

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2018

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American Prairie Reserve Welcomes Opportunity to Expand Bison Grazing

Proposal will help Reserve improve public access, expand hunting, and diversify the regional economy

BOZEMAN, Mont. – American Prairie Reserve welcomed a Bureau of Land Management proposal published today to expand bison grazing access on several hundred thousand acres of public lands in Central and Northeast Montana, where the group has public lands grazing privileges.

The Montana-based conservation group says the proposal will have a minimal impact on traditional agriculture and instead would be a net positive for the region. They say an expanding bison herd will facilitate more public access and hunting opportunities, while driving more visitation and outdoor recreation to Central Northeast Montana.

“This proposal is an important step to achieving our long-term goals of improving public access, expanding hunting opportunities, and working to diversify the economy in northeast Montana,” said Pete Geddes, Managing Director of American Prairie Reserve. “Agriculture has been and will continue to be a major contributor to the way of life in the area, and this action will not change that.”

The proposal would transition at most, 32,936 animal unit months per year from cattle to bison grazing on the American Prairie Reserve’s leased public lands. If approved, the Reserve estimates it would take twelve years to complete the transition.

The proposed action is consistent with efforts by American Prairie Reserve to encourage and expand public access and [hunting opportunities](#) in the region. In 2016, the Reserve reported 4,803 hunter days across their holdings. This year, the organization offered its first [public bison harvest](#) in which six harvests were awarded. Four were issued through a drawing for residents from the Reserve region and two were auctioned for the general public.

The proposed action is also consistent with ongoing efforts to drive increased demand for visitor spending and outdoor recreation.

A recent [study by the University of Montana](#) concluded there is significant but untapped potential for increased visitation to Missouri River Country. According to the study, if the broader vision of American

Prairie Reserve is realized, nonresident spending could increase 67 percent from the \$113 million spent in the region in 2015.

“That could yield \$56 million in additional economic output and nearly 700 additional jobs,” said the report author Jeremy Sage, an economist and associate director at the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at UM.

The Reserve has plans to expand outdoor and recreation infrastructure to support and encourage year-round visitation in coming years.

The first two huts in an eventual ten-hut system will open this spring. When completed, the system will allow visitors to traverse 200+ miles of the project area on foot, bicycle, canoe, and horseback. Adding to camping options like Buffalo Camp – the Reserve’s first campground built in 2010 – a new 24-site campground off Highway 191 is scheduled to open later this year.

American Prairie Reserve is excited by this opportunity and encourages interested members of the public to engage when the comment period opens April 9th.

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About American Prairie Reserve

American Prairie Reserve’s mission is to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, a spectacular refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America’s heritage. When complete, the Reserve will be larger than Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks combined and will support all the animals that historically called the Great Plains home, including buffalo, wolves, bears, elk, deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, swift fox, upland birds including the greater sage grouse, birds of prey, and all manner of snakes, amphibians, and insects. Already open to the public for recreation including camping, hunting, fishing, and birding, the Reserve offers visitors a once-in-a-lifetime, horizon-expanding opportunity to reconnect with nature on a truly grand scale. **Learn more at americanprairie.org.**