

## **Project Summary**

### **Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit**

**Project Title:** Interagency Bison Management Plan Agency Facilitation

**Discipline:** Natural  
**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance  
**Funding Agency:** National Park Service  
**Other Partners/Cooperators:** Montana State University  
**Effective Dates:** 1/1/2015 - 3/31/2016  
**Funding Amount:** \$37,600

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

NPS Contact: Rick Wallen, Wildlife Biologist, Yellowstone National Park, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY, 82190; Ph. 307.344.2204; tami\_blackford@nps.gov

Investigator: Cathy Whitlock, Director of Interdisciplinary Science Initiatives and Professor Earth Sciences, Montana State University, 200 Traphagen Hall, Bozeman, MT 59715, (406) 994-6910, (406) 994-6923, whitlock@montana.edu

**Project Abstract:**

Bison management in and around Yellowstone National Park (YELL) is a contentious land management issue of high public interest. As part of a negotiated settlement between the State of Montana and Yellowstone National Park (YELL) to provide for greater tolerance for wild bison in the state of Montana, the NPS conducts ongoing negotiations and participates in public meetings to share information with managing partners and public constituencies, discussing problem solving alternatives with partner agencies and agree upon/announce management decisions that result in conservation actions for Yellowstone bison.

Public meetings with an unbiased facilitator has become the most effective strategy to resolve conflicts that arise as bison migrate across the National Park boundary and into the state of Montana. Tendency to migrate is correlated well with population abundance and accumulated snow pack, with years of greater snow accumulations causing increased number of bison to migrate to or beyond the National Park boundary. In Montana, values regarding preservation of this resource (migratory wild bison) are different and tolerance for wild bison is limited. The bison conservation program is hotly debated among many publics with wide ranging perspectives. The information generated by these publics and the National Park Service contributes the majority of the new information to inform the debate.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates:** March 31, 2016

**Keywords:** public meeting facilitation, bison management, state of Montana, Yellowstone National Park, Montana State University