

This proposal will help ensure the National Mammal is a priority in America and Montana.

Feel free to use this guidance to encourage BLM to properly consider and analyze the proposal's beneficial impact on restoration of the national mammal. Although the Plains bison was recently declared the national mammal, there are only 20,000 bison spread across 55 conservation herds in the country. Plains bison are listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the state of Montana. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists the American bison as "near threatened." Most of the existing conservation herds contain fewer than 400 bison, which makes the genetic conservation of the species a national priority.

BLM should analyze the benefits of the proposal for other conservation bison herds

The American Prairie Reserve bison herd is one of only a handful in North America that shows no signs of cattle genes. This proposal will allow the herd to continue to grow and provide a stock of genetically-pure bison to establish and enhance the genetic health of other federal, state, and tribal herds.

The Reserve has demonstrated the talent, resources, and willingness to help make the restoration of our nation's mammal a stunning success. The organization has already contributed to bison restoration elsewhere by donating animals to several federal and state agencies, including Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska, Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge in Colorado, USDA-APHIS National Wildlife Research Center at Colorado State University, Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington, D.C. (for public education purposes), and Arizona Game and Fish Department for the House Rock Wildlife Area.

Through the approval of the proposed action, the gradual growth of the American Prairie Reserve bison herd will ensure close collaboration with managers of other conservation herds in North America, and will support the development of multiple herds that, collectively, will help restore and maintain the genetic variation and integrity of the national mammal.

BLM should analyze the benefits of the proposal for InterTribal bison restoration

Under coordination by the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC), bison restoration is a priority for cultural, spiritual, ecological, and economic purposes on Indian lands. Toward this purpose, the Reserve has already donated bison to the InterTribal Buffalo Council, who distributed these bison to four different members. Most recently, in January 2018, American Prairie Reserve donated 30 bison each to the Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, and Blackfeet Indian Reservations in Montana, and 25 bison to Pe' Sla in South Dakota. This collaboration is certain to increase.

This is particularly relevant to the Fort Belknap Indian Community, who are the Reserve's closest neighbors. The return of bison to the region is a common goal and vision shared with tribal elders, the tribal council, wildlife managers, and spiritual leaders. In 2014, Fort Belknap schools, elders and community members joined the Reserve to welcome the return of some bison to Reserve lands. BLM should consider that this important collaboration would continue to grow as a result of the proposal.