



FOR RELEASE
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New management plan for the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd

WHITEHORSE—The Government of Yukon will adopt the recommendations set out in the *Management Plan for the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd in Southwestern Yukon (2012)* as part of its ongoing commitment to promote the sustainable use of wildlife resources, Environment Minister Currie Dixon announced today.

"This plan provides a broad framework to guide management of the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd in a manner consistent with the recovery of a species at risk, while addressing local concerns and interests," Dixon said.

"A cooperatively developed management plan for the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd ensures that the varied interests in the conservation and management of the population are heard and addressed," Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board chair Harvey Jessup said.

Successful implementation of the species management plan at the community level will require collaboration between the Yukon government, First Nation governments, affected Renewable Resources Councils and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The plan's recommended actions include:

- a goal of maintaining the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd at or near 1,000 animals, post-hunt;
- keeping wood bison separate from plains bison and bison hybrids to protect the genetic integrity of the subspecies; and
- using hunting as the primary tool for managing the population size of the herd, in a manner that is consistent with the other goals and objectives of the plan.

The plan can be downloaded from the Environment Yukon website or YFWMB website.

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See backgrounder below.

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Plan goals and objectives

The *Management Plan for the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd in Southwestern Yukon* provides a broad framework to guide the management of the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd, while addressing local concerns and interests. It contains 34 tasks that address the following four goals:

- Ensure the long-term viability of the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd.
- Provide opportunities for human use and appreciation of wood bison.
- Acknowledge and address conflicts between bison and humans.
- Address land use and ecosystem considerations on the range of the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd.

It includes specific objectives, such as:

- maintaining the population at or near 1,000 animals post-hunt; and
- using hunting as the main tool for managing the population size and distribution of bison.

Challenges and issues

The plan focuses on a wide range of issues related to the management of the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd. The plan continues to address some ongoing challenges, including:

- ensuring the genetic purity of wood bison in Yukon;
- protecting wood bison from diseases of concern;
- reducing the risk of bison-vehicle collisions;
- limiting the range of the Aishihik herd; and
- Understanding the impacts of wood bison on other species and ecosystems.

Plan development

The plan was developed by the Yukon Wood Bison Technical Team which is made up of representatives of Environment Yukon, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation, Kluane First Nation, Alsek Renewable Resources Council, Carmacks Renewable Resources Council, Laberge Renewable Resources Council, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board (YFWMB) and Environment Canada. The YFWMB reviewed the plan, including input through three public meetings, and made recommendations to the minister.

Plan implementation and review

A cooperative approach is required to manage a nationally-listed threatened species, while addressing concerns about wood bison on the landscape, coupled with a strong public interest in harvesting opportunities. A publicly-sanctioned management plan is a way of working together to take care of wood bison and address identified concerns and interests. It is anticipated that the plan will be reviewed after five years by appropriate agencies to determine if the goals and principles are being met.

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