

WOOD BISON SURVEY AND INVENTORY

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-10

WORK LOCATION: Region 3

PROJECT NO. 10.0

PERIOD: 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013

PROJECT TITLE: The Reintroduction of Wood Bison to Interior Alaska and Evaluation of the Factors Influencing Their Survival and Growth

Project Activities and Accomplishments

Regionwide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Provide oversight of the wood bison health, feeding and veterinary care program at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (AWCC).

Improved the health of the captive wood bison herd through intensive treatments for endoparasites and provided high quality hay and additional grain supplements.

Held the captive wood bison herd numbers near a target of 135 total bison through restricted breeding and culling in preparation for a release. Culled a total of 8 bull wood bison. Two were killed on October 31, 2012 and 6 were killed on January 15, 2012.

Completed thorough nutrient analysis of tissues from culled bison and bison that died of natural causes.

Improved mineral supplementation regiment using information acquired from the necropsies and nutrient analysis of tissues from culled and other dead bison.

Completed thorough necropsies of bison that died of natural causes.

Completed body condition scoring of all captive wood bison several times per year in order to monitor bison health status.

ACTIVITY 2: Work with other agencies and organizations to identify and implement priority biological monitoring programs associated with the reintroduction of wood bison.

Worked with the USFWS, reviewing public comments on the proposed section 10(j) rule, then drafting and editing the final rule, which would designate the reintroduced wood bison population as experimental and non-essential, and provide a the legal authority for a release.

ACTIVITY 3: Provide biological information and expertise to support efforts to develop site-specific collaborative wood bison management plans.

With the lack of legal authority to reintroduce wood bison during 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013, and the lack of certainty concerning the location of the first release, collaboration on site specific management plans with other concerned parties has been impossible.

Met with Dr. Alistair Bath, an expert on resolving controversial wildlife issues worldwide through public planning processes from Memorial University at St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada to established the potential for further studies on the human dimensions of wood bison reintroduction which will help the planning process be efficient and successful when it begins.

ACTIVITY 4: Prepare wood bison release sites.

Met with the Shageluk community to discuss the wood bison project and identified a potential site for the soft release.

Observed snow depth and snow conditions in the release area to better understand release strategy.

Reviewed bison and other large ungulate re-introduction literature to refine release techniques and methods.

ACTIVITY 5: Prepare wood bison management reports.

Management report not completed because wood bison not released into the wild.

ACTIVITY 6: Provide wood bison management information to state and federal regulatory processes.

Did not provide information to state and federal regulatory processes because wood bison not released into the wild.

ACTIVITY 7: Assess range condition and work with fire control agencies to improve habitat.

Did not assess range condition and work with fire control agencies to improve habitat because of the lack of legal authority to reintroduce wood bison and the lack of certainty concerning the location of the first release.

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Region III Management Coordinator
