



"A conservation and action plan for the Aishihik bison (*Bison bison*) population"

Public Engagement

What We Learned

June 2023



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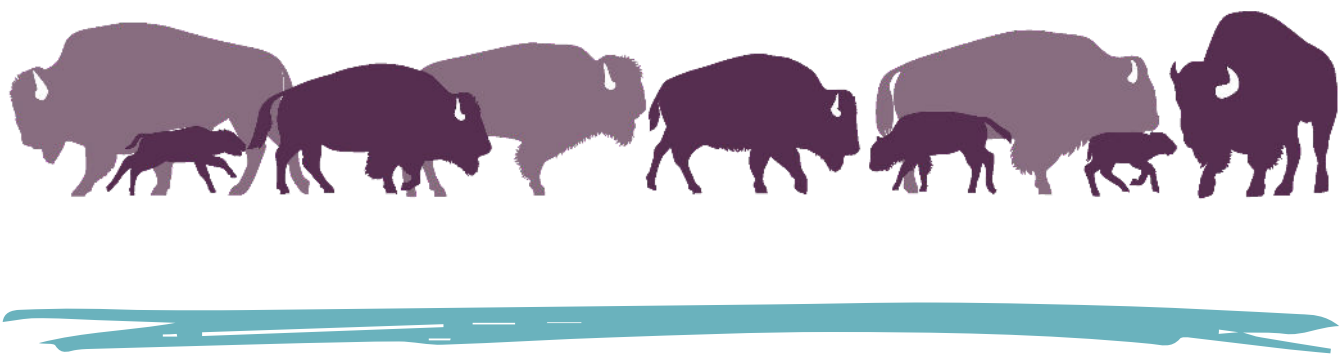
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This document summarizes the Board's public engagement on the updated draft Bison plan.



SECTION 1: About the updated draft plan

- This draft was shaped by the Aishihik Bison Technical Team, which has members from various Yukon First Nations, Renewable Resources Councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Government of Yukon, and the Government of Canada.
- The plan takes a revised approach to managing Yukon's population of Wood Bison. It aims to reflect Yukoners' values and align local management practices with national conservation efforts.
- Several documents were created by the Aishihik Bison Technical Team and government staff members to inform the draft plan, including:
 1. **MARK RE-SIGHT SURVEY**
To read in greater detail about the 2022 bison census survey, [click here.](#)
 2. **SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY**
If you want an overview of the 2022 census survey results, [click here.](#)
 3. **HUNTER EFFORT SURVEY**
To read about the 2021 hunter effort survey, [click here.](#)
 4. **STUDY OF 2021 PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS**
This study examines feedback from a previous public survey taken by hundreds of Yukoners. It compares the differing views around bison. To read it, [click here.](#)

Section 2: Plan Highlights and Updates

The plan acknowledges that since bison were re-established in the Yukon over 30 years ago, **the herd has grown, and human relationships with bison have evolved.**

Some of the **notable highlights** to this plan include the following:

- Fostering an appreciation for bison in the Yukon through **cultural connection.**
- Managing the harvest on a **sustainable basis.**
- Resolving **land use issues** such as the effects of bison hunting on traplines.
- Aligning local efforts with the **national recovery** strategy for bison.
- Improving **knowledge-sharing** between bison management partners and the public.

Updates

One of the most significant updates in this plan is the change towards **managing bison more like other species.**

This means focusing on **sustainability** and allowing the population to **fluctuate due to natural variations** caused by predation, natural disasters, habitat loss, and climate change.

Under the revised approach, **the plan does not set a target population**, and will not aim to manage the population to a specific size (i.e. 1,000 animals) through harvest.

The Tech Team also developed **interim harvest guidelines** to create a well-defined harvest regime that is determined by population size. These guidelines aim to provide **transparency and clarity** for management decisions.

Section 3: Important information

Why do we need an updated bison plan?

It's almost 5 years overdue.

- The 2012 plan was supposed to have a five-year lifespan.

The Aishihik Bison Technical Team reconsidered the idea of having a **target population** size.

- The 2012 plan identified a target population of a thousand animals, resulting in goals focusing on reducing the herd's population through harvest.
- The new draft plan does not set a target population.

The Tech Team learned that **bison are affecting culture and ecology**.

- Bison are impacting local people, cultures, and ways of life.
- We need to continue monitoring interactions between bison and other wildlife (moose, caribou, muskrats, sheep, etc.).
- Bison hunters are also impacting the land.
- We need to balance bison population control with impacts on other land users.

To help meet the requirements of the federal ***Species at Risk Act*** (SARA) and the 2018 national recovery strategy.

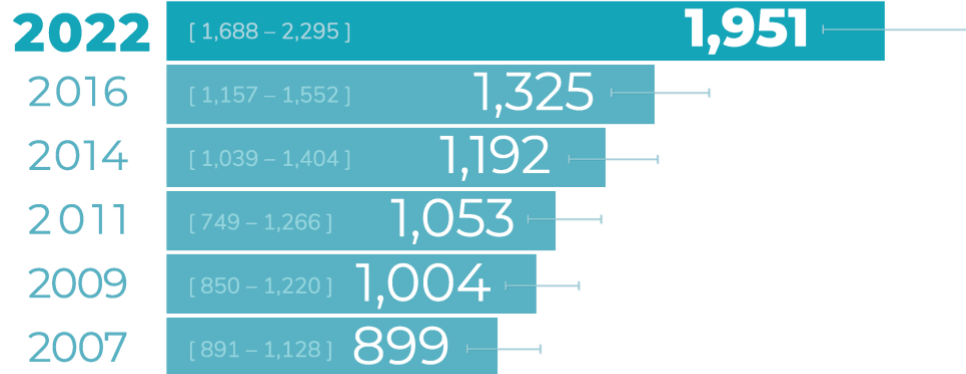
- Wood Bison are listed as a threatened species under *SARA* (federal legislation).
- They are considered a priority species for national recovery efforts.

Current Herd Size

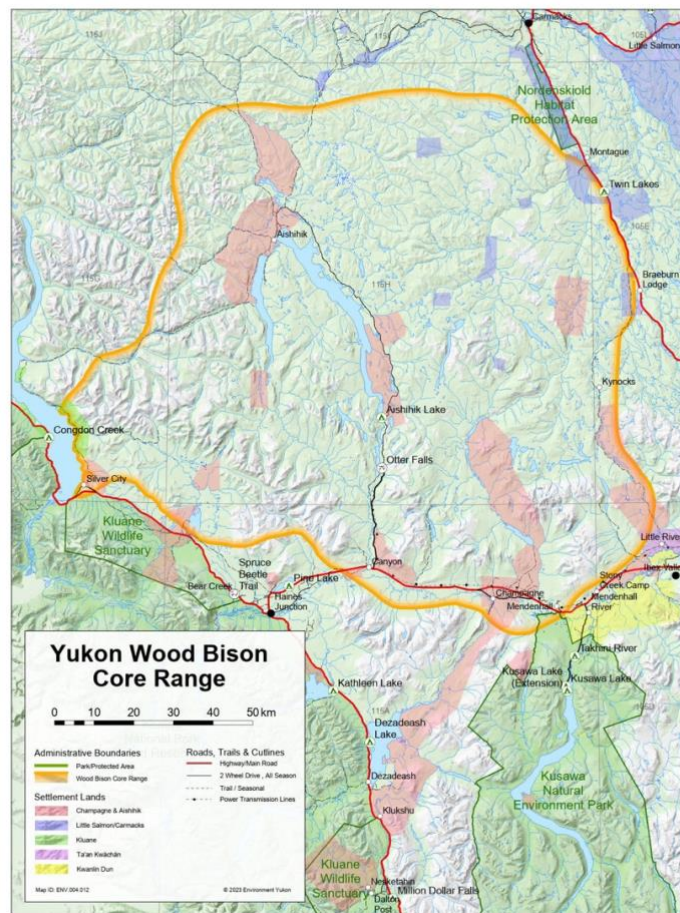
Based on the most recent survey information (2022), the estimated population for the Aishihik Bison Herd is 1,951 animals.

Population trend

Population trend since 2007



Core Range



Section 4: Goals, Outcomes, and Guiding Principles

The Draft Plan lays out **seven goals** with **outcomes** under each goal, it also includes management **actions** that will help achieve each outcome. These goals aim to ensure a **healthy and persisting population** in the Yukon.

When met, these goals will contribute to **consumptive and non-consumptive opportunities** to interact with bison. They also help us towards **global conservation efforts**.

Goal 1: Ensure a viable bison population is restored to the land.

Outcome 1: The Aishihik bison population maintains a minimum population of 1,000 animals.

Outcome 2: The Aishihik bison herd remains disease-free and genetically pure.

Goal 2: Promote greater awareness of, and connection to, bison.

Outcome 3: Inform and involve communities in bison management.

Outcome 4: Increase public outreach and appreciation about bison.

Goal 3: Strengthen cooperative bison management.

Outcome 5: Share information, listen, and participate in collaborative decision-making.

Goal 4: Provide opportunities for respectful and sustainable bison hunting.

Outcome 6: Maintain sustainable long-term bison hunting opportunities.

Outcome 7: Support hunters to be active stewards in bison management.

Outcome 8: Encourage respectful hunting and reduce the effects of hunters on the land.

Goal 5: Acknowledge and address human-bison coexistence issues.

Outcome 9: Decrease the potential for bison risks to human safety.

Outcome 10: Reduce collisions with vehicles through various mitigation measures.

Outcome 11: Mitigate impacts from bison to private property and cultural sites, including on First Nation Settlement Lands.

Goal 6: Assess the effects of bison on ecosystems.

Outcome 12: Monitor the effects of bison on other species and ecosystems.

Goal 7: Secure habitat for the Aishihik population.

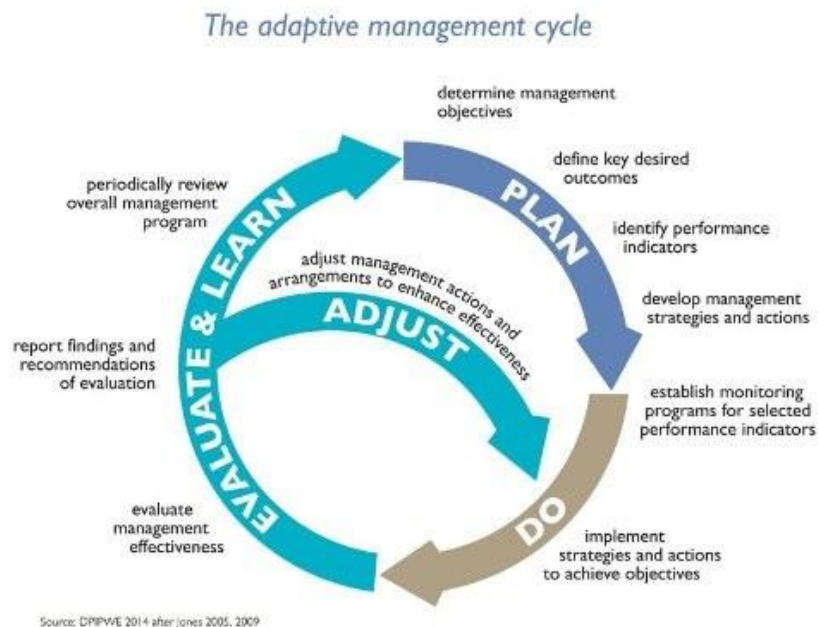
Outcome 13: Identify critical habitat.

Outcome 14: Secure critical habitat

More on Goal 4

This goal provides a plan for continued sustainable harvest opportunities. Bison managers will collaborate using "**adaptive management**" strategies to do so. This goal also addresses concerns about the effects bison hunting has on the land. Bison hunting is increasingly popular, and there are numerous concerns about the impacts it is having.

Adaptive management is a process for continuously improving management practices. It starts with developing strategies and actions based on management objectives. Those actions are implemented and then evaluated for their effectiveness. They may be modified or adjusted based on the results. This approach provides flexibility and is possible through observation, analysis, and application of new information.



Interim Harvest Guidelines

Interim Harvest Guidelines set the short-term **direction for the annual allowable harvest**. The annual allowable harvest is scaled depending on the best available population size and trend information.

The guidelines will be updated regularly, **balancing conservation with optimizing harvest opportunities**. The intent is to ensure the **population stays above 1,000 adults** while providing sustainable (long-term) harvest opportunities.

Estimated adult population size	Recommended harvest regime	
	Decreasing population	Stable or increasing population
Less than 1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunting closed • Up to 10 bison (bulls preferred) may be taken for cultural, community hunt, or management reasons 	
1,001 – 1,200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited hunting • Annual allowable harvest is 5% (50–60 bison) • Up to 10 additional bison may be taken for cultural, community hunt, or management reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited hunting • Annual allowable harvest is 10% (100–120 bison) • Up to 20 additional bison may be taken for cultural, community hunt, or management reasons
1,201 – 1,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate hunting • Annual allowable harvest is 12.5% (150–190 bison) • Up to 20 additional bison may be taken for cultural, community hunt, or management reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal hunting • Annual allowable harvest is 20% (240–300 bison) but may be capped at a lower number • Either sex
More than 1,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal hunting • Annual allowable harvest is 20% (300 or more bison) but may be capped at a lower number • Either sex but cow harvest may be encouraged 	

Guiding Principles

These adaptive management principles will guide the **implementation** process.

Respect bison and other wildlife.

- Only take what you need – and use all that you take.
- Apply a precautionary principle in management decisions.
- Minimize impacts on the land and other wildlife.

Respect all land users.

- Promote First Nations rights and land use.
- Raise awareness, especially among youth.
- Minimize impacts on other land users.

Management accountability and transparency.

- Communicate proactively.
- Be transparent and share harvest information.
- Keep things as simple as possible.

Bison hunting is a privilege and a tool.

- Manage harvest to balance opportunities and effects.
- Promote fair chase.
- Be inclusive and listen to all land users.

Section 5: Plan Summary

To summarize, here are three of the **most notable changes** being proposed in the updated draft plan:

1. Manage bison more like other big game species.

- The previous plan aimed to regulate the growth of the bison population, mainly through harvest (i.e., hunting efforts).
- The new draft plan manages bison sustainably, like other wildlife, while allowing them to be subject to the full force of nature (hunting, predation, natural disasters, climate change, etc.).

2. Removal of a target population size.

- The previous plan set a goal of managing the herd to a maximum herd size of 1,000 adult bison.
- The new draft plan sets a management goal of a minimum herd size of 1,000 adult bison.

3. New harvest model.

- The new harvest guidelines set a clear, predictable management approach based on the best-known data about herd size.
- This creates transparency about decision-making processes and is intended to give bison managers more concrete direction.

Section 6: About the Public Engagement Process

- This public engagement process was led by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board (the Board) with assistance from Government of Yukon (Dept. of Environment) and three Renewable Resources Councils (Dan Keyi, Alsek, and Carmacks).
- The intent of this process was to hear from a diverse group of Yukoners that are interested in the future of Wood Bison in the territory and learn what they think about the proposed draft plan.
- Questions and comments were received from 80 Yukoners during four community meetings:
 - Burwash Landing: March 15, 2023
 - Haines Junction: April 5, 2023
 - Whitehorse: April 18, 2023
 - Carmacks: April 19, 2023
- The Board also held a public survey to gather feedback from Yukoners. It was available both digitally and as a hardcopy:
 - The public survey had 130 respondents in total.
 - 123 surveys were completed online.
 - 7 surveys were completed manually.
- The Board will also consider several written submissions:
 - Wildlife Conservation Society, Arctic Beringia Program
 - Letters from concerned residents (x2)
 - Dan Keyi RRC (to be received)
 - Alsek RRC (to be received)
- The Board will review and consider all feedback equally, and then use it to inform its recommendations on the draft plan to the Minister of Environment.

Section 7: Summary of Survey Responses

- Most respondent are supportive of bison reintroduction, and the fact that the population is still growing (80%).
- **66% of respondents either agree or fully agree** with the idea of managing bison like other species.
- **80% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with Goal 1** – restoring a viable bison population to the land.
- **73% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with Goal 2** – promoting a greater awareness of, and connection to, bison.
- **79% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with Goal 3** –strengthening cooperative bison management; and improving knowledge-sharing between bison management partners and the public.
- **84% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with Goal 4** – providing opportunities for respectful, sustainable bison hunting and providing a plan for continued sustainable harvest opportunities.
 - 78% of respondents agree or fully agree with the proposed interim harvest guidelines (part of Goal 4).
- **67% of survey respondents think it is perfectly acceptable to have fewer harvest opportunities** if it means protecting the health and future well-being of the Wood Bison population.
 - **91% of survey respondents think that it is acceptable, somewhat acceptable, or perfectly acceptable to have fewer harvest opportunities** if it means protecting the health and future well-being of the Wood Bison population.
- **79% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied Goal 5**, acknowledging and addressing human-bison coexistence issues, and working towards addressing local concerns that people have about living close to bison.
- **79% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied Goal 6**, assessing the effects of bison on ecosystems.
- **80% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied Goal 7**, securing habitat for the Aishihik population, in alignment with the national recovery strategy for bison.
- **71% of respondents agree with the guiding management principles.**

Section 8: Summary of Key Themes

The presence of bison in the Yukon remains a complex social and ecological issue. Various communities and user groups have differing views about the significance, value, and role of bison on the landscape. Therefore, our approach toward bison management must be inclusive, comprehensive, and forward-thinking.

During our public engagement, the Board heard comments about the following topics:

Acceptance of bison – some respondents valued bison, while others were opposed to their re-introduction.

Examples of comments received:

- Bison hunting is a privilege. We need to reconnect to it culturally.
- Bison reduce harvest on other ungulates that are important to Indigenous subsistence harvest and culture.
- We need to protect the animals. Limit hunting/ access capabilities to protect the herd from being overrun by skidoos in March. Close the hunt at the end of February.
- Bison capture carbon, promote biodiversity, and maintain rare grasslands.
- Bison should not be given conservation priority over other species. Identify and protect key habitat for other “native” species first.
- Moderation of human (hunter) access is needed to minimize impacts to the land and other land users.
- More bison seals and permits are sold every year. We have a growing population. More hunters = more problems.
- Open hunting all year round; eliminate the bison altogether.
- Bison hunters are affecting trappers and traplines. It needs to be addressed right away.

Population size – some respondents suggested a cap on population, while others were happy with herd growth.

Examples of comments received:

- We should celebrate the herd growing. Do not cap it.
- Maintain minimum herd size closer to 1,500 or 2,000. This ensures sustainable harvest opportunities.
- Bison are an invasive/ transplanted species, and therefore, the plan needs to retain a maximum (target) population.
- The herd should not be allowed to grow uncontrollably. Set a target population and have an action plan in place if they grow above it.
- Harvest has not been successful in reducing or controlling bison numbers. Removing a target population is giving up on planning for the future.

Managing harvest – some respondents were not in favour of any limits to Yukon resident harvest of bison, while others suggested ideas to limit harvest (permit hunts for high traffic areas, limiting tags, etc.). Respondents also commented on season duration/ dates (either in favour of longer or shorter seasons), and some did not support cow harvest.

Examples of comments received:

- Harvest opportunities are important for food security. Do not implement a PHA.
- Limit bison harvest to residents only, increase qualifications for residency (more than 1 year to qualify).
- Stop promoting cow harvest. Remove it from interim guidelines, it does not support the notion of sustainability. (i.e., harvest of a cow could disqualify the hunter from buying a tag the next year)
- The bison hunting season should be the same as other species, not during winter.
- Hunting quotas are too high. PHAs should be used in high traffic areas.
- If sustainability is key, limit the number of tags issued within the core range per year.
- The plan doesn't link bison to the harvest of other species. Consider limiting the number of ungulates a hunter can take in a single year. Or introduce party hunts.
- Plan does not account for how the health of individual animals will contribute towards sound management decisions.
- Idea of an area closure is alarming. What does it mean? Why not regulate snowmobile use or create time limited permits?
- Criteria for "cultural harvest" within harvest guidelines is vague.

Need for analysis – surveying and monitoring the bison to understand impacts of bison on the land, to other species, and the impacts of bison hunters.

Examples of comments received:

- We need annual population surveys to get a better sense of how many bison are out there. Ensures harvest does not outpace population growth.
- Bison are big animals. We do not fully understand all the potential effects they are having on the land, other species, culture, and heritage.
- We need to continue studying the effects bison are having on the land, other species, and people.
- The herd estimate is too low, based on personal observations.
- We don't know what an optimum population size is. So, is growth a good or bad thing? Frequent monitoring of herd size and impact is essential.
- Include Traditional and local knowledge in population assessments and estimates.
- Identify and protect key wildlife areas and habitat. The plan needs to clearly outline commitments to what this means and how it will be done.
- Include concrete measurables, deliverables, timelines, and associated costs.

Education and awareness – a desire to continue educating and training bison hunters to be stewards of the land.

Examples of comments received:

- Create a mandatory bison hunting course. We need more respectful hunting practices.
- Promote meat sharing. One bison per household, etc.
- First Nations traditional laws and beliefs should be incorporated into the harvest guidelines and shared with all bison hunters.

During the public engagement, we learned that many Yukoners are still uncertain about the use, meaning, and implications of “Adaptive Management”. Some Yukoners question whether the Adaptive Management approach will be the best fit for bison management and maintaining future harvest opportunities.

We also received numerous comments and concerns about the significant time and resources required to study and monitor changes in bison population trends and behaviours under the adaptive management approach.

These concerns extend the allocation of additional time and resources toward ongoing monitoring of social attitudes around the general acceptability of bison as a wildlife species and the importance of it as a food source.

Finally, Yukoners would like the plan to include firm commitments about the frequency of aerial population surveys and timelines for publishing the results.

Section 9: Next Steps

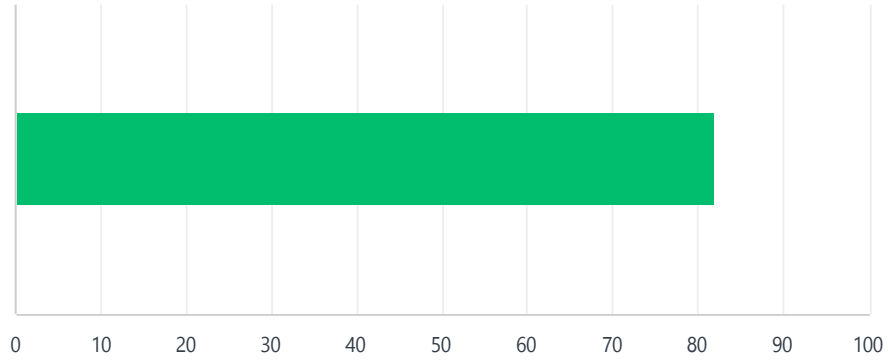
1. The Board deliberates the findings of what we have learned during the public engagement.
2. The Board discusses what elements of the plan need to be revised, if any, based on the public feedback.
3. The Board will send a recommendation letter to the Minister of Environment about the draft plan.
4. Government of Yukon (YG) will consult with the appropriate Yukon First Nations.
5. Changes will either be made to the plan, or it will be recommended for approval by Cabinet.
6. YG will route the plan for approval.
7. Target timeline for release is before next bison hunting season (Sept 1 or Nov 1, 2023).

Appendix A: Detailed Analysis of the Public Survey

Public survey results begin on the next page.

Q1: How do you feel about Wood Bison's reintroduction to the Yukon?

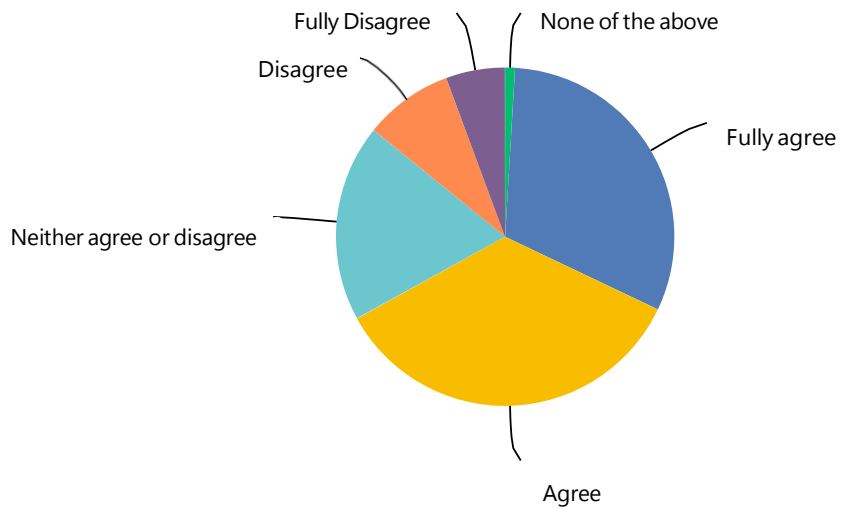
Answered: 120 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
		82	9,818
Total Respondents: 120			

Q2: Do you agree with bison being managed the same as other species?

Answered: 106 Skipped: 17



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.94%	1
Fully agree	31.13%	33
Agree	34.91%	37
Neither agree or disagree	18.87%	20
Disagree	8.49%	9
Fully Disagree	5.66%	6
TOTAL		106

Q3: Comments, concerns, or suggestions with this management approach?

Answered: 44 Skipped: 79

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Until we fully understand interactions with other species and potential negative impact on other species and on the land, I would suggest the population be kept at a maximum closer to 1000 animals.	5/18/2023 1:23 PM
2	Impact of hunting on other species and the landscape need to be considered and issues mitigated, e.g. restricted vehicle access, leave no trace, habitat destruction...	5/15/2023 7:35 AM
3	Bison are a transplanted invasive species that is impacting land animals and people. I acknowledge, they may have occupied this range many years ago, but so did mammoth and big cats. Elk and associated winter ticks fall into this same category. Biologists making decisions with no consideration of consequences or consultation with people most affected. Yukon needs to accept responsibility for their actions.	5/13/2023 9:36 AM
4	The hunting season for bison should not be longer than other hunted species.	5/8/2023 3:28 PM
5	These animals should have never been brought here	5/2/2023 6:36 PM
6	Give all other species a break during the harsh survival months of winter. Hunt bison during the regular season.	5/1/2023 9:29 AM
7	Concerns with no target population size set - more so on the maximum size. Due to concerns about ecological and cultural impacts if the herd gets large enough they escape the pressures of hunting and expand rapidly there could be implications for culture and the land. The harvest should keep them in check and increases as the herd does but at some point we cant harvest enough and they will grow to and past carrying capacity (hopefully being able to reach equilibrium without too many consequences and then the rest of the environment if disturbed will follow. I do agree that they need to be managed like other spp. and we have a unique opportunity but have concerns because unlike other spp. the bison are heavily concentrated in on area with high cultural and ecological values so a large herd could change things quickly.	4/28/2023 10:20 AM
8	Similar to Elk, re-introduced to provide new hunting opportunities and too take pressure off local ungulates like moose and caribou, alternate food source	4/25/2023 4:01 PM
9	I believe there are enough Bison to continue hunting as usual...no permit applications.	4/21/2023 9:18 PM
10	Concerned of overpopulation of the herd and damage caused to the land by increased hunters	4/21/2023 6:33 PM
11	Let the bison population grow! Remove trailhead signs recommending Female Cow Bison harvest.	4/20/2023 2:03 PM
12	It's not really accurate to say manage the same as other species. The harvest encourages the taking of pregnant cows, often when they are late term, something that would never be encouraged with other species.	4/18/2023 10:03 AM
13	As long as bison tags don't go to permit I have no problem with how the government chooses to manage them	4/18/2023 9:31 AM
14	Limit hunters coming from other provinces to hunt and make it require more than a year residency to obtain a hunt permit	4/17/2023 10:37 PM
15	Why does the season run so much longer compared to other big game species?	4/17/2023 9:28 PM
16	No	4/17/2023 9:19 PM
17	The interim guidelines allow to the harvest of cows. If the goal is sustainability and to have the population fluctuate due to natural variations, only bulls should be harvested. This would align with the management of other game species. The population should be allow to grow naturally without cows being harvested and especially without cows being targeted or encouraged.	4/17/2023 8:15 PM
18	It's a bit unclear in this question, if this means you'll be adhering to preserving the 1000 animal	4/17/2023 4:30 PM

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minimum herd count. It feels important to manage for a minimum sustainable herd size.

19	Bisons conservation status should not prioritize it over species like moose, caribou an sheep that are not as sustainable hunting levels eg Alsek region long term permit hunts. Critical habitats for other spp should be identified and protected as well.	4/17/2023 2:47 PM
20	Managing the bison herd is very different from other species in the Yukon. It is a herd that will greatly vary in harvest based on conditions. It is also a herd that was re-introduced, so it is not the same as the rest of our wildlife that has withstood high harvest numbers both by FN and none-FN.	4/17/2023 1:31 PM
21	they are invading sheep range and critical sheep winter range	4/17/2023 1:24 PM
22	I am fully in support of not capping the bison population. Based on the population of this species across Canada we should actively support the growth of this population that is doing so well in the Yukon. To me this is something all yukoners should celebrate!	4/17/2023 12:51 PM
23	Need the ability to remain flexible and make sound decisions in a timely manner. Managing wildlife is not a popularity contest and the right decisions should be made for the right reasons to ensure the species is variable for future generations!	4/16/2023 6:45 PM
24	I think its important to understand what the recruitment numbers are before making judgement on how to manage the population and what is affecting those numbers	4/15/2023 7:07 AM
25	I feel the current population estimate for Bison is too low so I am afraid that the herd will continue to grow to an unmanageable number soon.	4/14/2023 10:49 PM
26	This approach assumes that the 2018 objective was accurate and is still current but that is not made clear in the plan or other documents, nor is it clearly explained why the bison herd can or should be managed like other species. Does the same approach work for different species? Why or why not?	4/13/2023 9:15 PM
27	My concern with this approach is that many to most management plans have political goals and are not strictly based on science. This comment is a result of working as a YG employee and is factual, but I am sure it will be denied.	4/11/2023 4:18 PM
28	This approach is consistent with the management philosophy for other species.	4/10/2023 6:49 PM
29	I would still like the opportunity to harvest a bison	4/6/2023 4:45 PM
30	I'm unclear. The bison push the moose population out of hunting spots, and more hunters come to find bison and impact on the trails, use and general well being of the areas. More hunters = more problems	4/6/2023 3:38 PM
31	Accurate population surveys need to be conducted annually so harvest does not outpace population resulting in a sudden closure or reduction of hunting opportunity.	4/5/2023 10:04 AM
32	Too many bison, have huge physical impact on landscape. Very damaging	4/2/2023 9:22 AM
33	Bison are still a threatened species nationally and should be managed accordingly	3/31/2023 7:47 AM
34	Just don't limit hunting opportunities. They were reintroduced to hunt. If they can't support being hunted, then they are not being used as intended	3/30/2023 10:07 PM
35	With a healthy robust population and continuing growth there is no need to implement ANY hunting restrictions	3/30/2023 9:32 PM
36	Should be open season and no limit on male or female harvest	3/30/2023 9:31 AM
37	We need more bison, and we need more human bison interaction to allow first nations to rediscover the cultural benefit of bison. This is a huge success story that definitely does not get enough coverage. Hunting is helping the herd grow in a spectacular way which is protecting rare grassland from being claimed by ubiquitous forest helping biodiversity carbon storage goals(ie Bison store carbon safely in soil whereas forests are unable to store carbon safely) and a move towards recovering the lost grassland of the north.	3/29/2023 2:36 PM
38	Bison populations are doing well, and we aren't seeing major impacts to other species yet, there's no reason to limit their population growth. They should be managed like all other ungulates.	3/29/2023 9:18 AM
39	Bison have very minimal predation compared to other species in the Yukon. Hunting is the	3/29/2023 9:11 AM

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best management Tool

40	I agree with the concept but i fear this will be an excuse for the government to try and restrict harvest for arbitrary reasons so that is why i am against it. If the government had a better track record of doing something other than simply limiting hunting opportunities and never increasing, i would agree with treating bison like everything else.	3/29/2023 8:50 AM
41	Unlike other species, bison are a transplanted population whereby First Nations do not have subsistence rights to. FN have unlimited access to moose and caribou and sheep at any time of year, any sex and any number unless limited for conservation. Bison provide a unique opportunity for licensed hunters to meet a food need and in doing so reduce pressure on other species that support FN subsistence harvest. Management options need to respect this distinction.	3/28/2023 8:18 PM
42	same management but should keep studying them more than other species as the management might not be still vary from regular species	3/28/2023 6:44 PM
43	Sustainability for the species itself including the sustainability of the ecosystems and the other species that it coexists with is important.	3/28/2023 1:10 PM
44	As I stated before, having bison act like other Yukon species and, once they have filled their niche, fluctuate naturally is the appropriate way to manage Yukon wildlife, including Bison.	3/17/2023 12:16 PM

Q4:

Goal 1: Ensure a viable bison population is restored to the land. This goal is intended to align with the natural recovery strategy for bison. It is a shift to managing harvest sustainably and allowing the population to fluctuate due to natural variations caused by predation, natural disasters, habitat loss, and climate change.

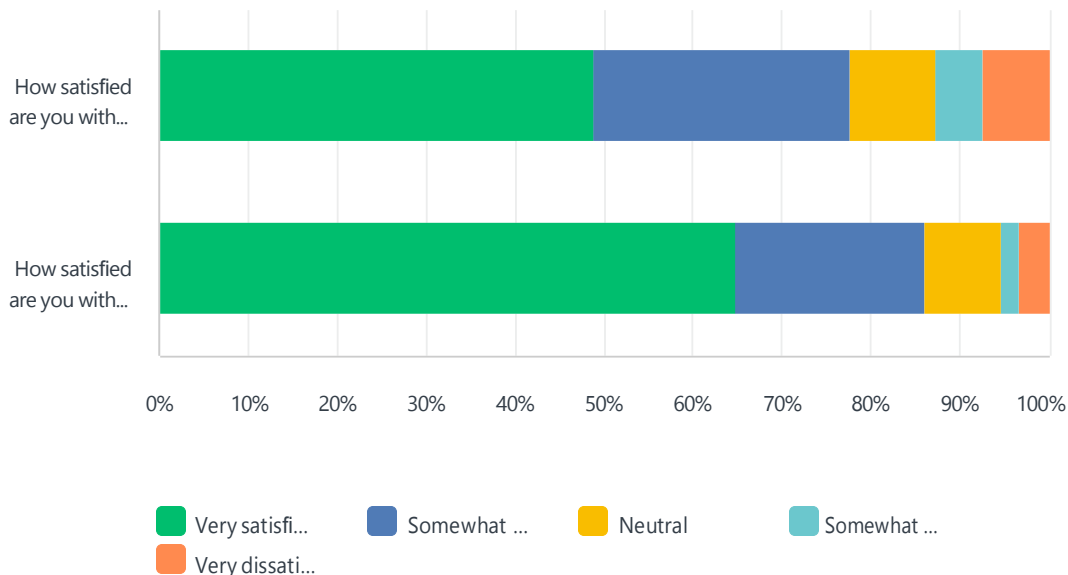
Outcome 1: The Aishihik bison population maintains a minimum population of 1,000 animals.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 1: Track herd numbers Monitor population trends (increasing vs. decreasing) Be prepared to change management actions based on current data.

Outcome 2: The Aishihik bison herd remains disease-free and genetically pure.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 2: Assess genetic diversity Prevent contact with livestock and other bison Develop a health monitoring and mitigation plan.

Answered: 94 Skipped: 29



	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
How satisfied are you with Goal 1, Outcome 1?	48.94% 46	28.72% 27	9.57% 9	5.32% 5	7.45% 7	94	1.94
How satisfied are you with Goal 1, Outcome 2?	64.89% 61	21.28% 20	8.51% 8	2.13% 2	3.19% 3	94	1.57

Q5:

Goal 2: Promote greater awareness of, and connection to, bison. This goal fosters an appreciation for bison in the Yukon through increased understanding and cultural connection.

Outcome 3: Inform and involve communities in bison management.

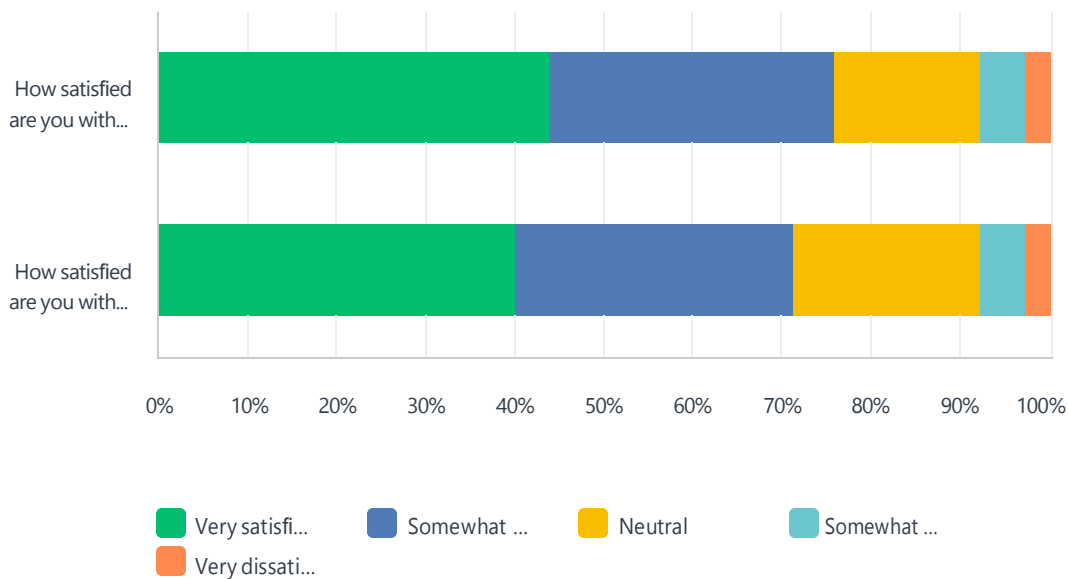
Management actions to achieve Outcome 3: Host community events

Make research results accessible to the public Understand the range of attitudes toward bison.

Outcome 4: Increase public outreach and appreciation about bison.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 4: Foster bison appreciation among youth Distribute information about bison Promote bison viewing Promote bison appreciation through the arts.

Answered: 91 Skipped: 32



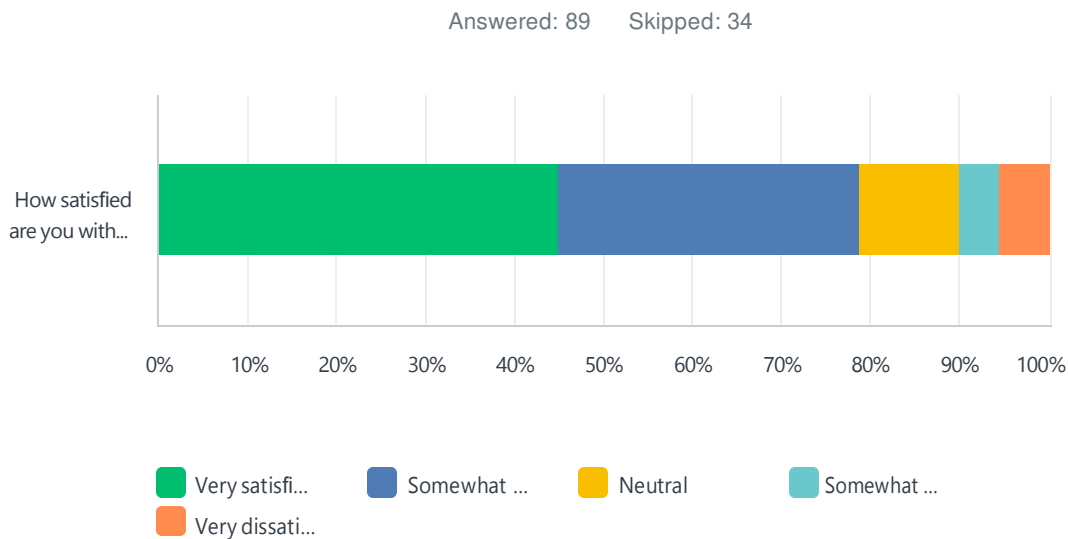
	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
How satisfied are you with Goal 2, Outcome 3?	43.96% 40	31.87% 29	16.48% 15	4.40% 4	3.30% 3	91	1.91
How satisfied are you with Goal 2, Outcome 4?	39.56% 36	31.87% 29	20.88% 19	5.49% 5	2.20% 2	91	1.99

Q6:

Goal 3: Strengthen cooperative bison management. This goal works towards improved knowledge-sharing between bison management partners and the public.

Outcome 5: Share information, listen, and participate in collaborative decision-making.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 5: Integrate traditional, local, and scientific knowledge. Increase communication among all bison management partners. Continue to hold regular Aishihik Bison Technical Team meetings.



	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
How satisfied are you with Goal 3, Outcome 5?	44.94% 40	33.71% 30	12.36% 11	3.37% 3	5.62% 5	89	1.91

Q7:

Goal 4: Provide opportunities for respectful and sustainable bison hunting. This goal provides a plan for continued sustainable harvest opportunities. Bison managers will collaborate using "adaptive management" strategies to do so. This goal also addresses concerns about the effects bison hunting has on the land. Bison hunting is increasingly popular, and there are numerous concerns about the impacts it is having.

Adaptive management is a process for continuously improving management practices. It starts with developing strategies and actions based on management objectives. Those actions are implemented and then evaluated for their effectiveness. They may be modified or adjusted based on the results. This approach provides flexibility and is possible through observation, analysis, and application of new information.

Outcome 6: Maintain sustainable long-term bison hunting opportunities.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 6: Bison Technical Team agrees on annual harvest allocation, uses interim harvest guidelines, and suggests adaptive management actions Use a combination of scientific and Traditional Knowledge to guide decision-making Monitor harvest statistics and share them publicly.

Outcome 7: Support hunters to be active stewards in bison management.

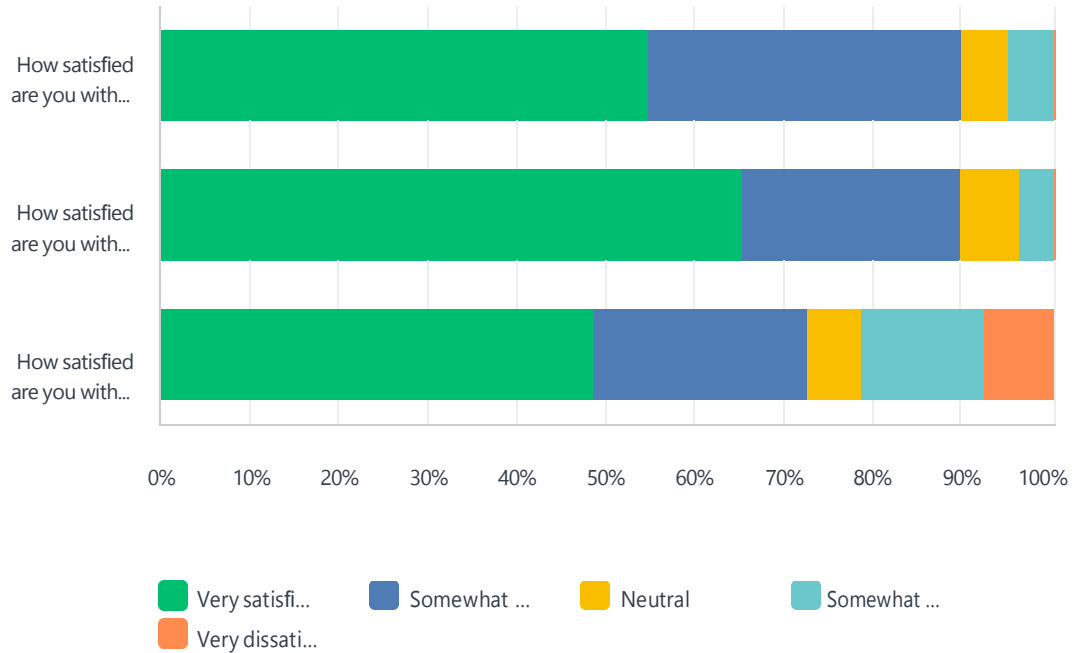
Management actions to achieve Outcome 7: Provide training on safe and ethical bison hunting. Engage hunters in sample collection Encourage hunter reports of observations. Communicate harvest management objectives.

Outcome 8: Encourage respectful hunting and reduce the effects of hunters on the land.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 8: Conduct outreach to reduce hunter impacts. Promote cultural sensitivity of First Nation lands. Consider reducing permits in problem areas. Consider protecting ecologically and culturally sensitive areas from bison hunting.

Answered: 82 Skipped: 41

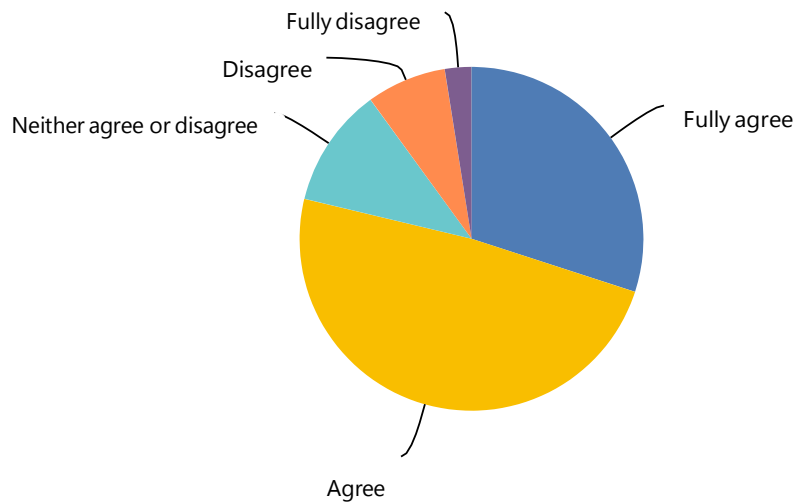
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	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
How satisfied are you with Goal 4, Outcome 6?	54.88% 45	34.15% 28	6.10% 5	3.66% 3	1.22% 1	82	1.62
How satisfied are you with Goal 4, Outcome 7?	65.43% 53	24.69% 20	6.17% 5	2.47% 2	1.23% 1	81	1.49
How satisfied are you with Goal 4, Outcome 8?	48.75% 39	23.75% 19	6.25% 5	13.75% 11	7.50% 6	80	2.08

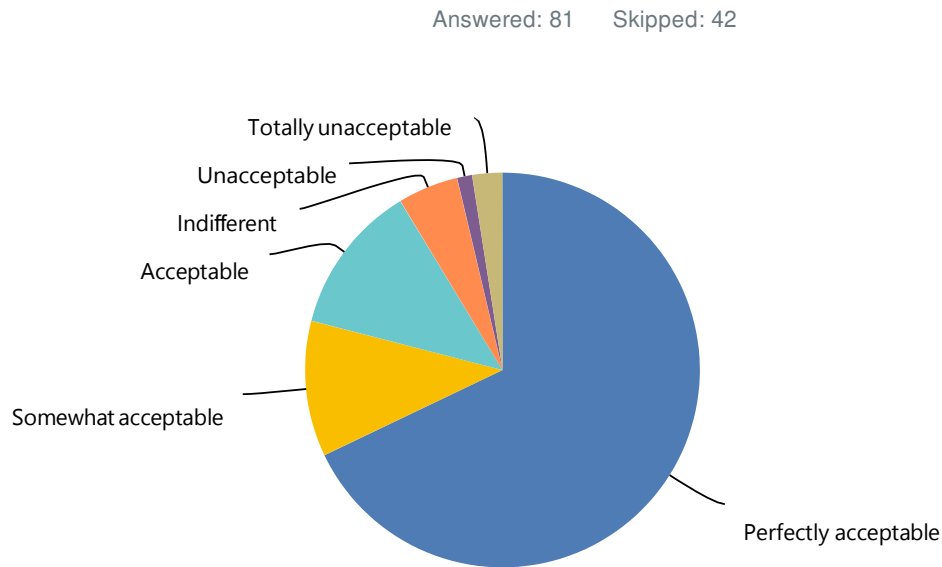
Q8: Do you agree with the proposed harvest guidelines?

Answered: 80 Skipped: 43



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.00%	0
Fully agree	30.00%	24
Agree	48.75%	39
Neither agree or disagree	11.25%	9
Disagree	7.50%	6
Fully disagree	2.50%	2
TOTAL		80

Q9: Is it acceptable to have fewer harvest opportunities if it means protecting the health and future well-being of the Wood Bison population?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.00%	0
Perfectly acceptable	67.90%	55
Somewhat acceptable	11.11%	9
Acceptable	12.35%	10
Indifferent	4.94%	4
Unacceptable	1.23%	1
Somewhat unacceptable	0.00%	0
Totally unacceptable	2.47%	2
TOTAL		81

Q10: Comments, concerns, or suggestions for the interim harvest guidelines?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 77

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	White people should have equal access to and right to hunt bison on non-FN lands if there is reduced harvest.	5/21/2023 1:24 PM
2	Have a maximum number and action plan if it goes beyond that number.	5/18/2023 2:06 PM
3	The guidelines take into account population numbers, but how frequently is a scientific population estimate made? How is TEK/LK incorporated into the population estimate in interim years? The guidelines also take into account the population level metrics, but what about disease or negative health perimeters? Genetic diversity is mentioned but in future, if we have other measures of individual health will these be considered in the management decisions? Given the theme of this plan, I assume the BTT would incorporate all health information into decision making but I'm not sure that is mentioned or that veterinary input is accounted for specifically in the plan.	5/15/2023 7:48 AM
4	Hunting has not been successful in limiting population growth so other options need to be considered. Could meet food security and population goals by having a roundup and removal of animals. Removing a population goal means you have given up on a plan for the future. These animals are not indigenous wildlife. Too many bison and far too many hunters on the landscape.	5/13/2023 9:47 AM
5	Concern with reducing harvesting opportunities considering how popular hunting bison has become and the pressure it takes off hunting other valued ungulates such as moose and caribou	5/11/2023 3:50 PM
6	First Nations traditional laws and beliefs should be incorporated into the harvest guidelines.	5/8/2023 3:36 PM
7	Need a definition on what a "community hunt" is defined as? What are the criteria to be eligible to conduct a community hunt?	5/5/2023 11:19 AM
8	I would want to know why the numbers would drop. Disease? Overhunting? Poaching?	5/3/2023 1:14 PM
9	Open up hunting year round till there is no more left	5/2/2023 6:43 PM
10	This survey sucks!	5/1/2023 9:34 AM
11	Interest in the criteria for cultural harvest (in the Less than 1,000 regimes). Yukon FN cannot hunt bison under UFA/subsistence rights rather need a licence to hunt under Yukon Hunting Licence how do FN access this as cultural? Also, what does culture imply? Thinking of the notion the FNs don't only have a culture.. Hunting culture for ex.	4/28/2023 10:46 AM
12	Monitor hunters more closely	4/21/2023 6:38 PM
13	I fully support fewer harvest opportunities if it means better bison population health and well being.	4/20/2023 2:12 PM
14	Ethics and morals need to be educated about the bison hunt. These animals were advertised and treated as pretty much an invasive or intrusive species in the past. It was almost like the mentality (non intentionally) has shifted into a "cull" mentality. To reap and pillar the bison population as it's "too large"; "destroying moose or caribou habitat populations"; "recommend taking cows". This reminds me of the invasive species in New Zealand. No pointing fingers at why or how it came about, that is irrelevant but this mindset needs to stop and to do so, appreciation of the bison is required. In what capacity should there be a recommendations of cows being harvested? Why is there a season where you can hunt cows when they are pregnant? You are taking multiple animals out at once? why is there hunters chasing bison for 15 plus kilometres in March and causing detrimental stress to these animals? Why are there hunters taking 6-7 shots at an animal? Why are hunters not recovering wounded bison? Careless. Hunters have the feeling of doing a favor by removing the bison (deemed as a pest)	4/19/2023 9:18 AM

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so the lack of morals, ethics and care goes down. Remove March all together in the hunt. maybe half of february. Limit capabilities. Give the herd a chance at recession without having miscarriages because they have been run down by skidoos for many kilometres.

15	The main hunt is in march. This time of year cows are about to give birth. Cow harvests should not be allowed. I also think the minimum population should be closer to current herd size or at least a herd size above 1500.	4/18/2023 8:57 PM
16	This plan doesn't consider linking bison harvest to that of other species. Some Yukoners have unrealistic expectations that they should be able to harvest a moose, a bison, a caribou, a sheep every year. It may be necessary to slowly introduce party hunts or the idea if you get a bison, you don't get a moose that year.	4/18/2023 10:14 AM
17	Limit new hunters to the Yukon, any hunters newer than 3 years must take course on bison hunting. Too man drunks coming up here with guns and snowmobiles just out to shoot and wound bison.	4/17/2023 10:42 PM
18	None	4/17/2023 9:26 PM
19	The guidelines should be based on maintaining a minimum equal to current population size or at least a larger minimum population size than 1000 (eg:1700). Cows should never be allowed to be harvested. Harvesting cows will stop to population from reaching its full potential. Bison are a flagship species in Canada and the Ashihik herd is well positioned to be a large herd with good viewing opportunities along the Alaska highway.	4/17/2023 8:29 PM
20	I am alarmed by the prospect of area closures. We know this doesn't work and just makes other areas more busy. Either plan the whole thing, and come up with a regime that manages the impact of the entire bison hunt (ie time limited permits) or don't bother. Definitely support stricter guidelines for snowmachine use in the back country.	4/17/2023 4:37 PM
21	Consider making bison hunting workshops mandatory esp if distinguishing between cows and bulls is required, if there are changes year to year bison hunters need to be aware of etc	4/17/2023 2:52 PM
22	I prefer a bull only harvest. Perhaps something like limiting a hunter's ability to get a tag the year following a cow harvest would encourage bull hunting without making cow harvest illegal.	4/17/2023 1:55 PM
23	So far, data presented about herd health and field work to access herd health by Yukon Environment has been poor. These harvest guidelines are simply thrown out to appease all interested parties in bison management, but where is the science that stands behind it. The herd does not fluctuate in size dramatically from year-to-year, so the fact you would possibly encourage people to harvest cows resembles the fact little to no, or poor data, is being collected and kept.	4/17/2023 1:36 PM
24	If only this science-based approach were more reasonably applied to other species!	4/17/2023 1:05 PM
25	Totally reasonable. Active bison hunter and happy to have them on the landscape. Hope the herd continues to flourish and expand their range.	4/17/2023 12:54 PM
26	Promote sharing of meat and consider limiting the number of ungulates harvested by a single person each year.	4/16/2023 6:53 PM
27	Based on my experience on the land over the years and the observations I have made I feel the current Bison population estimate is way too low. Harvest levels need to be increased to keep the herd growth in check and reduce negative impacts to the land and native wildlife populations.	4/14/2023 11:04 PM
28	When the herd is less than 1000, hunting for any reason should still be capped at a lower number. At what low point should there be no hunting either sex for any purpose?	4/13/2023 9:30 PM
29	If the herd size drops below 1000 animals then all hunting should cease.	4/11/2023 4:24 PM
30	The priority should be to maintain bison on the landscape at and harvest secondary. Reducing the hunting pressure by limiting opportunities (tags) issued within the core area per year is preferred.	4/10/2023 6:54 PM
31	I think the hunting quotas are too high	4/8/2023 2:59 PM
32	To be clear; this was a reintroduced species, that is still considered endangered. The population is healthy, the heard is healthy; I think it's premature to open it up and bring it close to that minimum of 1000. I understand, that's a minimum and not a hard number; but when	4/6/2023 3:54 PM

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things change and have limits; some panic respond and encourage their friends/family to go blasting about. Could a safe reduction in permits issued to every person who blinks be a safer approach (i.e. I hear and meet hunters every year who are new to the Yukon, been here less than a year and boom. Out hunting). Causing all sorts of issues. Could there be a minimum number of years to be in the Yukon before being let loose? 2-3 year residency to be granted a hunting permit on Yukon's traditional territory, by that time, that person has become acclimatized and hopefully aware of the culture, respect, and values Yukoners hold

33	I believe other options are available for sustainable harvest - ie:1 bison per family/household... no household needs more than one bison per year too many people are simply harvesting bison for the sake of harvesting a bison (ie: 2 person household no kids, kill 2 bison every year)	4/5/2023 7:31 PM
34	I would like to see the population sustained well above the 1000 animal minimum, closer to current levels of 2000 animals, to provide ample harvest opportunity.	4/5/2023 10:08 AM
35	My biggest concern is to control or reduce population. I am concerned about effects of bison on cultural heritage and ecology, which primarily affects CAFN TT for a large part of its TT. It's not an issue of not appreciating Bison, it's that they are transplants that have drastically changed that landscape. The effects of the animals and the effects of the hunters pursuing those animals on the landscape cannot be overstated. More effort should be placed on respectful hunting practices recognizing and minimizing damage to cultural hertiage etc	4/2/2023 9:33 AM
36	Permit Hunts should be used in easily accessed, high use areas to spread the pressure over a larger area.	3/31/2023 8:16 AM
37	It should be all liberal hunting u til the population is under 1000, then a percentage. Please don't use this as a make work project with bored government employees micromanaging everything.	3/30/2023 10:11 PM
38	No decisions on reducing harvest opportunities should be allowed to be made without knowing harvest numbers of FN population. Limit FN to the same harvest opportunities as everyone else before reducing opportunities for the rest of us.	3/30/2023 9:38 PM
39	Goal 8 seems vague. First Nations already have control over who gets to hunt on their settlement lands. Not sure how reducing permits in conflict areas would be any benefit. All Yukoners should have equal access on non settlement lands.	3/30/2023 10:10 AM
40	The guidelines follow sound biological information	3/30/2023 9:33 AM
41	As long as politics does not become involved.	3/29/2023 2:38 PM
42	These harvest guidelines look great but they dictate that we must be conducting surveys at least every other year to understand population trends. Otherwise we will be mismanaging based on old data.	3/29/2023 10:10 AM
43	Again the concept is good but it just looks like a framework for the government to unneccessarily limit harvest opportunities. If the goal is to maintain 1000 animals or more, there should be no limit or restriction until getting under 1000 animals is withing striking distance. If we have never harvested more than 300 bison in a year, there should be absolutley no restriction until the population is below 1300. Even when the population is at 1000, there should still be a 2-4% harvest. this graphic is a perfect example of what i am talking about and fear. Government just making more work for themselves and the result is limiting harvest. The bison population has grown steadily and who knows f it has plateaued, but one day it will, and then that will be the new number, not 1000 animals, and as soon as it goes below that new level, it will go on permit so the government can be in control again.	3/29/2023 9:03 AM
44	What about closing section/zone for part of the hunting season? Or one Bison permit for 2 hunters (well I guess everyone is already sharing there harvest...).	3/28/2023 8:30 PM
45	Consider opportunities for Canadian non-residents of the Yukon to hunt bison	3/28/2023 7:18 PM
46	There was nowhere to comment after the last several questions, so I just wanted to add in terms of human impacts and the winter hunt's impact on bison- I think it would be very beneficial for hunters to have to take a bison hunting workshop to learn face to face about proper shot placement, fair chase, and ethical hunting strategies. The core region for bison is not that massive and with hunters entering from all angles the entire winter pushing bison from one direction to the next, pretty well non-stop in the toughest season for them to get through and considering the last few years of quite deep snow- I'm not sure what I'm getting at other	3/28/2023 1:28 PM

than sharing that it's something to think about. I'm not sure if it's necessarily ethical or respectful to the species to have them pushed around left right and Center through the snow all winter long- and as we see at all the bison hunting entry points off the highway- there are a ton of people out there. I 100% support bison hunting and am grateful for the privilege I have to experience it, but I do feel somewhat sour inside imagining what it's like for them to be hunted from all directions all winter long. Also- a workshop on proper shot placement and taking an ethical shot would be beneficial and eye opening I think, we know many bison are wounded every winter- last week I was out and a group of hunters got shooting into a herd on a lake. They killed one bison and didn't even know they wounded an other. We tracked the wounded bison and unfortunately we're not able to recover it- but this situation wouldn't exist if the hunters had held back on taking those risky shots into the herd. It's disrespectful and disheartening how often this seems to happen. Again- I don't know the solution- just something to think about. I love hunting bison but I also feel like they are in the middle of a shooting fest and snow machines in their hardest months of the year and I feel uneasy about it.

Q11:

Goal 5: Acknowledge and address human-bison coexistence issues. This goal works towards addressing local concerns that people have about living close to bison.

Outcome 9: Decrease the potential for bison risks to human safety.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 9: Educate people on how to be safe around bison.

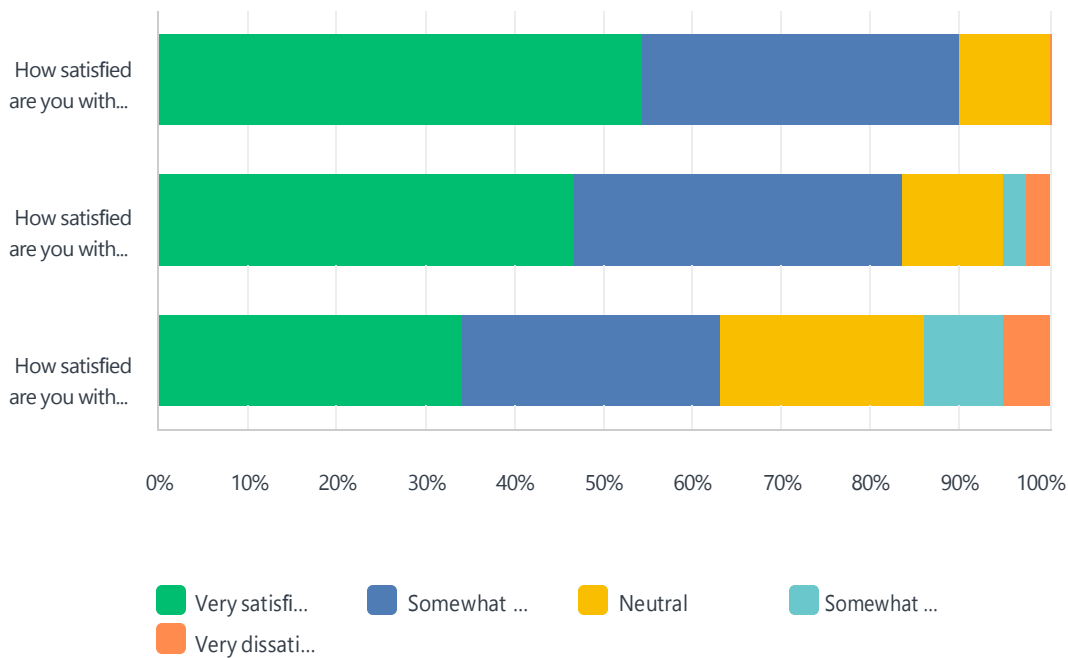
Outcome 10: Reduce collisions with vehicles through various mitigation measures.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 10: Reduce bison attractants along the highway. Review practices to address bison on the highway.

Outcome 11: Mitigate impacts from bison to private property and cultural sites, including on First Nation Settlement Lands.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 11: Address property damage issues
Implement bison exclusion from cultural sites

Answered: 79 Skipped: 44



	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
How satisfied are you with Goal 5, Outcome 9?	54.43% 43	35.44% 28	8.86% 7	0.00% 0	1.27% 1	79	1.58
How satisfied are you with Goal 5, Outcome 10?	46.84% 37	36.71% 29	11.39% 9	2.53% 2	2.53% 2	79	1.77
How satisfied are you with Goal 5, Outcome 11?	34.18% 27	29.11% 23	22.78% 18	8.86% 7	5.06% 4	79	2.22

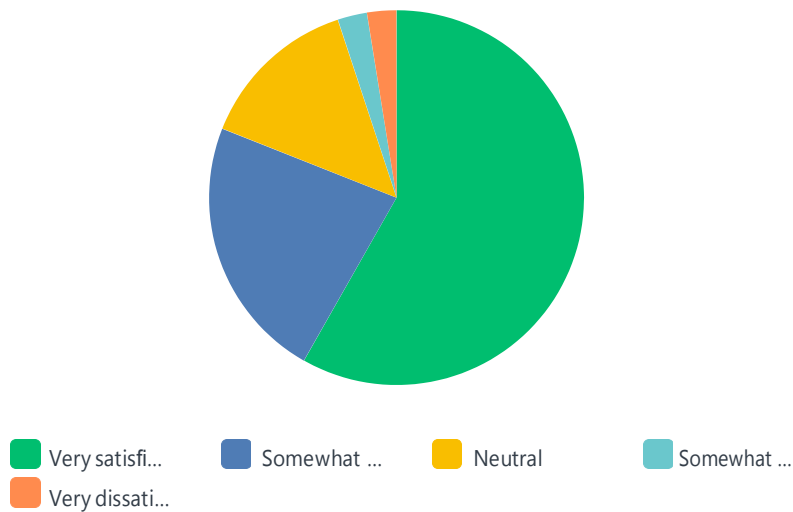
Q12:

Goal 6: Assess the effects of bison on ecosystems. There has been considerable research and local observations about the effects of bison on wildlife and the environment, and this goal suggests continuing this important work.

Outcome 12: Monitor the effects of bison on other species and ecosystems.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 12: Monitor for range expansion
Monitor for bison impacts on other valued wildlife (i.e., moose, caribou, sheep, muskrats)
Monitor for bison impacts on ecosystems and rare plant species.

Answered: 79 Skipped: 44



	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
How satisfied are you with Goal 6, Outcome 12?	58.23% 46	22.78% 18	13.92% 11	2.53% 2	2.53% 2	79	1.68

Q13:

Goal 7: Secure habitat for the Aishihik population. This goal aligns with the national recovery strategy for bison. Habitat loss does not appear to be a pressing threat for the Aishihik herd.

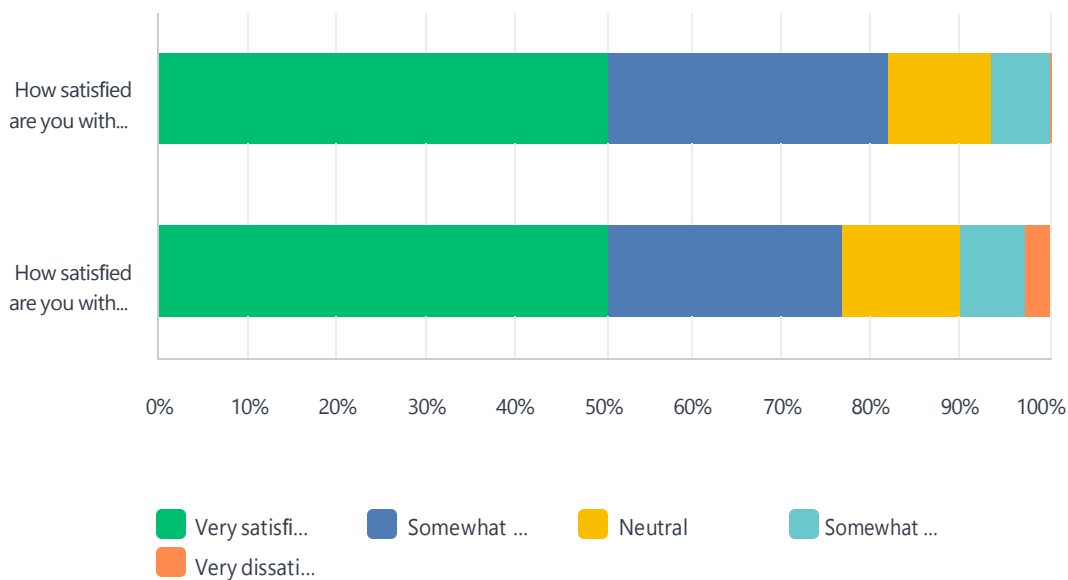
Outcome 13: Identify critical habitat.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 13: Gain knowledge on habitat use Develop and apply an approach to map critical habitat.

Outcome 14: Secure critical habitat.

Management actions to achieve Outcome 14: Provide management guidelines for critical habitat Designate and manage critical habitat.

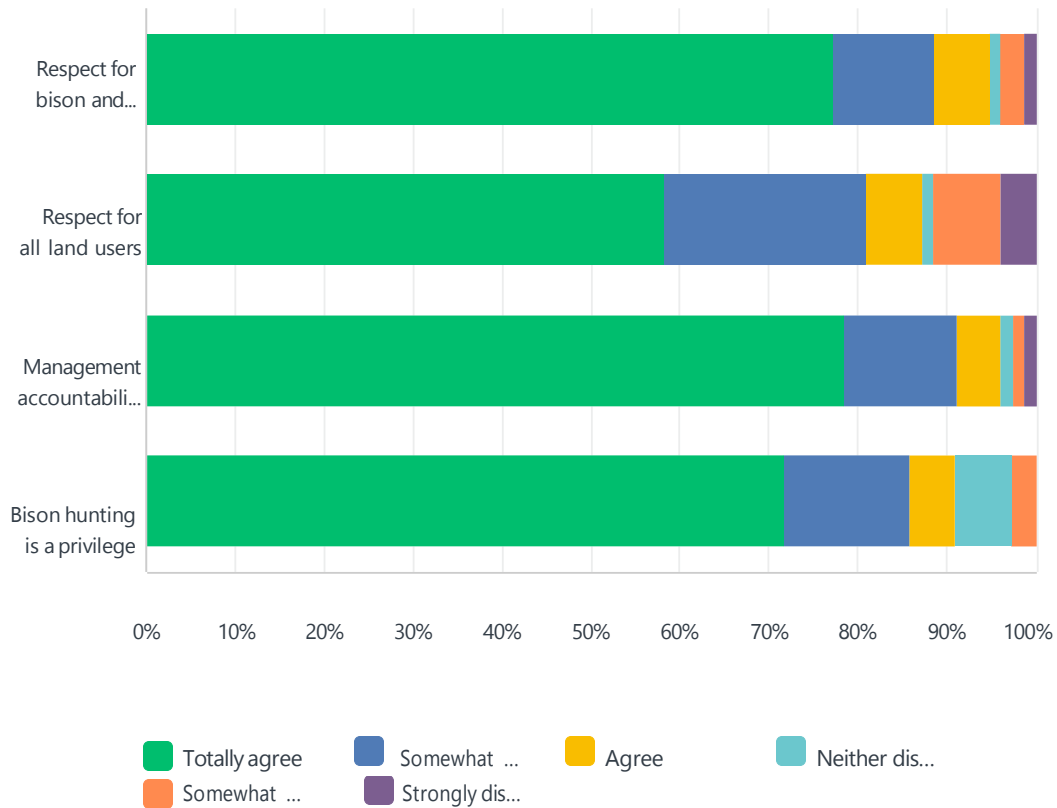
Answered: 79 Skipped: 44



	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
How satisfied are you with Goal 7, Outcome 13?	51.28% 40	30.77% 24	11.54% 9	5.13% 4	1.28% 1	78	1.74
How satisfied are you with Goal 7, Outcome 14?	51.28% 40	25.64% 20	14.10% 11	6.41% 5	2.56% 2	78	1.83

Q14: What do you think about the guiding management principles?

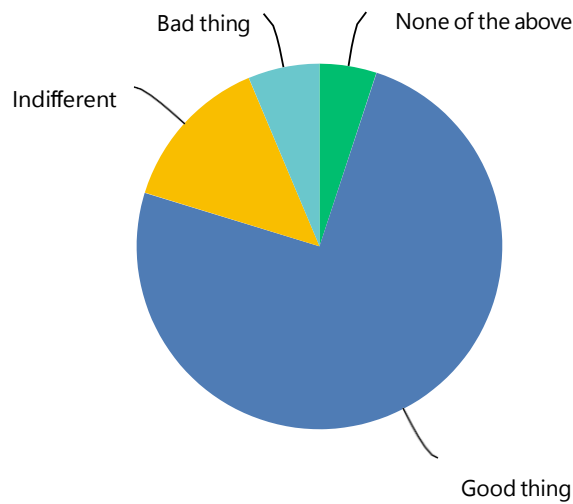
Answered: 79 Skipped: 44



	TOTALLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE OR AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Respect for bison and wildlife	77.22% 61	11.39% 9	6.33% 5	1.27% 1	2.53% 2	1.27% 1	79	1.44
Respect for all land users	58.23% 46	22.78% 18	6.33% 5	1.27% 1	7.59% 6	3.80% 3	79	1.89
Management accountability and transparency	78.48% 62	12.66% 10	5.06% 4	1.27% 1	1.27% 1	1.27% 1	79	1.38
Bison hunting is a privilege	71.79% 56	14.10% 11	5.13% 4	6.41% 5	2.56% 2	0.00% 0	78	1.54

Q15: What do you think about the Aishihik bison population continuing to grow?

Answered: 79 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	5.06%	4
Good thing	74.68%	59
Indifferent	13.92%	11
Bad thing	6.33%	5
TOTAL		79

Q16: Comments or concerns with the growing bison population?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 75

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Interaction with other species, especially sheep, impact of high access and activities in bison range	5/18/2023 2:09 PM
2	In general I feel that the growing bison population is a good thing. However, we have to appreciate that the growth comes with consequences, not just more harvest opportunities!, and if those consequences are not acceptable then management needs to be reevaluated - as this plan lays out.	5/15/2023 8:01 AM
3	Too many bison and too many hunters. All the habitat and social conflict studies over the years were based on a much smaller population size.	5/13/2023 10:05 AM
4	Would involve more liberal harvesting opportunities so don't see this as a bad thing - have never seen bison negatively impact other species so don't see this as a concern	5/11/2023 3:53 PM
5	The minimum number should be 2000.	5/8/2023 3:41 PM
6	This harvesting opportunity limits the competition and stress on moose populations and YFN's who wish to harvest them	5/5/2023 11:22 AM
7	Open hunting all year round. Get rid of them.	5/2/2023 7:22 PM
8	We haven't been able to hunt moose in our area for over thirty years unless First Nations.	5/1/2023 9:36 AM
9	Concerns again about if the herd grows past the point where hunters can harvest enough bison to prevent them from reaching/exceeding the area carrying capacity. Potential for too many bison in one herd/range vs multiple herd in Yukon (Separate from Alaska/BC/other herds)	4/28/2023 11:00 AM
10	I think that we don't know what an optimum populations size is. So is growth a good or bad thing? Frequent monitoring of herd size and impact is essential.	4/21/2023 9:52 PM
11	Both Good & bad; good that it increases access to food, bad, because it increases non-CAFN member's onto our lands of which they also hunt other animals	4/21/2023 6:42 PM
12	Would love to see a healthy growing bison population in the Yukon. Perhaps adjusting the minimum from 1000 to 2000 in the next bison management plan...	4/20/2023 2:16 PM
13	Good. We want it to keep growing vs having the animals extirpated or going on permit, etc.	4/19/2023 9:32 AM
14	Thank you for your survey on the Yukon bison herd. Growing bison populations in the Yukon can bring numerous benefits, including ecological, cultural, and economic benefits. Bison can play an important role in maintaining ecosystem balance by grazing on vegetation and reducing the risk of wildfires. In addition, bison have cultural significance for many communities in the Yukon and are an important symbol of traditional ways of life. Regarding hunting regulations, it is important to ban hunting of female bison in the Yukon to ensure the long-term sustainability of the herd. Female bison are critical to the herd's growth and reproduction, and hunting them can have devastating effects on the population. Finally, a growing bison population can bring significant social and economic benefits to the Yukon. Bison hunting and ecotourism are popular activities, which can generate revenue for local communities and support local businesses. In addition, the presence of bison can attract tourists to the Yukon, contributing to the growth of the tourism industry. Overall, it is important to support the growth of the Yukon bison herd while also implementing responsible and sustainable management practices to ensure the long-term health of the population.	4/18/2023 9:15 PM
15	The plan doesn't really address what would happen if the here reaches much higher numbers.	4/18/2023 10:19 AM
16	Let the population grow. The Yukon is a huge territory and there are only more and more hunters moving here.	4/17/2023 10:44 PM
17	Make Bison Great Again	4/17/2023 9:42 PM

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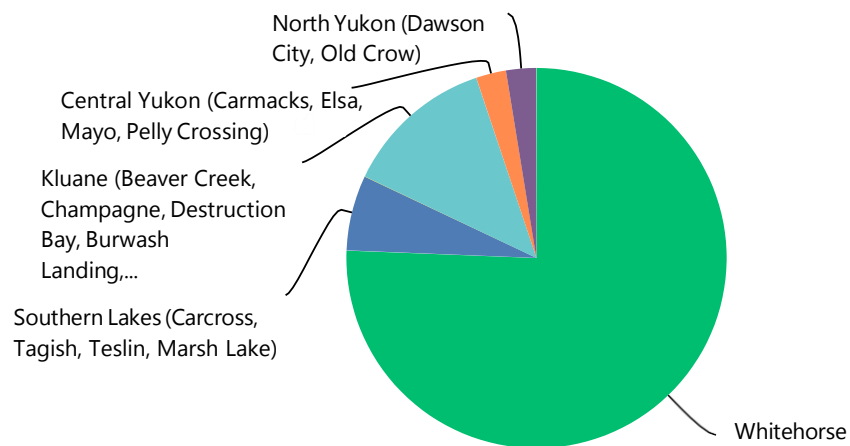
18	Increased hunting activity on active trap line trails and interference with trapping cabins	4/17/2023 9:33 PM
19	I believe the herd should continue to grow and we should promote its growth to increase both bison viewing and hunting opportunities.	4/17/2023 8:36 PM
20	No concerns at this time - we know they don't compete with Moose or other important species. An expanded herd means more areas for people to hunt them and less concentrated effort in popular areas. This also likely means less pressure on other game species, and winter hunt often has less damage to the land than hunt by ATV or truck. I would be worried about them joining the elk in getting too comfortable on farmland.	4/17/2023 4:41 PM
21	Effects on other species and their habitats, heritage and cultural resources, directly from bison but also indirectly from bison hunters	4/17/2023 2:54 PM
22	I think it's good that the population is strong, but perhaps it's growing too large for the limited area they inhabit. This growth could lead to negative consequences.	4/17/2023 1:06 PM
23	None. As with previous comments, I think it's excellent- hope they continue to grow. Although I enjoy hunting them I do find it very odd that we do considering the status of the species....	4/17/2023 12:57 PM
24	No concerns along as there is continued monitoring of habitat and other potential affected species.	4/16/2023 7:00 PM
25	I think the growth is important as it adds a buffer for unforeseen issues like disease or winter die off. It will allow for a cushion to allow for a sustainable herd if these issues occur.	4/15/2023 7:20 AM
26	I like the hunting opportunities that are provided by the growing population but I am concerned about the damage the Bison herds cause to the land and the potential competition for food and habitat that the herds have with native species. I also believe the current population estimate is way too low based on my observations on the land.	4/14/2023 11:14 PM
27	Bison are clearly re-occupying an ecological niche that was vacant for a couple of centuries. It would be great to gain a better understanding of what happened that they disappeared and how they will affect the lands they occupy.	4/14/2023 11:35 AM
28	Hopefully the Yukon can provide a leading example, share data and generally promote lessons learned.	4/13/2023 9:44 PM
29	A population size over 1750 seems most reasonable to manage to. I've watched bison in Yukon for over 30 years and the current abundance level is preferred. Good opportunities for viewing and hunting with minimal negative consequences.	4/10/2023 6:58 PM
30	Concerned that sport hunting may be introduced at some point to help keep numbers low, thus impacting local opportunities.	4/7/2023 6:58 AM
31	With the amount of influx of people moving to the Yukon; the outrageous prices of groceries, it's simple to see that people are turning to harvesting. We also have many new people who are uneducated (ignorant even if accidentally so) to the ways of life up here. Disrespectful to the land protectors, land users, First Nations and general way of life. Leave this population to grow a bit more to contend with the increase of people	4/6/2023 4:00 PM
32	Effects on other wildlife populations in conflict. However since permission on category B lands is essentially impossible to get, harvest efforts may not be as effective as animals will move to protected areas	4/5/2023 7:36 PM
33	The Yukon has a growing population as well with hunter numbers increasing. The bison hunting opportunity can alleviate pressure on hunting of other species such as moose. As long as there is limited impact on other species from bison population growth, the increased opportunity is a good thing.	4/5/2023 10:11 AM
34	As above. Damage to ecology, cultural heritage and traditional use. This is not confined to settlement lands	4/2/2023 9:37 AM
35	There is a lot of room to grow into but it is in urgent need of protection. A few years back Yukon oil and gas dept was looking at exploring for natural gas right in the bison core range north of Whitehorse that would completely alter the country. The wilderness nature of the bison habitat has to be preserved. There already is an oil patch down south, we don't want one here!!!	3/31/2023 2:37 PM
36	Bison are a precious resource of the Yukon and Yukoners. A large healthy herd is the goal.	3/31/2023 8:26 AM

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37	Just don't limit hunting until population is below 1000	3/30/2023 10:13 PM
38	It demonstrates a healthy robust population that should be free of ANY hunting restrictions.	3/30/2023 9:42 PM
39	Given the continued trend of population growth (which seems like a great thing), there is a fine line to walk between anticipating future issues surrounding land use vs creating unnecessary restrictions to those in the short term. I think if FN were able to manage/enforce their settlement lands then it would help eliminate any conflict there. Beyond that, if it continues to move in the right direction (continued growth, despite increase in hunters etc), what is there to fix at this time. I think the mapping of critical habitat and continued management of population is great to know for potential future land use conflict (increased human population or development), but unless it is a territorial park which allows hunting and access to ALL Yukoners then I don't want any restrictions.	3/30/2023 10:15 AM
40	The increase in population could increase a longer hunting season	3/30/2023 9:35 AM
41	Will we ever set an upper limit to the herd size? Instead of focusing solely on minimums?	3/29/2023 3:29 PM
42	They are still a fraction of what they should be. Studies show there were many more plants and animals here 10,000 years ago. Our current ecosystem is spectacularly damaged long prior to industrial expansion. There needs to be more awareness about that.	3/29/2023 2:40 PM
43	I am indeferent because i like that the population is growing as i like the unrestricted unting opportunity, but am concerned once the population stops growing, the government is going to say its a problem and start limiting harvest	3/29/2023 10:20 AM
44	I guess it is a good thing, but I don't really know the impact of bison on other wildlife like moose.	3/28/2023 8:34 PM
45	good thing if living range expand too, else it might be concerning	3/28/2023 6:49 PM
46	Greater probability for hunting or viewing	3/28/2023 2:29 PM
47	It is concerning in terms of how fast the population has grown and how relatively new they are to the ecosystems and their coexistence with sheep, moose, caribou, muskrats etc.	3/28/2023 1:31 PM
48	I think of wood bison in the Yukon as a restored rather than re-introduced species, meaning that they should be able to find a suitable ecological niche. Suitable bison habitat extends well beyond the herd's current range, so an increasing herd is appropriate.	3/17/2023 12:15 PM

Q17: Which region do you live in?

Answered: 78 Skipped: 45



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Whitehorse	75.64%	59
Southern Lakes (Carcross, Tagish, Teslin, Marsh Lake)	6.41%	5
Liard (Watson Lake, Faro, Ross River)	0.00%	0
Kluane (Beaver Creek, Champagne, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, Haines Junction)	12.82%	10
Central Yukon (Carmacks, Elsa, Mayo, Pelly Crossing)	2.56%	2
North Yukon (Dawson City, Old Crow)	2.56%	2
TOTAL		78

Q18: Final comments, concerns, ideas, suggestions?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 75

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Survey is difficult to answer. The plan is not very detailed in terms of actions that need to be taken to meet the objectives. The questions are worded as if we were evaluating how we did with this plan instead of how the plan may address the issues identified.	5/18/2023 2:10 PM
2	Is there a commitment to how often populations surveys will be done? Do new action items only evolve if the Bison Mgmt Committee formally signals a plan review? What determines if a finding initiates change? Are impacts of hunting on the bison assessed in some way? ie. the animals that survive the intense harvest season? Folks say that bison are skittish or bolt at the sound of machines - do we know how the stress of hunting season impacts their health?	5/15/2023 8:07 AM
3	This may be considered to be a national conservation success story, but not to the people and land directly affected. Since they are not wildlife, then Yukon has responsibility to pay grazing fees and compensation for damages to landowners. I have watched the population goal grow from 200 to 500 to 1000 animals with hunting unsuccessfully being used as the only tool for managing the population. It is time to consider other options. It used to be the bison causing the greatest impact and now it is the huge increase of hunters vandalizing cabins, creating new trails, destroying trapping and other cultural opportunities to spend time on the land, harrasing wildlife. 2100 hunters leave a lot of disgusting waste behind when the snow melts. Pack in pack out, leave no trace. They installed "thunder boxes" on the Yukon River for canoeists or require travellers on some rivers to take their waste out with them.	5/13/2023 10:28 AM
4	Am mostly in favour of the proposed changes, just don't agree with section 4.11 - First Nations with traditional territory in the bison core area already aren't granting permission to hunt on settlement land, so there should not be additional areas that limit bison hunting based on community concerns. I don't see the concern with bison affecting cultural areas outside of settlement lands such that whole areas would need to be closed to hunting.	5/11/2023 3:56 PM
5	Overall I think this will be good thing for the herd and future hunting opportunity.	5/9/2023 1:01 PM
6	The traditional spiritual beliefs and traditional laws should be taken into consideration when harvesting bison. For example more than one animal should be taken if nessessary. FN belief is that you do not let a wounded animal suffer which will require the hunter to shoot more than one animal according to to hunting permit.	5/8/2023 3:49 PM
7	Continue to value wood bison as a valuable resource. Start to consider establishing limits for harvest of big game. This aligns with the "take what you need approach". Licensed harvesters should only be allowed to harvest two big game per year (either moose or bison and sheep or caribou). Outfitters should always be limited on harvesting opportunities well ahead of licensed harvesters. YFN's exercise of harvesting rights should not apply to bison at this time. Commending Tom Jung and Graham VT for all your efforts to engage with us and all the years of hard work put into managing this wonderful species. Thanks!	5/5/2023 11:26 AM
8	These animals are taking over and chasing other large species out! Get rid of them. They should have never been brought here!	5/2/2023 7:24 PM
9	Let the herd grow so we can all harvest some meat.	5/1/2023 9:38 AM
10	Given our population of bison is good compared to the rest of Canada. Does the national recovery strategy trump Yukon's needs, contexts, and wants?	4/28/2023 11:13 AM
11	Thanks to all who worked on the draft plan. It does seem sound overall.	4/21/2023 9:53 PM
12	Would like to see mandatory bison hunting workshops that train and promote resident hunters to hunt and harvest ethically. Would like there to be fewer wounded bison from poor or unethical shots. This can be achieved through educating and training resident hunters. Promote and incentivize bringing out organ meat, hides, etc. Make a public calling list for people who would like to receive these items by hunter donations. Increase school hunts. Remove trailhead female cow bison harvest signs. Actively support the development and	4/20/2023 2:33 PM

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maintenance of positive relationships between non-indigenous resident hunters and First Nations. There is room for improvement with First Nation land permissions and non-indigenous resident hunters understanding and following them. Provide assistance and training to First Nations land guardians. Support them. I am very pleased to see a healthy growing bison population in the Yukon. The groups involved in managing are doing a great job.

13	Please set and higher minimum herd size and ban female bison hunting.	4/18/2023 9:16 PM
14	This is probably the worst survey I have ever dealt with... Every question involves so much information at one time that it is not possible to truly answer the questions.. Each part should be separate. I did not know what to answer for most questions as I would often strongly disagree with some of the statement and strongly agree with some of the statement. I don't think any decisions should be made using this survey in whole or in part. It seems to be aimed at getting the answers desired by the organization providing the survey and not the actual opinion of the population on specific issues. It had to be said... I know you can do better!	4/18/2023 11:29 AM
15	It's somewhat unfortunate that Wildlife Viewing isn't more of a consideration in the plan. I get it that they are a hazard near roads and that they have become more wary because they are hunted. So it makes it challenging, but wildlife viewing is so limited in the Yukon in general.	4/18/2023 10:26 AM
16	Re enforcement of current language to discourage hunters from using active trap line trails when marked "active "	4/17/2023 9:41 PM
17	I strongly oppose harvesting cows	4/17/2023 8:39 PM
18	The goals are largely admirable but as they say, devil in the details, and there are no devils here. YGs whackamole approach to wildlife management is not a good one, and adding bison to the list of species managed that way is bad news. What areas are being contemplated for closures, and why? What impact will that have on hunting pressures elsewhere, and on other species? The plan also doesn't seem to contemplate what happens if/when the herd continues to agree - is this plan tacit acceptance that the bison herd will continue to spread beyond the Aishihik valley? Do we want them in Mayo? Southern Lakes? I am concerned that removing the maximum herd size without any other stated management goals in that regard leaves room for future conflict. I am also concerned that the plan as drafted may allow the Minister too much control to make ad hoc decisions with little accountability or transparency.	4/17/2023 4:46 PM
19	Bison population growth should not be unlimited, min 1000 but maybe a max should still be considered (3000?). How does the plan account for climate change and has the potential range shifts of bison and their preferred vegetation spp been considered? Great work thanks!	4/17/2023 2:58 PM
20	I think bison have been used somewhat sacrificially to give hunting opportunities to Yukon residents and their children. I am encouraged to see that bison might be managed more respectfully and professionally in the near future. I hope to see more emphasis placed on hunting bulls because 1) I think it is better for the bison population and 2) it makes people think, or think harder, before pulling the trigger. I think some of the lack of respect shown the bison comes from the permission to shoot anything that breathes attitude. Good luck.	4/17/2023 2:08 PM
21	I support wildlife management, and proper management of the bison herd, but there needs to be more funds allocated to monitoring herd health and for habitat loss investigations. I am confused who and how the initial people responsible for re-establishing bison into the Yukon would have aired on the side of caution for the definition of 'herd health' or at to how they established the cap on the herd numbers. In the 1980s, did they do habitat loss evaluations? The core group deciding how to properly manage bison then would have spent more time on the land and being more informed as to what a sustainable harvest is, and how to properly manage the herd.	4/17/2023 1:41 PM
22	Hunting bison is something I am grateful for, and I think it brings much value to Yukoners. Thank you for protecting the opportunity!	4/17/2023 1:07 PM
23	In full support of squurching managing a population cap to maintaining a minimum.	4/17/2023 12:59 PM
24	Good work, thank you!!	4/16/2023 7:02 PM
25	I think the minimum calibre firearm should be increased for harvesting. I also think there should be mandatory training and possibly a minimum equipment checklist promoted. I have seen dozens of people out "hunting" without a skimmer or any equipment to deal with the animals when they are on the ground. I also believe the impacts on bison and other species as well as damage to property and historic site could be mitigated if the season is shortened to	4/15/2023 7:32 AM

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the middle of February. The bison hunt is being used as a social outing and is putting increasing amounts of pressure on all species during a time when they should be recovering from the effects of winter. Instead this is the time when the majority of hunters are out and wind up pushing, harassing and displacing animals that typically would otherwise be settled. This in turn increases stress on the animals and can have detrimental effects on recruitment.

26	I hope the new Bison management plan provides for more harvest opportunities not less. There is no reason for not having a limited number of Bison hunting permits available in September and October. In addition First Nation hunters should be allowed to harvest Bison year round on their settlement lands.	4/14/2023 11:19 PM
27	I may have answered "very satisfied" to more questions if not for my misgivings and experiences with Yukon Government wildlife management and its use as a political tool.	4/11/2023 4:29 PM
28	Moving away from the maximum 1000 herd size and adopting a minimum 1000 herd size strategy are a good start. I recommend considering a higher population baseline / minimum of 1750.	4/10/2023 7:00 PM
29	I think the value of wildlife tourism, being able to see these creatures in their natural habitat, is not getting enough attention in this report. It is not just about hunting and land use. There is a big opportunity here for tourism and conservation and it should not be drowned out by hunters only.	4/8/2023 3:04 PM
30	Please don't introduce sport hunting as a management tool to reduce numbers.	4/7/2023 7:02 AM
31	Ibex Valley is where I actually live	4/6/2023 4:52 PM
32	I feel this should be explored further. I'm nervous that we're implementing some great intentions with disastrous consequences if anything is miscalculated	4/6/2023 4:03 PM
33	Bison are becoming more and more educated every year. Populations will continue to move to unhuntable locations where those populations will boom and may come into conflict with other wildlife and cause environmental impacts. The PHA draw system is a good system for limiting the number of hunters on the land yet would likely increase harvest numbers due to access to huntable animals. Perhaps with fewer snowmobiles on the land permission for First Nations land may become more palatable as environmental impacts would be less and those governments would may be more comfortable imposing terms and conditions for land use on license holders....and not be bothered by hundreds of people seeking permission.	4/5/2023 7:42 PM
34	Allow hunting of bison on Category B Settlement Lands without requiring permission. Since the management strategy is changing to align with other big game animals, this change would align with land access for the other big game species. If the population declines and opportunity is reduced, consider designating a certain number of tags to seniors (over 50 years old for example). I think this would provide a unique opportunity for mentorship of younger hunters.	4/5/2023 10:17 AM
35	Worse survey ever. Grouping way too much together in a question that has to be answered with satisfaction level can't possibly provide any real information. It looks like you're just looking to check a box saying you asked people. What a waste of time	3/30/2023 10:17 PM
36	Thanks for listening and not restricting our access to bison. There are so many restrictions on moose hunting that it is getting tougher for white subsistence hunters to fill the freezer and enjoy time on the land harvesting an animal with our family.	3/30/2023 9:44 PM
37	Only one of either Moose or Bison should be permitted to harvest per season per license holder.	3/30/2023 5:35 PM
38	Thank you for all your hard work on this. It is clear that there are many passionate people doing a lot of hard work to manage this incredible resource. I often worry that my kids (1 and 3) will not have the same opportunities that I have had growing up and living in the Yukon. Reading the management plan gives me hope that through hard work from many user groups, there will still be excellent opportunities for future generations. Thank you!	3/30/2023 10:18 AM
39	Open the season for longer, thank you for making this opportunity a reality. Also, let's make sure the First Nation peoples determine how this policy/management moves forward	3/30/2023 9:37 AM
40	This plan is great but it lacks explaining HOW these management outcomes will be achieved. It doesn't offer any timelines or commitments to these 7 goals. The harvest framework makes sense but it will require an extreme dedication to monitoring population trends that YG has not	3/29/2023 3:32 PM

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demonstrated to date. This system will not work without good survey data being completed at least every other year. Finally, protecting or securing bison habitat leaves much to be desired. What does that mean? Protection from what? Hunting? Mining? Development? How will this be done, specifically, which legislation will be used to achieve it. We also need more monitoring effort to understand the effects bison are having on other wildlife.

41	The bison herd should continue to grow to protect rare grasslands from encroaching forests. Grasslands provide much more biodiversity and are a vestige of the mammoth steppe that is at a critically low ebb. We are holding a flame in a dark night and bison are helping us in almost all ways. A solution to FN concerns about moose and muskrats should be looked which could include moose habitat improvements especially in FN settlement lands.	3/29/2023 2:43 PM
42	This was a terribly built survey. There are numerous things i would have liked to voice my opinion on but no place to do that. Asking is i am satisfied with the goal and outcome is very confusing. what if i like the goal but not the outcome? Am i satisfied the outcome been reached? Am i satisfied that that should be the desired outcome? What if i like the outcome but not the approach to achieve it? am i satisfied that that approach will achieve the desired outcome? What if i like 2 of the ways to achieve the outcome but not 1 of them, how am i supposed to express that. I am a little shocked how poorly thought out this whole survey is. I hate to think about how much time and money was spent on this and next time you should hire an expert on writing surveys to get representative and usefull information. The questions are so broad and unclear that i dont even know what my position is. Also who decided to go from max 1000 animals to minimum 1000? As for some useful information you should have asked for in the survey, Id like to see bison season sept 1-Nov31 and Feb1-March31 to give animals and trappers some respite, and any animal open tags unless there is under 800 animals, then start doing harvest percentages. Bison were put here to be hunted. We dont need another disaster like the elk who were also put here to be hunted but we are barely allowed to now and we spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on keeping them around to hunt a couple but break fences and get hit by cars. If they were put here to hunt, and they cant support a hunt, they just werent meant to be here. save us all some money	3/29/2023 10:50 AM
43	Questions seem to be generated to get the answers preferred by the creators of these plans. I am very concerned about government working to enforce no access on cat A and B settlement lands. That is a slippery slope and highly discouraged. It is not Governments responsibility to control that. As a tax payer that is very disappointing to read.	3/29/2023 9:30 AM
44	Questions about goal and outcomes were not really clear. Did you mean to evaluate if those outcomes were good, or they were done right?	3/28/2023 8:37 PM
45	My main concern with bison hunting is the high concentration of hunter in small area during hunting season. Which make other usage of the land hard (unless you like listening to snowmobile all day) and must have an impact on other species that lives in those area. Spreading the hunter over would be appreciated	3/28/2023 6:54 PM
46	Allow hunting on all First Nations land to increase the ability to control bison population	3/28/2023 2:32 PM
47	Let's do our best to make sure that we coexist with these animals in as respectful and sustainable way as possible while ensuring the sustainability and over-all health and well-being of the ecosystems and other wildlife species that they live on and coexist with. And let's educate hunters on how to hunt in the most ethical and respectful ways possible. There are also tons of hunters that do not get permission for hunting on Settlement land because they either don't know they need to or they do not care as there is no reinforcement of this rule. That is a problem.	3/28/2023 1:35 PM
48	Great plan!	3/17/2023 12:55 PM

Appendix B: Detailed Community Meeting Notes

Burwash Landing

Date: Wednesday, March 15th, 12:00-1:30 pm

Location: Jacquot Hall

Attendance: 18 residents (Geraldine Van Bibber from KFN, Sian Williams and Brenda Carson from the DKRRC); YG staff members (Tom Jung, Catherine Pinard, and Amy Law); YFWMB (Michelle Dawson-Beattie and Steve Hossack).

- All questions (Q:) answered by Senior Wildlife Biologist at YG, Tom Jung unless otherwise noted, Executive Director at YFWM. Comments are indicated with a (C:).

Q: Why did you bring the wood bison here?

- There is evidence that bison were here thousands of years ago until just 350 years ago.
- In the 1980s GC and YG agreed to bring bison back as a national conservation effort.

Q: Do they share the same food sources as other species?

- 2012 plan asked for research on this. Research was completed in 2015.
- Bison don't share food with moose, only a small amount with caribou winter range.
- Do share food mostly with sheep, horses, and a bit with muskrat.

Q: What was the historical range of bison in the Yukon?

- Depends how far back you go in time, not precisely mapped, but there was wide-ranging occurrence.
- Skull evidence suggest almost as far north as the Arctic Circle (Beringia).

Q: What were the challenges with re-introduction in the 1980s?

- Social concerns mostly. Concerns that Bison would compete with other species for food.
- We've found that there is not much overlap, they've already shared space with caribou for thousands of years.

Q: Do you think there is a detrimental effect on sheep/ sheep food?

- It is complex. We believe that bison are grazing on some winter sheep habitat in the summer.
- Not grazing the areas at the same time – but they do eat the same food.
- Possible that there are some impacts.

C: “There are different kinds of sage in Kluane country – it is important for medicinal uses as it has codeine in it. Elders used it as pain management during birthing. Cultural conservation isn’t being realized. Our uses and needs for medicines. This is the same thing as what happened with the National Park. Our upbringing helps us to understand values. We don’t eat bison around here. Bison are eating our medicines. Bison are impacting our cultural uses. Native science is different than the science you are talking about. Elders taught us connectiveness of everything. Bison are taking over salt licks – and the mining and road development also removed many salt licks.”

- The Tech Team has FN members, which is one way it tries to recognize cultural values in the plan. We are learning from your comments.
- Plan could have done a better job at recognizing medicinal plants.

Q: Overhunting caused the extinction in the Prairies, what about in the Yukon?

- We don’t know for sure. Th environment used to be cold dry steppe habitat. With climate change Yukon became more forested. Could have crowded out bison habitat.
- If they got crowded into smaller areas, it would have been easier for humans to hunt them and could have been larger disease outbreaks.

C: “Bison are packing down the trails down to the lake. Interfering with the trails of other species and crowding out moose. This is a small habitat between the mountains on either side of Kluane Lake and Bison are taking over bigger areas. It is making it harder to hunt moose.”

- Bison have lived with other species for thousands of years, so we think that they’ve learned to live together. There could be some impacts.

C: “Saw Bison up the road by Cultus bay. It went to the Chisana airstrip and Alaska. A small very black bison. Was it a different breed? It looked very different, thought it was a bear at first.”

- All bison in the Yukon are genetically pure Wood Bison. No evidence to suggest otherwise.

Q: Do you take range expansion into consideration? We never used to see bison in Cultus Bay, but now they are there regularly. They’ve also been seen across the lake.”

- Yes, we are monitoring for range expansion. Bison are curious animals and will naturally explore and expand their range a bit.
- Over the last 20 years, we haven’t seen a lot of range expansion, but they have changed their areas of focus. Means there’s enough food within the core range. They have changed their range a little, and that can be a very important/ noticeable amount to people.

Q: Will it be too late by the time we notice them moving?

- We focused hunter efforts to target any bison heading towards Kluane Park, the bison responded and did move away.

Q: “Habitat looks better to the north when I fly over it. Will they move that way?”

- We aren’t sure yet, they are using some new areas and are still learning as they go.

C: “The helicopter survey that I was on, it seemed like the more appealing habitat would be over by Aishihik. Is that right?”

- Not sure, but they do move around their range and what they were first using is different than what they are currently using.

Q: What is the escape route when bison feel threatened by hunters? I often see them in the alpine when I’m flying – is that a threat response?

- We’ve also heard this from hunters, more bison in the alpine lately. Also see them moving into the dense forest to keep safe.

Q: What do you want to see happen with the future of the bison population? Hunting opportunities? Reduce or enhance numbers? Protect them? Will you address impacts by hunters/ impacts by bison? Limit their range expansion?

- We want to align with national recovery strategies, and that is to grow populations.

Geraldine: Bison Technical Team is in place, but Bison Management Team has been removed. I heard this from my staff. Is that right?

- We understand that there was a decision to work government-to-government without a committee format. Please follow up with Marc Cattet, Director of Fish and Wildlife Branch.

Geraldine: KFN never agreed to have the meeting today – we said we were busy. We’ll talk about requesting another meeting or will write a letter.

- Steve: YFWMB’s intention for this community meeting is to hear from members of the public in Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay. YG is obligated to consult with KFN after the 60 day public engagement period that the Board is conducting.

Q: What is the process for identifying critical habitat?

- Two ways – we can draw a line around where they live. Another way is using GPS collar information and local/traditional information to figure out exactly where they are.
- Legally, we must do an action plan, as part of the federal strategy. We have to document our process and show a map. Then the federal government will consult with FNs and YG. Then the Minister would decide whether to accept the action plan. Then those circles become critical habitat and they would be protected.
- Never been done for a bison herd in Canada yet.

Q: Can you expand on the actions in the plan for the issues that people identified today – concern about other species and cultural sites?

- Exclude bison from cultural sites (action in the plan)
- An example of this action is that we worked with CAFN in the past to make sure bison aren't in gravesite areas. The gravesites were where bison would want to be travelling through. CAFN built rustle fences to steer them away. It worked well, still working after all these years.

Q: What are the effects of bison on other ecosystems?

- Plan says we will monitor effects of bison – all those things we heard about today. Especially will continue to monitor sheep, muskrat, caribou.
- We are closely watching for range expansion and sharing that information. We have directed hunters to areas of concern for range expansion.
- As for impacts to plant species – there were 2 studies done, one by Government of Canada and one by a university. Two different studies using different techniques, they both found that those areas with bison, the rare plants were doing better, and they remained grasslands. The bison keep them from becoming more forested and there was more plant diversity. A surprising but promising result.

Haines Junction

Date: Wednesday, April 5th, 5:30-8:30 pm

Location: Da Ku Cultural Centre

Attendance: 20 residents; CAFN (Josee Trembley, Levi, Michael Jim); Alsek RRC (Cassandra, Larry, Ainslie); YG staff members (Tom Jung, Amy Law, Ryan Drummond); YFWMB (Graham Van Tighem, Steve Hossack, Michelle Dawson-Beattie)

- All questions (Q:) answered by Senior Wildlife Biologist at YG, Tom Jung unless otherwise noted, Executive Director at YFWM. Comments are indicated with a (C:).

Q: Do Conservation officers work with the technical team? They need to get more involved and make sure that there's licenses and tags that the hunters must have. They should be more involved because they are on the highway all the time. What's happening is that people are camping overnight, and they shouldn't be. I don't know how many kills they've had. The COs could check on that.

- Yes, COs are on the technical team; they are on the land enforcing; and there is a largescale bison hunter education program run by COs.

GOAL 1

Q: There used to be a maximum population – is that not part of the plan anymore?

- The 2012 plan had a population cap of 1000 animals, but no cap in this plan. It's really hard to do that, and we are well over that.
- The technical team has decided to manage bison more like other wildlife – it's about what the land can sustain.

Q: How are you keeping to 1000 animals?

- That target population is no longer a goal of the management plan.

Q: Why don't you change the hunting rules and hunt cows and other things to reduce numbers of bison?

- We tried all of this and failed. Hunters didn't want to take cows, especially pregnant cows.
- We made it so that everyone could buy a permit, no limit – we sold 2,100 permits and there were fewer animals than that. The hunt is liberalized – this caused some problems, which we'll talk about.

Q: When you get more hunters out on the field in trapping season, it makes trapping harder because there is so many ppl out there. What can be done?

- This is a big issue – by opening the hunt, we did create other problems. Addressed in the plan.

Q: You mentioned the concept of carrying capacity - do we understand what that would mean for this species? Or the impacts on other species? What would you establish as a carrying capacity for bison?

- Hard to say that the land can hold exactly this number of bison. And land is changing. Other species are also changing.
- We will know when the land can't handle so many bison, because the bison will tell us. We'll see sharp declines in reproduction, in body condition and survival. The hunters will see when this happens. The number of surviving calves will drop.

Q: Won't they just move to a different place like down the Yukon River or into the Park?

- Yes, they can change their range as a response. If they start getting too many bison in this area, they'll move and start a new herd somewhere else.

Q: Are they going to eat themselves out of house and home and all die?

- We'll probably see both things happen at the same time. We've seen this in other places in the world. We'll see the condition decline in this area, and we'll see a splinter group moving into a new area and staying there, they will start a new herd there. They saw that occur in the NWT.
- Bison are bulk eaters – they aren't picky. They can eat lots of things. But at the same time, sometimes it's hard to find bison. There is a lot of room for bison here.

Q: I was wondering there was a bunch of groups of bison down by Carmacks and a few other places. Our herd is here – around Aishihik. Are you allowed to share with us what's working for the other communities? Can we have joint community meetings?

- It's an interesting idea for folks from different communities to share. The technical team is a place where we already do that.
- They aren't like moose. The bison that are by Carmacks could be here the next day. They don't stay in different groups – they are always mixing and moving. We do think there are 2 groups forming (mostly from collar information) but they seem to come together in the high country in the summer.

Q: I think there are areas where we don't want the bison to be – the park and the game sanctuary. Is there talk about exclusion zones?

- We do talk about identifying some areas in this plan, but we aren't specific. In the 2012 plan we were explicit about this due to direction from CAFN. That problem solved itself because they were very accessible to hunters in that area.

Q: Surprised that hunting in the game sanctuary hasn't been a point of discussion. If they start to get a significant migration across the highway, I'm not sure you're set up to deal with that. Are you?

- I haven't heard that yet. Heard lots about the park. They are close to the game sanctuary, agreed.
- Adaptive management is one way that we are enabled to deal with issues as they come up. We are trying to see what works and didn't work.
- When they first started coming into the park, the tech team tried to get out the message to target the Kloo Lake area. I think that helped a little. But groups of bulls do go out and explore.
- It's a population that is restored to the land, bison were here before and we are working to reconnect culturally.

Goal 4

Q: How are you encouraging local observations? There are surveys of hunters, but what are other ways, ways to share experiences? The TIPP line is for reporting, but what about sharing information?

- People do report to regional bios.
- It's an interesting idea that can be expanded on.
- (Steve) Maybe we can start a Facebook page to report sightings and other info.

Q: In reducing permits – what is the average number of permits sold per year? It seems to be increasing more and more.

- The last 3-4 years has gone from about 1,800 permits sold to about 2,300.
- Bison was the #2 most harvested species in the Territory last year. More than caribou. Moose remains #1.

C:” The problem areas are starting to self-identify. When CAFN used to issue access permits it was nice to meet the bison hunters and we used to ask them to report information and share concerns. Now, sometimes we will get feedback and sometimes we won’t.”

- This plan does try to enable us to deal with problem areas. It’s enabling.
- We identified a lot of issues for the Tech Team to work on.

Adaptive Management

C: “I support the idea that bison hunting is a privilege. When I lived in Yellowknife, the bison hunting permit process – you had to go with a guide. If it happened that hunt timeframe was - 40, that was that. No hunting.

I just can’t emphasize enough that bison hunting is a privilege. In the 90s when they were talking about a hunt, [name?] had to go to Ottawa. Because this was a national species at risk, he had to go there and convince them that we should be allowed to hunt bison. He was surprised at how amazed those people were about us hunting bison. YG came up with a plan and feedback loops to make sure not too many are harvested, but it we relied on Ottawa it would not have involved a harvest.”

- Yes, this came up again in 2003 when they did the *Species at Risk* Act. Even though the federal law says no hunting of species at risk, we do hunt bison. Federally, they’ve determined 6 priority species with emphasis for recovery – 4 species of caribou, sage grouse, and bison. We’ve argued successfully that hunting bison aids in conservation.
- We work closely with the federal government, and they agree with our approach in the management plan.

Q: Impacts to people – don’t forget the trappers. I don’t see anything about protecting the trappers. Bison hunters have impacted and bothered the trappers. Can you put the words, respect for trappers, in there?

- Yes, the slide doesn’t show it, but in the plan, we do say reduce impacts to trapping/ trappers. We put signs out about respect active trapping areas.

Q: Do the signs work?

- It probably works with a lot of ppl, but not everyone.
- Years ago, you couldn’t get anyone out there trapping, but now with the prices, its better - but there is a lot of problems with the bison hunters on traplines.

Interim Harvest Guidelines

Q: What's a community hunt?

- Like a school hunt, or in the past CAFN had a community hunt. The concept is open.

Q: They used to have a management strategy that had a list of hunters, like if there was bison on the highway, you called the hunters – how is this addressed now?

- Yes, we used to have a list of hunters when there was a bison lottery. There was a list that we called when we needed to address a management problem like bison on the highway. But we haven't needed that since everyone can get a permit. If numbers are more limited, we might need to go back to something like that.
- We can still inform hunters when bison are near the highway.
- Our goal is to have enough bison out there to meet the demand of hunters and to meet conservation goals.

Q: In 1977, in NWT, we were doing some work there was anthrax and the bison died. We burned them up. I'm wondering with climate change and more wet weather and warmer, would that implicate an anthrax outbreak?

- We don't know. There hasn't been anthrax in wildlife in the Yukon yet; it does happen in NWT – the last time was about 2012. Agreed, with climate change, we don't know what will happen. We're definitely watching that.

Q: What about ticks? Years ago the elk was infested with ticks and they thought the cold weather would take care of it but it didn't. What about the tick problem now? Is it gone? Are they in bison?

- No, the tick problem isn't gone. Haven't heard of any ticks on bison. Maybe a hunter has seen it and not reported it. They have been identified on moose, caribou, and deer.
- There has been some research – the ticks drop in October, and we knew the areas where the elk were in October. In the spring, the ticks climb up the plants and whatever animal goes by the tick gets on. So, the researcher put camera traps up in the places that the ticks are dropped and saw who came by in the spring – this helped understand risk of moose picking up ticks.
- From her camera work, it was almost all elk and deer using those spots. The risk is low for moose and caribou, but high for elk and deer.

Goal 5

Q: What is the management of the BC bison close to Watson Lake? What is the status of those BC bison that walk into the Yukon? Could we be able to shoot the ones along the highway as management to reduce collisions with vehicles?

- We work with BC government and have made the point that bison pose a risk to Yukoners when they are on the road. The Alaska Highway is our lifeline.
- We've just started raising this issue with BC and we're getting a lot of good reception. We are identifying hot spots through radio collars.

Q: Do you have a policy of allowing them to expand into the Yukon?

- We don't have a policy. It's more how will we respond if they start spending a lot of time in the Yukon. We are working with the Kaska about the BC bison to find out their goals.

Q: What about the 3-mile corridor – the CO told me.

- Yes, in Sept to Oct there is a 3km corridor along the north side of the Alaska Highway between Whitehorse and the Slims River Bridge to allow hunting in the fall.

Submitted Comments for CAFN Traditional Territory (anonymous):

- Take only what you need.
- The season is too long.
- Bison are causing feeding problems for moose.
- The public is chasing them too much.
- Too many hunters and too much over kill.
- Permit and tags, only 1 for certain areas and sections.
- No overnight camps.
- If problems arise, cameras may have to be used.

Whitehorse

Date: Tuesday, April 18th, 6:30-9:00 pm

Location: Sternwheeler Hotel

Attendance: 20 residents; YG (Amy Law, Marc Cattet, Tom Jung, Jaylene Goorts, Catherine Pinard); YFWMB (Graham Van Tighem, and Steve)

- All questions (Q:) answered by Senior Wildlife Biologist at YG, Tom Jung unless otherwise noted, Executive Director at YFWM. Comments are indicated with a (C:).

Population status

Q: Why do you survey in the summer vs winter?

- Bison come together after calving in large groups; because they form big groups up high, they are easier and cheaper to count.

Q: Chasing them with helicopter doesn't seem like the best option. And paintballing them – can you explain that? I see bison in the winters, hiding in the trees etc. They don't like helicopters.

- They don't like engines, that's right. Helicopters are the only feasible way. It is a big country, and they are up high in the alpine. If we did it with a slower method, we can't be sure that we see all of the groups and don't double-count.
- The reason why we paintball is because of doing mark-resight. To do that, you have to mark animals (often with radio collars – which is more stressful to do). Paintballing animals – is only about 20 secs per animal. Extremely stressful, but short duration. It allows us to do good science and keep the range of the population tight. Marking a lot of animals helps us to keep good population estimate.

Q: You painted 120 animals; how do you extrapolate into the population estimate?

- We use a math formula to apply to the marked bison and the unmarked ones that we see. We count them three times. The repeating helps us to be more certain.

Q: There's a large area where you haven't paintballed animals. How do you know if you've missed animals if you haven't gone there?

- That's one of the main reasons that we radio-collar – we have 25 animals to tell us where they are.

Planning section

Q: Survey by Alistair Bath set a high bar for public surveys for harvest in Yukon. I really appreciate the work he did. I would like to see the public report of that survey.

- Report is available online at Yukon.ca.

Vision

Q: I didn't see much reference to the goals when I read the plan. When you say in balance with other native species – if we are the main predator of bison in absence of wolf predation. In other places, it took 30 years for wolf to prey on bison. Are they really becoming part of the predator-prey system?

- Evidence is that it takes wolves a long time to prey on bison. Up to now, it seems that they make an insignificant dent. Every year there are one or two reports of wolf killed bison, but not a lot. They need packs of 13 or more to be able to take a bison. There was just a Aishihik wolf survey, data still being analysed, by they weren't seeing big groups.
- Putting camera traps on human-killed bison sites to see what species feed.

Goal 1

Q: Are there domestic bison in the Yukon that are Plains bison?

- No. There is a small captive herd, but they came from the same source as the wild bison.

Q: Has there been documented anthrax?

- Not in Yukon, but in NWT – they lost a large population.

Q: I didn't catch on Goal 1 – in the plan, you talk about adjacent populations. The delta one, and the one in Liard. What is the closest bison to us in that herd. From that herd, how close have they come to Whitehorse. To satisfy goal 1, you have to put that information in the plan.

- The delta one is more a threat. They don't leave that area very far. They have a small range. It has been the other way around; our animals have gone to Alaska (4 in the last 25 years).

Q: Do you know where the herd from Liard is compared to here? Should there be a no bison zone?

- We had that in the 2012 plan, we don't have it here.
- Interesting discussions with Alaska where they are talking about bringing a new bison herd to Tok. That would be a bigger threat to our herd, but they are wood bison too. There would be a lot of discussions.
- I think it is already in the plan – that we can have bison control areas.
- We track the Liard herd; those bison are accustomed to highway. We've had them go up towards big creek. 80 km our side of Watson Lake.

C: "We should be looking at the threats to our herd, or there shouldn't be a management plan."

Goal 2

Q: Could you make more telemetry information available? Just where they are – a summary of the movement information and elevation changes, where they are going?

- Yes, we can do that. If you've seen the southern lakes caribou story-map, we plan to do something like that. Trace movements through the year.

Goal 4

What was the total number harvested this year?

- Numbers still trickling in, but 217 now.

What percentage of animals that are hunted get harvested?

- We hear many incidences that there are bullets in many animals hunted. COs say that 10% are wounded and eventually die. We factor that number into our harvest calculations.

Q: This year it seemed harder to find them. Are you finding that? Would it affect your recommendations moving forward?

- We heard that too. IT was a deep snow year. Bison aren't built for deep snow – they hunker down and don't move around as much. That makes them harder to find. They like to hide in the trees.

C: They are getting smarter.

- Agreed.

Q: Hard to quantify, but with wounded and lost animals that you said about hunting. But the population is healthy. So, the recruitment is good.

- Yes, the population is doing well. Wounding loss isn't OK, but the population is doing well despite it.

Q: Opportunities, is there any consideration of increasing early season, not just the highway corridor - an open zone from beginning of September?

- It has come to the BTT and the Board. The BTT are sympathetic to the idea of opening the season earlier. The problem is when we look at pros and cons. Lots of concern about trail proliferation – without snow cover it would make more trails. Bison tend to birth a bit longer into the season – its more stretched out, so there is a concern of orphaning calves. Bears on gut piles is also a considerations. For all these reasons, we haven't put this into action.
- Graham: we need to reiterate that we are looking for long term sustainable hunting opportunities. It is already the longest hunt season of any animal in Yukon.

Q: Can you expand on the refugia idea?

- There used to be areas where you would reliably see bison. But bison are smart and have figured out that those areas aren't safe. Those were good winter-feeding areas for bison. They've been pushed out.
- Female bison have a choice of where to take their group – either in a good food area with high risk, or a safer place with less food.
- Plan enables establishing refugia to protect critical habitat for bison. We don't have a concern right now and haven't identified areas.
- Not big areas, just a small patch

Q: You've got 2000 animals, that's 100 percent more than the target. There is no reason to have those concerns, given how many animals there are.

- There's no other bison around. If we blow it, it will have severe consequences. Example in Alberta, they had to close the Hays population for a couple of years. The anthrax issue closed the hunt in NWT for at least 6-7 seasons. We must be a bit precautionary. If we overdue it, we may pay for that. You're right, no concerns right now. The way things are with the herd are good.

C: If we keep using the sky is falling and make comparison with places with millions of people. We aren't the same. It's apples and oranges comparison. We are all for supporting conservation, but it is very much the sky is falling. We go out to survey to try to prove the narrative and the guess is wrong. We are seeing wrong answers all the time from Environment Yukon. It is the constant story about having to stop harvest – like last year it was in the news that we might have to stop harvest.

- It's not the fact with bison. But we should not take anything for granted.

Q: You said that bison are natural, they were here before and they went extinct. What caused the extinction?

- No one knows for sure. 2 main ideas are that they were overhunted or that the habitat and landscape changed. Probably a combination.

Q: Have you recorded stories about indigenous peoples and their relationships with bison? Testaments from indigenous oral histories about mammoth – is there a resource for indigenous knowledge about hunting bison or relationship with bison that is available?

- There was a researcher who interviewed elders about bison knowledge. Kaska peoples had stories. There wasn't much information from the south.
- We don't hear much on the technical team from the 4 FNs on the team.
- In AK, there was TK about bison stories further north.

Q: Special guide licence you allow 25 bison. Can you change that number – take the pressure away from other species.

- That's out of the purview of the BTT. We asked a few question in the bison hunter survey – you can see what other hunters thought in that survey.

Q: Out of the 25, did any special guide have success?

- Not sure.

C: “Great management – the numbers are going in the right direction.”

Q: Folks are finding it unpalatable to shoot a cow with a calf. Has the ratio of hunting bulls to cows changed? Is there still 50/50?

- We had promoted hunters to take a cow. We were trying to reduce population. We aren't doing that anymore. Not promoting, you can.
- The numbers seem to be stable – the promotion didn't change. It is 60 percent bulls to 40 per cent cows.

Q: Talk about pressure on bison in March. Has there been any measured change of body condition? Do you take measurements in late winter – the body condition, to see if there is a difference in body condition and birth rate from the stress from hunting? If you can show stress and population issues, that's the background for making changes.

- We have been looking at stress in feces and nutritional content. It is complicated. I would love to be able to do the body condition work, but we don't have hands on animals at different times in the winter.

Q: What about body fat based on femur fat?

- The issue is that it would be nice to have a before and after.
- We thought about handing out rulers to measure the rump fat.

Q: Finding bison – the behaviour has changed. Eating on bare hillsides. Holing up in pockets.

C: “Outcome 7 is great. This slide seems good. The story that Graham told about the trapper cabin, but ethics is the basis of all hunting. There are rubbing points, we see it in reg changes over the years. This is managing people. I don't always think that managing people will work. Some of the points are old stories – there's no science to these stories. There are real concerns about the hunting community. I get annoyed with too many people too, but I think we need to be careful, and we may need a broader strategy about this in particular. I agree with cultural sensitivity. I think we need to pull out management of people and tease it apart. This plan might not be the best place to deal with these issues.”

- For the small number of individuals affected – we need to deal with it. There are a lot of first-time hunters. We need to educate more people.

Q: Is the training course mandatory in this plan? If the course was mandatory to go bison hunting, you charge a dollar value you could put that back into bison.

- It's not currently mandatory, no.

Q: Consider reducing permits in problem areas – what’s the idea behind problem areas. It sounds like the area is the problem. Or that you’ll affect everyone for the behaviour of a few people. Wouldn’t it be better to have a way to hold ppl accountable that are causing problems. I would rather see that kind of language. What is a problem area? I understand problem behaviour and people causing problems. There needs to be education and consequences for people.

- One of the problems is to translate the plan content into a small slide. That wording isn’t the situation you’re describing. Its more if a FN tells that there is a conflict with cultural uses of a certain area and hunters, we could close an area for a period.
- The plan is enabling. Doesn’t mean it will happen. It doesn’t have anything to do with problem behaviours.

Q: Need to make sure there is good data behind behaviour and conflict. Real data would back up management actions. Validify when a FN talks about too many ppl in an area – go back to Kaska rumours about breaking into vehicles etc. It makes a rift between communities. If that’s an issue, document and chart and make sure it’s well founded to reduce permits. COs get incident reports, something like that. Acting based on rumour is irresponsible.

- It’s enabling – allows to address issues that are brought up.

Interim guidelines

Q: Can you explain the 1000 threshold?

- Came out of research – how many bison do you need for it to be viable.

Q: Is there a top end number where you would be concerned on the other end of the spectrum?

- No – we don’t know how many bison the land can sustain or how many bison communities. We know there is potential for growth. Bison are not close to carrying capacity. If they do – the bison would go into a sharp decline or expand their range. That causes problems too.
- Plan doesn’t set an upper target or a limit. We can revisit that if there are concerns.

Goal 5

Q: Bison hunting corridors were designed to keep bison off road.

- Yes – we tell BC that it works too.

Q: Can we consider another outcome – I'm concerned about competition with horse and bison for sedges in Yukon. There is a fear that we can have disease come into the sedges and there could be competition for sedge between grazing of domestic species - like horses - and bison.

- We did research and found the main competitor for food of bison is horses.

C: Couple of bad batches of hay could be detrimental for bison. It might be outside of plan.

C: Horses in Aishihik area as well. Whenever you see the horses have been somewhere there is nothing else.

C: At one time, horses were good eating.

- Horses aren't wildlife.

Goal 6

Q: Have you looked at any positive impacts that bison have on the ecosystem?

- There was a concern for south facing hillsides with grasslands that have rare and endemic plants. We researched (2 studies) and both found that bison were good to help maintain those grasslands and the rare plant species.

Goal 7

Q: Would there be a concern for oil and gas. There was a push to open oil and gas in the core bison range. When the cut seismic lines and start developing oil and gas it would be the end of bison

C: Not that much different from mining roads. Access is access.

- Access does mean more harvest. Bison do OK around oil and gas – have worked in Alberta. The problem it creates is conflict with people, doesn't take away from bison habitat.

Q: In your actions, is it inclusive of opportunities to create habitat? With a changing climate, what about prescribed burns to create more grasses. Does the plan support habitat enhancement.

- No, the plan doesn't have this in it currently.
- We aren't at the point of needing enhancing habitat for bison.

Q: Have you thought about raising the calibre of bullet?

- Tech Team has had lots of discussion. It would be placing a barrier on hunters.
- We have to draw the line somewhere. We also encourage folks to buy quality bullets like the copper ones.

C: The first bison I got had 4 bullet holes in it, and the bullets were encapsulated, no expansion.

C: Everywhere else where you can hunt bison, except NWT, you can hunt with a bow. So minimum requirement could be something future looking as well.

- There have been reg change proposals for bows before.

Overall

C: "It seemed like the presentation glossed over the FNs content – the goals, like take only what you need and only utilize what you can. I own a business that tries to implement more indigenous ideology into harvest planning and other workshops. You are only obligated to take the meat when you are hunting. There could be a lot more programming about how to make bone tools, to use the brain to tan hides. There is a lot of waste. IF we are going to work toward the goal of sustainability and respect for the TK and animals, where is the manpower to do that work. If there is no research about indigenous people's relationship with bison in Yukon, there are other places we can adapt knowledge from."

- The original ideas came from Lawrence Joe from speaking to FNs in NWT. That's why we have the winter hunt. It comes from Indigenous Knowledge.

Carmacks

Date: Wednesday, April 19th, 6:00-8:30 pm

Location: Carmacks Recreation Center

Attendance: 11 residents; YG (Amy Law, Tom Jung, and Conservation Officer Blake Vandecamp); YFWMB (Graham Van Tighem, and Steve)

- All questions (Q:) answered by Senior Wildlife Biologist at YG, Tom Jung unless otherwise noted, Executive Director at YFWM. Comments are indicated with a (C:).

Intro

- There are 2 types of bison – plains and wood – and the bison brought back were wood.

Q: Do those bison scare moose and chase them away? The RRC flew over southeast and there was a low moose count. Was it the Bison's problem?

- Complicated question, we did some research about bison and moose and don't see a lot of competition between bison and moose and bison and caribou. They eat different things, so we find them in different areas and habitats. If the 2 happen to be in the same place at the same time, there might be some interactions – either getting along or not.

Q: How many tickets (permits) does the government issue for getting bison.

- A lot – it's open. Anyone can get one. No limit. Over 2000 permits for the last 3 years.

Q: Not all of them are successful?

- No. Sell 2000, but the highest number ever harvested was 282.

Q: They are growing at such a rapid rate; we are going to have even more in the spring. Our growth is between 3-4 percent, is that consistent with other areas? Is this abnormal or high compared to other populations?

- Our population seems to be doing better. Hard to say, because other jurisdictions aren't counting the bison regularly. We've been lucky in not having big catastrophic reductions like anthrax and deep snow issues.

Vision

C: What about spiritually and culturally restored? If we want to connect with the bison, our people are a part of that ecosystem and everything we took and everything around us alive. To be fully connected, we need to be spiritually connected.

Goal 1

Q: Is there any data about wolves – have they learned how to take down the bison?

- After 19 years, we found a bison that was killed by a wolf. In BC and NWT it took the wolves longer. Every year we get 1-2 reports, but we don't see it much. In Yellowstone they found that wolf packs have to be about 13 animals to take down a bison. In Yukon, we tend to have smaller packs.

Q: This year alone, we had a herd of bison. I came across moose kills from wolf, and the bison were right there and stayed around. Is there any evidence about bears?

- Very little information. We've never witnessed it but think that it happens. We do see grizzlies hanging out beside bison groups when the calves are really young.

Goal 2

Q: Bison in the Yukon, we don't see them on the road. As soon as they see people they leave. Past Fort Nelson, that's a different story because they don't get hunted. It shows you the difference. I see some of those bigger herds gathered together – Kluane, Kloo Lake, Alshihik, along the highway up to Braeburn – are they learning to migrate?

- Bison do migrate, we haven't figured it out yet. Where they spend the winter is different than the summer. Some definite spots they like to be in in June and July.

Goal 3

Q: When you say Indigenous, traditional, local knowledge... I heard elders talking in HJ, they did a lot of work with people educating about bison.

- Agreed, CAFN is a leader in bison education and management.

Q: I'm trying to figure out when the buffalo calf – in March?

- March is a bit early. Other species, like caribou, moose, and sheep all calf in a short period of time. Bison are different, they can start calving at the end of March and can go all the way to August or October. The majority still calf in May.

Q: I'm asking that because I was in a meeting in HJ when someone said there were ppl chasing buffalo with a skidoo and it was trying to calf at the same time. Should we be cutting the hunting time shorter or what?

- The tech team has discussed this and would like to make changes.

Q: If you get irresponsible hunters, chasing after cows that are calving, shouldn't that be a big fine or something? That's really disrespectful to the animal itself.

- It's new information that bison could be calving in March. We need to have more discussions with FNs.

Goal 4

Q: I hear more issues about problems with hunters, not that they are being individually disrespectful, but because there are so many of them. It's stressful for all the animals to have so many people.

- Bison have been the 2nd most hunted species for licensed hunters. When you are talking about caribou or moose it's over the whole area, but bison it is one area.

Q: Majority of bison hunts is done by snowmobile. Increased hunters getting out there, do we see a side effect to other animals due to snowmobile tracks or other things?

- We don't know.
- We could do research on moose pellets to see whether there is stress. Would like to do this research but haven't currently.
- We did look at where we were seeing moose and bison on the land, the overlap where we predicted seeing these animals was only 1.5 % overlap in summer and then 7% in winter. If bison hunters are going where bison are, they are probably avoiding moose.

Q: Are those hunters educated at all? You gotta know where Category A and B areas are, and people are going through with snowmobile through areas that are supposed to be protected. They need to know the areas not to go into.

- We have a lot of resources and RRCs and FNs have done a lot of work too.
- iHunter App has been a really good resource for hunters to know where they are compared to special places on the land like Cat A and B lands.

Q: Those school bison hunts, I know they used to do it at our school – they get culturally educated and get connected. They grow up with that and pass it on. I heard that some of that has stopped and I don't know why.

- The FN education board is now involved in bison hunts.

Adaptive management

Q: What is your next count going to be?

- We are talking about that – if not this summer, then 2024. 2-3 years would be ideal.

Q: Is there any way to do it with fixed wing.

- Not reliably. You can't see things as much.
- It would be great to be able to switch to a photo census.

Q: Another idea would be a drone. That would be a combo of helicopter and photo marking.

- It's such a big area. We aren't there yet.

Goal 5

Q: Do these bison go on peoples trapline and do damage?

- Have heard some stories. They are curious animals. They don't like deep snow, so would walk down nice traplines.

Q: Have the bison hunters disturbed people's traplines? Making new trails, going through traplines, that's what I was wanting to ask.

Goal 6

Q: Are you seeing the range expand?

- No – they stay in the same area but use different parts. It tells us that there is enough food. If they start moving into new areas that means that there are too many bison in that area.

C: I noticed that they are starting to do what the cattle do, terracing the hillsides – putting lines in the hillside. They graze, and then switch to one line. In a few places I've noticed that.

- They do make trail systems, yes.

Appendix C: Formal Submissions and Letters

6/2/23, 9:45 AM

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board Mail - Draft bison management plan



Steve Hossack <communications@yfwmb.ca>

Draft bison management plan

Ken + Libby Anderson <kliba@live.com>

Fri, May 19, 2023 at 8:51 AM

To: "communications@yfwmb.ca" <communications@yfwmb.ca>

As a hunter and conservationist I think the bison introduction has been a success story, providing a significant source of wild meat, taking hunting pressure off other game species and protecting an endangered species.

However I'm not so sure I can support the unchecked expansion of the herd beyond it's present range.

The bison have shown that they can live in a wide variety of habitats and as they reach the carrying capacity of their current range I don't see anything that will stop them from occupying pockets of suitable habitat throughout the Yukon. I'm not suggesting this will happen quickly but over the decades it seems inevitable. This isn't necessarily a bad thing but we have several examples of wildlife transplants that have gone awry. Deer in New Zealand, rabbits in Australia and beavers in Chile come to mind.

I don't buy into the rationale that the species is being "restored". Bison naturally disappeared from the Yukon landscape hundreds of years ago and their ecological niche has also long since disappeared so I think it is irrelevant that they once lived here.

The draft management plan contains provisions for protecting the herd if populations decline. This is good. I suggest there should be complimentary strategies to discourage expansion of the herd into unsuitable areas. Right now I think intrusion into Kluane Nation Park and the Kluane Game Sanctuary where human harvest is prohibited hold be discouraged.

We are already in a situation where control is difficult but we do have some tools to promote exclusion zones. It seems like during the life of this plan we might prevent the herd from crossing the Alaska and Klondike Highways. If they cross these boundaries the bison are sure to occupy an area far beyond the original vision for preservation of a species and beyond any proposal that was contemplated during previous public consultations.

The cautionary principle would suggest that we should prepare to deal with too high a population as well as too low.

Ken Anderson

Haines Junction

Sent from my Galaxy



May 10th, 2023

RE: Comment on the Draft Aishihik Wood Bison Management Plan

Dear Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board,

I am writing on behalf of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in response to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board's efforts to update the management plan for the Aishihik Wood Bison herd. This herd is of territorial, national and international interest. Our work, based out of Fairbanks (Alaska), seeks close partnerships with tribes and agencies as we support efforts interested in restoration of Wood Bison across their original range in boreal Alaska. Such efforts have relevance to species conservation, sustainable natural resource use, and Indigenous food and economic security.

The draft Aishihik Wood Bison management plan does a great job of herd-specific recommendations and for emphasizing different values that they bring to people living within their range. However, we think there is substantial value in ensuring at least one additional goal is added to the plan. We would encourage the board to consider situating this management plan within the wider context of North American wood bison restoration. Specifically, we recommend inclusion of an additional Goal 8: "Support broader inter-herd and transboundary information exchange and coordination."

While the Aishihik is not an internationally shared herd, it resides just east of the transboundary border between Alaska and the Yukon. Individuals from this herd have periodically entered Alaska. That area where Aishihik wood bison have crossed the border, around Chisana and Tetlin, represents good wood bison habitat and is being reviewed as a potential release site by interested groups in Alaska. Any movement toward authorizing new releases would, of course, be contingent on public support. The potential for both transboundary connectivity, and the shared interests in Alaska for new wood bison herds supports our assessment that the plan should reference transboundary considerations, as well as promote continued consultation among Alaska tribes/Yukon First Nations, state/provincial government, and bilateral federal partners.

We also have much to learn from the substantial efforts that the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Provincial Government staff, and federal partners have made to both develop a healthy herd and learn to co-manage this resource over the past three and a half decades. Similarly, we hope to be able to offer support as Alaska herds grow. For example, we recently participated with Parks Canada in helping a metapopulation

analysis of genetic structure across all North American Wood Bison herds (including the Alaskan Innoko herd). Finally, we see consultation as essential to our shared desires and needs of ensuring wood bison are disease free and avoid introgression with Plains bison in this region.

We look forward to continued consultation between US and Canadian interests on this topic in the transboundary Yukon/Alaska region. Doing so will undoubtedly benefit long-term planning and management that supports thriving wood bison, as well as minimizes social conflict associated with bison on both sides of the border.

Sincerely



Martin Robards

Regional Director – Arctic Beringia Program. Wildlife Conservation Society

Cc

Hilary Cooke, Chrystal Mantyka-Pringle – WCS Canada

Thomas Jung – Yukon Government

Tom Seaton – Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Ben Bobowski – Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve