely infectious bison (brucellosis), and keep bison separated from cattle. Bison will continue to migrate into Montana and the area for wild bison in Montana is unlikely to change in the near future to preclude bison removals.
- Hunting bison in Montana has not been consistently effective at limiting abundance and distribution because most bison do not migrate outside the park until after hunting seasons end in mid-February.

### Feasibility:

- Several Tribes have expressed strong interest in obtaining live Yellowstone bison.
- A quarantine feasibility study during 2005-2010 demonstrated it is possible to quarantine, repeatedly test, and eventually certify some Yellowstone bison as free from brucellosis.
- Current U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations for livestock (CFR9-78 Brucellosis) allow bison exposed to, or infected with, brucellosis to be transferred to a new location and held in quarantine until the Tribes could harvest them for conservation, cultural, and food-bank programs.
- The USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) published an interim rule (75 Federal Register 81090) that removes the automatic reclassification of any Class Free State or area to a lower status if two or more herds are found to have brucellosis within a 2-year period. This rule eliminates many economic barriers created by the brucellosis class status system and should ease the establishment of quarantine facilities or terminal pastures outside the greater Yellowstone area.

### Expectations:

- Providing bison to the Tribes would reduce the number of bison consigned directly to domestic slaughter facilities, but will require substantial consensus building.
- The interstate transfer of Yellowstone bison is feasible, but constrained by numerous regulatory (e.g., 9 CFR 78; UMR, Chapter 1, Part II), logistical (e.g., expense, lack of facilities, long-distance transport, minimum quarantine periods and testing requirements), political (e.g., participation of recipient states), and social (e.g., acceptance of bison) hurdles.

- Many animal health authorities in potential recipient states may be unwilling to accept Yellowstone bison, regardless of the extent of testing or assurances regarding quarantine facilities or pastures. Some livestock regulatory officials and operators do not believe that bison recipients will maintain separation from livestock or that bison “graduating” from quarantine programs are disease-free.
- Because most states consider bison as subject to livestock regulations, APHIS would need to consider agricultural concerns and perhaps either acknowledge agricultural regulations do not apply to wild bison or adjust agriculture regulations accordingly.
- Perceived risk could be minimized by neutering bison that would eventually be slaughtered or hunted by Tribes at alternate locations. However, neutering is not supported by the Tribes.
- The preparation of an environmental assessment or impact statement may be necessary if the transfer of Yellowstone bison would have controversial environmental effects and involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E)). NPS would conduct consultation with tribes as part of the compliance process.

#### **Supporting Information:**

Appendix A: Background

Appendix B: Quarantine Protocol for Bison (USDA-APHIS)

Appendix C: Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 78 Brucellosis (USDA-APHIS)

Appendix D: Information for Proposals to Obtain Disease-Free Yellowstone Bison

Appendix E: Proposed Bison Relocation Criteria

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## APPENDIX A – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### General

- Yellowstone bison are the resource that historically occupied an area of approximately 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the headwaters of the Yellowstone and Madison Rivers in what is now referred to as the northern Greater Yellowstone Area.
- The Yellowstone bison population will likely continue to grow and expand their range unless hunting, culling, and/or relocations are used to remove several hundred bison per year from the population.
- “The Secretary of the Interior is authorized, in his discretion and under regulations to be prescribed by him, to give surplus elk, buffalo, bear, beaver, and predatory animals inhabiting Yellowstone National Park to Federal, State, county, and municipal authorities for preserves, zoos, zoological gardens, and parks. He may sell or otherwise dispose of the surplus buffalo of the Yellowstone National Park herd, and all moneys received from the sale of any such surplus buffalo shall be deposited in the Treasury of the United States as miscellaneous receipts.” (Jan. 24, 1923, ch. 42, 42 Stat. 1214.)
- When there are 2,500-4,500 bison park-wide, approximately 200-450 bison would need to be culled during most winters to limit large migrations to the park boundary and stabilize population growth.
- Removal of bison to slaughter facilities is highly controversial, especially since bison testing negative and non-infectious, test-positive bison are often removed. However, other movement options have been limited due to a lack of quarantine facilities available to handle brucellosis-exposed bison.
- The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and APHIS initiated a 5-year research program (i.e., quarantine feasibility study) north of Yellowstone National Park in 2005 and 2006 with 100 Yellowstone bison calves to determine if Yellowstone bison could be certified as brucellosis-free after repeated testing of multiple generations.
- In February 2010, 87 bison from the quarantine feasibility study were transferred to Turner Enterprises and placed on the Green Ranch Montana. These bison will remain separate from other bison and livestock for 4 years, after which they will be transferred to the Tribes or public lands.

### Opportunities

- During 2008 and 2009, the Fort Belknap Indian Community in Harlem, Montana proposed to establish a quarantine facility to receive surplus Yellowstone bison. These bison would be distributed to other Tribes and organizations after they completed the brucellosis surveillance protocol and were certified as disease free.
- During 2009, the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes applied for disease-free Yellowstone bison from the quarantine feasibility study, but state and federal agencies did not think the Tribe had the proper infrastructure to take the bison. Since then, Fort Peck has fenced a 6,000-acre parcel of land (Range Unit 62) for the potential acquisition of 40 Yellowstone bison.
- The Northern Arapaho General Council voted in 2009 against moving disease-free Yellowstone bison from the quarantine feasibility study to the Wind River Indian

Reservation. However, in October 2010 Council voted to allow bison on Arapaho range and directed the Tribe's Business Council to find a proper home for them.

- Protocols from the quarantine feasibility study could be modified, as appropriate, to operationally move brucellosis test-negative Yellowstone bison to quarantine facilities for further surveillance, certification of bison as brucellosis-free, and eventual release of bison onto suitable restoration sites to supplement genetic variation of existing herds or establish new herds.
- Similarly, untested or test-positive Yellowstone bison could potentially be transported to slaughter facilities on tribal lands or terminal destinations managed like quarantined pastures or intermediate handling facilities, albeit with longer holding times. These facilities would improve the ethical treatment of wild bison while they are periodically hunted or otherwise harvested for food or ceremonial purposes.
- Sterilization (castration, ovariectomy) is a measure whereby Yellowstone bison could become eligible for live intra- or inter-state movement. Existing regulations allow sterilized bison to be transported without restriction, provided that state animal health authorities approve movement into their state. Otherwise, bison could only be transported to approved slaughter or research facilities.
- Relocation of Yellowstone bison would provide an opportunity to coordinate with a broader North American bison conservation strategy by establishing or augmenting public and tribal bison herds.

#### Possible Constraints:

- Facilities and fenced pastures are not ready to receive bison on most tribal and public conservation lands, and funding will be required to prepare, operate, and maintain these sites.
- The Montana Department of Livestock is authorized to remove or destroy publicly owned bison that enter Montana from a herd that is infected with a dangerous disease or whenever those bison jeopardize Montana's compliance with state or federally administered livestock disease control programs (81-2-120 (1-4) M.C.A.).
- Since the Yellowstone bison population is chronically infected with brucellosis, APHIS considers all bison removed from Yellowstone National Park, for purposes other than consignment directly to slaughter, as alternate livestock (9 CFR 78; Appendix B). Thus:
  - Bison steers and spayed heifers may be moved interstate without restriction (9 CFR 78.21).
  - Brucellosis reactor bison may be moved interstate only for immediate slaughter (9 CFR 78.22).
  - Brucellosis exposed bison may be moved interstate to recognized slaughtering establishments, quarantined feedlots, or without restriction if they are official vaccinates under 1 year of age from a herd following an approved individual herd plan (9 CFR 78.23).
- The Brucellosis Uniform Method and Rules (UM&R; USDA APHIS, Veterinary Services 2003) discourages the movement of bison from brucellosis-affected herds unless the animals have first cleared quarantine to certify that each animal is free of brucellosis (Appendix B). Minimum quarantine periods are as follows: 1) males – 1 year; 2) adult females – 1 ½ years; 3) immature females – 2 ½ years; and 4) calves born in quarantine – 6 months.
- The minimum quarantine periods and testing requirements in the UM&R are logistically difficult and relatively expensive to implement. Thus, interest in obtaining Yellowstone

bison may be limited to groups that greatly value the cultural and wildlife significance of wild bison. The financial commitments to develop appropriate quarantine facilities may only be justified if a long-term commitment to provide surplus bison is made by the USDI.

- Rules regarding the establishment of quarantine facilities for Yellowstone bison in the UM&R limit the location of facilities to areas within Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming directly adjacent to the endemic brucellosis infection area.
- Rules in the UM&R only allow holding reactor (i.e., test-positive) bison in “intermediate handling facilities” for short periods of time (i.e., up to 7 days).
- The UM&R indicates “quarantine pastures” can be used to hold test-negative bison from brucellosis exposed herds for up to 10 months, but are not allowed in class-free states.
- Per the UM&R, regulatory approval for quarantine facilities can only be done for periods of one year.
- Though existing APHIS regulations allow neutered bison to be transported interstate without restriction (9 CFR 78.21), state animal health authorities would likely want to approve movements into their state.
- Relocated Yellowstone bison could be re-classified as captive wildlife or alternative livestock by the receiving states. Idaho agricultural regulations do not recognize wild bison and consider them livestock. Montana has designated bison as a species requiring disease control (A.R.M. 32.3.224). Wyoming considers bison livestock outside specific areas adjacent to Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks.

## **APPENDIX B – QUARANTINE PROTOCOL FOR BISON (USDA-APHIS)**

### **Brucellosis Eradication: Uniform Methods and Rules**

#### **Chapter 1, General Provisions—Cattle and Bison**

#### **Part II. Procedures**

#### **6. Procedures for Handling Infected or Restricted Herds**

##### **D. Approved Bison Quarantine Facilities**

A group or individual may establish an approved bison quarantine facility (ABQF) to provide testing for brucellosis-exposed bison from Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks in order to qualify the animals as brucellosis-free. These facilities may be located in Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, or adjacent to the Parks in the adjoining States of Idaho, Montana, or Wyoming. State and Federal animal health officials must approve each facility. Facility approval is valid for one year and can be reapproved provided all requirements are met.

State and/or Federal animal health officials will select the serological tests to be conducted, establish procedures to account for all animals entering or leaving the ABQF, and supervise all operations.

All bison entering an approved bison quarantine facility are considered to be brucellosis-exposed animals and must be permanently identified with official metal ear tags and placed under quarantine restrictions. Prior to entering the facility, all animals must test negative on official brucellosis serological tests conducted at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) or at an approved Cooperative State-Federal Brucellosis Laboratory (CSFBL). All serological and/or milk tests conducted in the ABQF are considered preliminary and must be confirmed at NVSL or at an approved CSFBL. Specimens or milk samples for bacterial culture must also be cultured at NVSL or at an approved CSFBL.

It is recommended that test-negative bison captured during a single season entering the ABQF be placed in an ABQF holding pen until they can be sorted and penned separately into individual test groups (ITG). The holding pens and ITG pens should be separated by at least two fences that are a minimum of 10 feet apart. Upon entry into the ABQF, it is recommended, but not required, that serological tests be conducted on every bison every 30-45 days while they are in a holding pen or ITG until each animal classified as a reactor has been removed and the remaining animals test negative. If the testing results in any bison being classified as a reactor, a subsequent ITG test must be conducted on the remaining animals in the ITG at least 30 days later.

Initially, this procedure will more readily identify reactor animals, minimizing the time spent in the ABQF completing the testing requirements to qualify for quarantine release.

All *Brucella* culture-positive animals and/or all animals classified as reactors must be removed from the ABQF within 15 days of being identified. Any bison removed from the ABQF before completing the requirements to qualify for quarantine release must move under permit either to an approved research facility or to an approved slaughter facility for slaughter only. All bison that are classified as reactors because they tested positive to an official serological and/or milk test or are confined culture-positive must go to an approved research facility or to an approved slaughter facility for slaughter only. Each ITG must qualify for quarantine release following the procedures listed below before any individual bison within the ITG may be released from quarantine.

1. *Sexually mature bison (3 years of age or older)*

- (a) *Males*—Male bison must pass a minimum of three consecutive negative ITG tests. The first ITG test must be conducted when the ITG starts the quarantine period. The second ITG test must be conducted at least 180 days after the first ITG test. There must be at least 12 months between the first and last consecutive negative ITG tests.
- (b) *Pregnant females*—Pregnant female bison must complete two calvings within the ABQF. Pregnant female bison not born in the facility and continually penned within a test-negative ITG must be rebred in the ABQF following their first calving to a test-negative male from a holding pen or ITG.

An ITG test must be conducted when the ITG starts the quarantine period before the first calving, another ITG test must be conducted at least 30 days and not more than 90 days after each female has calved during the first and second calvings, and an ITG test must be conducted six months after the last animal has calved during the first and second calvings. Each postparturient female bison must have discharges, fluids, and swabs collected and cultured within 5 days after calving. There must be at least 12 months between the first and last consecutive negative ITG test.

- (c) *Nonpregnant females*—Nonpregnant female bison not born in the facility and continually penned within a test-negative ITG must be bred in the ITG to a test-negative male from a holding pen or ITG, complete a gestation cycle, calve, and pass a minimum of three consecutive negative ITG tests.

The first ITG test must be conducted when the ITG starts the quarantine period before being bred. The second ITG test must be conducted at least 30 days and not more than 90 days after each female has calved, and the third ITG test must be conducted six months after the last animal has calved in the ITG. Each postparturient female bison must have discharges, fluids, and swabs collected and cultured within 5 days after calving. There must be at least 12 months between the first and last consecutive negative ITG tests.

2. *Sexually immature bison (under 3 years of age)*

- (a) *Immature males*—Male bison under three years of age must pass a minimum of three consecutive ITG tests. The first ITG test must be conducted when the ITG starts the quarantine period, and the last consecutive negative ITG test must be conducted after the animals are at least three years of age. The second ITG test will be conducted at least 180 days after the first ITG test. There must be at least 12 months between the first and last consecutive negative ITG tests.
- (b) *Immature females*—Immature female bison under three years of age not born in the facility and continually penned within a test-negative ITG must be bred to a test-negative male from a holding pen or ITG, complete a gestation cycle, calve, and pass a minimum of three consecutive negative ITG tests.

The first ITG test must be conducted when the ITG starts the quarantine period before being bred. The second ITG test must be conducted at least 30 days and not more than 90 days after each female has calved, and the third ITG test must be conducted six months after the last animal has calved in the ITG. Each postparturient female bison must have discharges, fluids, and swabs collected and cultured within 5 days after calving. There must be at least 12 months between the first and last consecutive negative ITG tests.

- 3. *Calves*—Calves born in the ABQF from a test- and/or culture-negative ITG of adult pregnant females may be released from quarantine at six months of age or older provided that all of the following conditions are met: 1) there have been no reactor animals in the ITG immediately after their birth or within one month prior to their birth; 2) all calves in the ITG are serologically test-negative; 3) each adult in the ITG is serologically test-negative at least 30 days postcalving and culturally test-negative within 5 days postcalving; and 4) the adult animals in the ITG have tested negative on three consecutive herd tests over a 12 month period. For calves born to females that were pregnant at the time of entrance into the ABQF and/or calves born during a time in which reactors are disclosed, the males calves would be classified as "immature males" and be tested as in 2(a) above, the females would be classified as "immature females" and be tested as in 2(b) above, or the calves could be neutered and released from quarantine without restrictions.
- 4. *Test- and/or culture-positive animals or animals that die in quarantine*—Any aborted fetus, stillborn animal, or an animal that dies in the ABQF for any reason, will be necropsied, serologically tested, and its tissues and other appropriate specimens cultured for *Brucella*. Tissue collection methods should be based on the sampling protocol outlined by the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee (GYIBC). Any culture and/or serologically test-positive animal found in an ITG will cause the ITG to restart the quarantine requirements. Restarting the quarantine requires the ITG to be tested every 30-45 days until all animals classified as reactors have been removed from the ITG and a complete ITG test is negative. Bred female bison in the ITG that have been pregnancy checked and determined not be pregnant must be sacrificed, necropsied, and specimens collected and cultured. In addition, a complete epidemiologic assessment will be made of all test or culture-positive cases of brucellosis within the ABQF. All



*Brucella* culture-positive animals and/or all animals classified as reactors must be removed from the ABQF within 15 days of being identified. They must be neutered, slaughtered, or moved to an approved research facility.

5. *Breeding bulls*—Bulls must be tested negative for brucellosis within 30 days of being placed within an ITG for breeding purposes or be from an ITG that has qualified for a quarantine release.
5. *Neutered animals*—Neutered bison may be released from quarantine without restrictions.
7. *Post-quarantine requirements*—The entire ITG must qualify for quarantine release before any individual bison within the ITG may be released to a group or individual in a State or area. All animals released from the ITG must be retested at approximately six months and then one year later to verify that they remain test negative. An agreement to test must be signed by the receiving owners or managers before the animals will be released into their custody. The agreement must also state that the animals must be kept separate from all other animals until the six month test has been completed. In addition, the State Animal Health Authorities in the State of destination must authorize movement into their State.

	Minimum tests required to release	Minimum test intervals	Minimum quarantine periods
Sexually mature males	3	1st: start of quarantine period 2nd: at least 180 days after first test 3rd: at least 12 months after first test	1 year
Pregnant females	5	1st: before calving 2nd: between 30 and 90 days after each animal has calved during 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> calvings Last: 6 months after last animal has calved during 1st and 2 <sup>nd</sup> calvings	1 ½ years
Nonpregnant sexually mature females	3	1st: before bred 2nd: between 30 and 90 days after females each animal has calved Last: 6 months after last animal has calved	1 ½ years
Immature males	3	1st: start of quarantine period 2nd: at least 180 days after first test 3rd: at least 12 months after the first test, and at least 3 years of age	1 year

Immature females	3	1st: before bred 2nd: between 30 and 90 days after each animal has calved Last: 6 months after last animal has calved	2 ½ years
Calves*	1	One test at 6 months of age	½ year

\* Calves born to females that were pregnant upon entry into the ABQF and calves born in an ITG in which reactors have been disclosed shall not be released as calves.

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**APPENDIX C – TITLE 9, CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, PART 78 BRUCELLOSIS (USDA-APHIS)**

CHAPTER I--ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE, DEPARTMENT  
OF  
AGRICULTURE

PART 78\_BRUCELLOSIS--

Subpart C\_Restrictions on Interstate Movement of Bison Because of Brucellosis

Sec. 78.20 General restrictions.

Bison may not be moved interstate except in compliance with this subpart.

Sec. 78.21 Bison steers and spayed heifers.

Bison steers and spayed heifers may be moved interstate without restriction under this subpart.

Sec. 78.22 Brucellosis reactor bison.

(a) Destination. Brucellosis reactor bison may be moved interstate only for immediate slaughter as follows:

- (1) Directly to a recognized slaughtering establishment;
- (2) Directly to an approved intermediate handling facility and then directly to a recognized slaughtering establishment; or
- (3) From a farm of origin directly to a specifically approved stockyard approved to receive brucellosis reactors and then
  - (i) Directly to a recognized slaughtering establishment; or
  - (ii) Directly to an approved intermediate handling facility and then directly to a recognized slaughtering establishment.

(b) Identification. Brucellosis reactor bison must be individually identified prior to moving interstate by attaching to the left ear a metal tag bearing a serial number and the inscription "U.S. Reactor," or a metal tag bearing a serial number designated by the State animal health official for identifying brucellosis reactors, and must be:

- (1) "B" branded (as defined in Sec. 78.1); or
- (2) Accompanied directly to slaughter by an APHIS or State representative; or
- (3) Moved in vehicles closed with official seals applied and removed by an APHIS representative, State representative, accredited veterinarian, or an individual authorized for this purpose by an APHIS representative. The official seal numbers must be recorded on the accompanying permit.

(c) Permit. Brucellosis reactor bison moving interstate shall be accompanied to destination by a permit.

(d) Marking of records. Each person moving brucellosis reactor bison interstate shall, in the course of interstate movement, plainly write or stamp the words "Brucellosis Reactor" upon the face of any document that person prepares in connection with such movement.

(e) Segregation en route. Brucellosis reactor bison shall not be moved interstate in any means of conveyance containing animals which are not brucellosis reactors unless all of the animals are for immediate slaughter or unless the brucellosis reactor bison are kept separate from the other animals by a partition securely affixed to the sides of the means of conveyance.

#### Sec. 78.23 Brucellosis exposed bison.

Brucellosis exposed bison may be moved interstate only as follows:

(a) Movement to recognized slaughtering establishments. Brucellosis exposed bison may be moved interstate for slaughter accompanied by a permit or "S" brand permit and as follows:

- (1) Directly to a recognized slaughtering establishment or directly to an approved intermediate handling facility and then directly to a recognized slaughtering establishment; or
- (2) From a farm of origin directly to a specifically approved stockyard approved to receive brucellosis exposed bison and then
  - (i) Directly to a recognized slaughtering establishment; or
  - (ii) Directly to an approved intermediate handling facility and then directly to a recognized slaughtering establishment.

(b) Movement to quarantined feedlots. Brucellosis exposed bison may be moved directly to a quarantined feedlot or, from a farm of origin, directly to a specifically approved stockyard approved to receive brucellosis exposed bison and then directly to a quarantined feedlot. Such bison shall be accompanied by a permit or "S" brand permit.

(c) Movement other than in accordance with paragraphs (a) or (b) of this section. Brucellosis exposed bison which are from herds known to be affected, but which are not part of a herd being depopulated under Part 51 of this chapter, may move without restriction if the bison:

- (1) Are under 6 months of age and were weaned from brucellosis reactor or brucellosis exposed bison not less than 30 days immediately preceding interstate movement; or
- (2) Are under 6 months of age and nursing brucellosis exposed bison in a herd subjected to a herd blood test within 10 days prior to interstate movement; or
- (3) Are official vaccinates under 1 year of age from a herd following an approved individual herd plan.

## **APPENDIX D – INFORMATION FOR PROPOSALS TO OBTAIN DISEASE-FREE YELLOWSTONE BISON**

Yellowstone bison that are entering or completing quarantine to be certified as disease-free will be made available to conservation projects initiated by American Indian tribes, USDI agencies, and other federal and state agencies. In the absence of opportunities to contribute to wild bison conservation on public and tribal lands, alternatives for consignment of bison will be considered if they can contribute to educational displays on tribal lands, federal or state lands, lands managed by non-governmental conservation organizations, and zoos or similar facilities.

Consignment to private citizens, corporations, or tribal lands that propose to use the bison in an agricultural manner will be considered if none of these options are available. If no feasible or suitable parties agree to receive the bison and obtain all the necessary agreements to implement this action in an agreed-upon time frame, then the bison may be consigned to domestic slaughter facilities (with meat and other body parts distributed to tribes and food banks) or vaccinated and returned to the Yellowstone bison population.

### **Population and Conservation Objectives**

- The number, age class (adult, calf), sex, and delivery date of requested Yellowstone bison.
- How the project serves the cultural or spiritual needs of American Indian Tribes or the greater conservation needs of plains bison as described in the Status Survey and Conservation Guidelines for American Bison published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in 2010.
- Population objectives and clearly defined means to regulate herd size and distribution.
- Habitat management objectives and monitoring methods.

### **Brucellosis Surveillance and Herd Management**

- Site information regarding where bison will be held during quarantine, assurance testing, and thereafter, including a description of the location and habitats at the site(s).
- The capacity of the quarantine facility to hold bison, including their offspring and future cohorts.
- Brucellosis surveillance plan, including a response protocol if brucellosis is detected, that is developed with APHIS and complies with the standards described in Appendix B.
- How bison undergoing quarantine or assurance testing will be maintained in a closed herd, free of contact with domestic livestock or other bison and elk that already exist in the project area.
- Conflict management strategies for responding to conceivable events that may occur during and after quarantine or assurance testing (e.g., bison escape quarantine; neighbors or interest groups protest quarantine facility; predator intrusions; issues with other wildlife; etc).
- What will happen to bison at end of quarantine or assurance testing (e.g., relocation, dropping the fence, supplementing with other bison, etc.), and what decision framework will be used to evaluate and designate where bison will go.

### **Compliance, Funding, Partnerships, and Disclosure**

- Legal, policy, or treaty constraints that may affect the project.
- Description of environmental review process to be conducted, if required.

- Potential impacts to other animals (e.g., prairie dogs, ferrets, swift fox, etc.) and how those impacts will be minimized or mitigated.
- Secured and potential funding sources to maintain animals within a closed herd and meet the surveillance plan requirements within the required area
- Commitments by other agencies and/or organizations to assist with the project.
- Letters of support from partners and a definition of the role of partners in the conservation program.
- Disclose how information learned through surveillance will be shared with federal and state agencies to improve understanding of the probabilities of latent brucellosis infection in exposed bison.

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## **APPENDIX E – PROPOSED YELLOWSTONE BISON RELOCATION CRITERIA**

### **Quarantine Sites/Scenarios Receiving Brucellosis Test-Negative Bison:**

#### **Site Selection**

- The relocation site must be within suitable habitat within the historic range of plains bison.
- Any decision to relocate Yellowstone bison for the purpose of establishing new or augmenting existing conservation herds requires the consent of the entity that receives the bison and that entity's commitment to manage the bison in a manner that serves the cultural or spiritual needs of American Indian Tribes or supports the greater conservation needs of plains bison as described in the Status Survey and Conservation Guidelines for American Bison published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in 2010.
- All restoration projects must comply with environmental regulations of recipient jurisdictions.
- The receiving entity must accept all costs associated with the transport, disease surveillance, and management of relocated Yellowstone bison, unless otherwise agreed-upon by all parties.

#### **Transportation Logistics**

- Yellowstone bison will be transported to the relocation site in sealed trailers or other vehicles appropriate for transporting bison.
- A reasonably direct route will be chosen to the release site, with flexibility to accommodate existing road and weather conditions.
- Bison will be treated humanely during transport, with an effort to maintain family units.
- Bison calves greater than 5 months of age will be vaccinated with Strain RB51 before transport.
- As necessary, develop additional protocols for long-distance, overnight transport.

#### **Facility Security and Logistics**

- The quarantine facility should be separate and apart from any commercial livestock operation by a distance of at least 0.25 mile.
- The perimeter of the quarantine facility must be fenced, preferably with double fences (one at least eight feet tall) that are 10 feet apart. The fences should be constructed to prohibit ingress and egress of susceptible animals.
- Locks should be provided on all gates to the facility.
- Paddocks where the Yellowstone bison are held should be observed on a daily basis during the initial release period and until confidence is gained that the group has adjusted to their new location.
- There must be a written procedure for the tracking and capture and/or removal of any bison that escapes the facility.
- Signs must be posted at the perimeter of the facility stating that it is a quarantined facility and that non-approved personnel are not allowed in the facility. The signs should list the name and telephone number of the facility supervisor or other responsible person(s).
- Personnel with access to the facility should be advised of the potential hazard and trained on the proper containment and security procedures.

- All animals should be individually identified through some type of unobtrusive marker during the surveillance period.
- Records should be maintained to document all procedures done to each animal (pursuant to Select Agent regulations 9 CFR Part 122 and 42 CFR Part 73).
- Corrals and working areas should be adequate to safely contain, restrain, and handle the bison.
- Personnel with access to the facility should be trained in the safe handling of bison.
- Personal protective equipment should be used for all activities involving potentially infected birth materials or bison.
- Drainage should be contained within the perimeter fence to prevent run-off into surrounding pastures or areas.

#### Brucellosis Surveillance

- The agency, organization, or Tribe receiving bison must agree to a brucellosis surveillance plan developed with APHIS, including a response protocol if brucellosis reactors are detected.
- All relocated bison will be tested for brucellosis within 30-days of arriving at the facility to ensure they are still negative for brucellosis.
- To ensure that latent infection is not present in the relocated bison, the receiving entity would be required to hold the relocated bison in fenced pastures during the quarantine and assurance testing periods (Appendix B), isolated from domestic livestock (i.e., closed-herd status), and make brucellosis testing records available for review by APHIS Veterinary Services. There will be a zero tolerance for bison leaving the designating fenced pasture(s) during closed-herd status. Receiving entities are advised to fully collaborate with APHIS to maximize credibility and disclosure in conducting a surveillance program.
- Every relocated bison should be serologically tested during the quarantine period pursuant to the criteria provided in Appendix B.
- If relocated bison test positive for brucellosis exposure, the positive reactors will be sacrificed, necropsied, and specimens will be collected for culture. If brucellosis infection is confirmed, then whole-herd testing will occur. With results of the whole herd test, a disease management plan will be developed in cooperation with the receiving entity and the appropriate animal health department—the State Veterinarian's office, APHIS epidemiologists, or tribal agricultural agency. Depending on the testing results, the disease management plan may consist of vaccination combined with rigorous test-and-slaughter or whole herd depopulation.
- All aborted fetuses and bison that die of unknown causes during the closed-herd period will be reported immediately to investigators and submitted to a diagnostic laboratory for necropsy, immune and reproductive tissue collection, and *Brucella* culture.
- When the closed-herd period ends, bison will be certified as brucellosis free and continued assurance testing will be conducted for one additional pregnancy period. Regular brucellosis surveillance will not be required following the assurance test period.
- Bison will be booster vaccinated before they are released from closed-herd status.

#### Herd Management



- A suitable comprehensive management plan to address population management, distribution, management of wildlife conflicts, and habitat management within the project area should be completed and adaptively managed to meet long-range goals.
- Hunting may be part of the population management program on any restoration area.
- After the closed-herd period, bison can be rounded-up as needed for transport to other areas/parties.

### **Terminal Destinations Receiving Bison Not Tested for Brucellosis or Test-Positive Bison:**

#### **Site Selection**

- Bison relocated to terminal pastures cannot be removed from the quarantined pastures for any reason and will be harvested for food or ceremonial purposes in a manner that serves the cultural or spiritual needs of American Indian Tribes.
- The receiving entity must accept all costs associated with the transport, disease surveillance, and management of relocated Yellowstone bison, unless otherwise agreed-upon by all parties.

#### **Transportation Logistics**

- Yellowstone bison will be transported to the relocation site in sealed trailers or other vehicles appropriate for transporting bison.
- A reasonably direct route will be chosen to the release site, with flexibility to accommodate existing road and weather conditions.
- Bison will be treated humanely during transport, with an effort to maintain family units.
- As necessary, develop additional protocols for long-distance, overnight transport.

#### **Facility Security and Logistics**

- The receiving entity would be required to hold the relocated bison and their offspring in fenced pastures, isolated from domestic livestock (i.e., closed-herd status), until they are harvested. There will be a zero tolerance for bison leaving the designating fenced pasture(s) during closed-herd status.
- The terminal quarantine pasture should be separate and apart from any commercial livestock operation by a distance of at least 0.25 mile.
- The perimeter of the quarantine facility must be fenced with double fences (one at least eight feet tall) that are 10 feet apart. The fences should be constructed to prohibit ingress and egress of susceptible animals and mammalian predators/scavengers (e.g., angled fencing at the top of the fence; fence bottom pinned or buried; the use of at least two strands of electric wire).
- Locks should be provided on all gates to the facility.
- Paddocks where the Yellowstone bison are held should be observed on a daily basis.
- There must be a written procedure for the tracking and capture and/or removal of any bison that escapes the facility.
- Signs must be posted at the perimeter of the facility stating that it is a quarantined facility and that non-approved personnel are not allowed in the facility. The signs should list the name and telephone number of the facility supervisor or other responsible person(s).

- Personnel with access to the facility should be advised of the potential hazard and trained on the proper containment and security procedures.
- All animals should be individually identified through some type of unobtrusive marker during the terminal quarantine period.
- Records should be maintained to document all procedures done to each animal (pursuant to Select Agent regulations 9 CFR Part 122 and 42 CFR Part 73).
- Corrals and working areas should be adequate to safely contain, restrain, and handle the bison.
- Personnel with access to the facility should be trained in the safe handling of bison.
- Personal protective equipment should be used for all activities involving potentially infected birth materials or bison.
- Drainage should be contained within the perimeter fence to prevent run-off into surrounding pastures or areas.

#### Brucellosis Surveillance

- Yellowstone bison may be sterilized (castration, ovariectomy) before transport based on agreements between APHIS and the Tribe receiving the bison.
- The Tribe receiving bison must agree to develop and implement a credible brucellosis risk management plan. These plans should be shared with staff from APHIS and Yellowstone National Park during their development (i.e., peer review) and include provisions to (1) harvest bison within a specified time frame, and (2) prohibit the transfer of any live bison to other locations.
- All aborted fetuses and bison that die of unknown causes during the closed-herd period will be reported immediately to herd managers and submitted to a diagnostic laboratory for necropsy, immune and reproductive system tissue collection, and *Brucella* culture.