

From: [Kyran Kunkel](#)
To: [Hanauska-Brown, Lauri](#)
Cc: [Sean Gerrity](#)
Subject: Re: bison EIS congrats
Date: Tuesday, June 16, 2015 10:00:02 AM

Lauri,

Understand on the challenges of identifying sites etc. We are happy to be included as you did. Now we will see what the public has to say.....

Yes, lets for sure plan to connect this summer up on APR, we would much like to show you our new Enrico center and work we have going on including bison. It would be great to get an update on your projects and priorities now.

We had a good long meeting with new CMR manager at Enrico last week and he seems keen to collaborate, we are excited about that.

Kyran



On Tue, Jun 16, 2015 at 9:33 AM, Hanauska-Brown, Lauri <LHanauska-Brown@mt.gov> wrote:

Kyran, thanks for your note. But shame on me for not reaching out to you all before release of the draft. I gave up communicating with you after we played phone tag a month or so back. You'll see as you go through the draft that we removed all discussion of the potential sites, one of which was APR. It was simply too confusing for the reader to see those sites, i.e., APR, CMR, and the Blackfeet Reservation/Iinnii Initiative, and understand those were included for demonstration only. Even internally we had a hard time convincing reviewers that this EIS was not a full analysis of those site. ARP is still within the document as a case study.

Hopefully that is not too disappointing for you guys. Stay tuned and thanks to you for all of your help in getting the case study in shape. Hope to see you sometime this summer, perhaps we'll run into each other on the prairie.

From: Kyran Kunkel [mailto:kyran@americanprairie.org]
Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2015 12:58 PM
To: Hanauska-Brown, Lauri
Cc: Sean Gerrity
Subject: bison EIS congrats

From: [Randy Matchett](#)
To: [Kyran Kunkel](#); [Hanauska-Brown, Lauri](#); [Sean Gerrity](#)
Cc: [Paul Santavy](#)
Subject: RE: statewide bison EIS update
Date: Sunday, April 5, 2015 1:10:21 PM

A few thoughts from Randy and I've included Paul here too for his guidance. I'd be very cautionary about any bison deterring fences on CMR, especially any new ones, as CMR has always been clear that FWS is not interested another "fenced bison herd" regardless of who builds/maintains fences. Along those lines, and maybe somebody has already done it but I haven't seen it, has anyone generated a probable bison use/distribution map of where bison might be expected to spend most of their time? ... a "habitat suitability" map for lack of a better term. Based on topography, soils, veg. types and water distribution, and using APR bison movement and location data over the years, is there a predictive map of where bison could stay out of trouble and where the high risk conflict areas might be? Such a map might be helpful in visualizing where high conflict areas may be and places that bison would naturally be attracted to (e.g. Sun Prairie area). I think identifying those areas of chronic, high conflict places where bison naturally "want" to be, need to be thought out and don't worry too much about the occasional rogue animals that happen to take 2 steps beyond a magic line where they won't be tolerated. I know that level of detail is probably too much for this document, but still think it needs some thought. In regards to the private/state acreage totals presented below, perhaps a more accurate reflection would be totaling just those private/state acres on CMR in the area under consideration, and not the refuge as a whole. I do think a combination of lands and jurisdictions will be necessary to be successful for a bison herd managed as wildlife for public benefit. My 2c.

Randy

From: Kyran Kunkel [mailto:kyran@americanprairie.org]

Sent: Sunday, April 05, 2015 10:00 AM

To: Hanauska-Brown, Lauri; Randy Matchett; Sean Gerrity

Subject: Fwd: statewide bison EIS update

Happy easter Lauri,

Would it be useful/helpful here for us to propose as we discussed some, the idea of a shared CMR APR test herd where we would build a robust fence that keeps bison in a shared cmr apr site (ul bend area?) and use apr people and experience to ensure bison stay in etc? and perhaps including our incentive program whereby we compensate any cost for bison on private lands. We could probably readily retrofit old Weidrick allot fences in CMR for this test herd. this would demonstrate we can keep bison contained in short term and cost to neighbors is none. We would be happy to have a conversation with Taylor. We have had some good conversations this winter with him.

Kyran

Kyran Kunkel, Ph.D. | *Lead Scientist*
Affiliate Professor, University of Montana

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: [McDonald, Ken](#)
To: [Hanauska-Brown, Lauri](#); [Sullivan, Mark](#); [Schmitz, Brad](#); [Bertellotti, Gary](#)
Subject: RE: Recent meeting with CD Supervisors and County Commissioners
Date: Thursday, January 19, 2017 3:21:53 PM

Just an FYI so you are up to speed (please don't distribute further) – last week a group of bison advocates met with the Govs office to press for bison restoration at CMR. They included Tom France (NWF), Kyran Kunckle (APR), Keith Aune (WCS), Sen. Mike Phillips, and a couple others. Paul Sihler and I were there and mainly just listened. France et al. were pretty demanding that the clock is ticking and we need to have things in place and hooves on the ground within a couple years so they are well established before the end of Bullock's 4-year term and therefore harder to undo. They did advocate convening an advisory group to help formulate and vet a proposal. The Governor mainly listened, and then made the point that this would antagonize legislators, and that antagonizing the legislators isn't just about bison, but could ultimately affect infrastructure, health care, education, etc. Where it got left was a suggestion that our new Director, Martha, reconvene the advisory committee we had formed previously to help on the EIS and see how open they might be to finalizing the programmatic EIS and then moving forward on an analysis of a potential reintro. site involving the CMR in conjunction with APR – possibly using APR's bison, which would involve whatever legal hoops are necessary to make them wildlife.

So I expect that will likely happen after the session, and based on Mark's portrayal of the temperature surrounding this issue, Martha will get an ear full.

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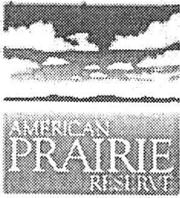
From: Hanauska-Brown, Lauri
Sent: Thursday, January 19, 2017 9:01 AM
To: Sullivan, Mark ; Volesky, Mike ; Sihler, Paul
Cc: Schmitz, Brad ; Bertellotti, Gary ; McDonald, Ken
Subject: RE: Recent meeting with CD Supervisors and County Commissioners

Thank Mark.

FYI: Rachel is trying to re-schedule the December meeting we cancelled due to weather. The objective of that meeting was for me to clarify where we currently are with the EIS and some of alternatives and language within it. The last I heard from Rachel she was narrowing in on Jan 31, likely in Lewistown.

And I just got off the phone with Rob Poertner from Winifred...he said all the same stuff you did here Mark, but a little differently.

From: Sullivan, Mark
Sent: Thursday, January 19, 2017 7:55 AM
To: Volesky, Mike <mvolesky@mt.gov>; Sihler, Paul <psihler@mt.gov>
Cc: Schmitz, Brad <brschmitz@mt.gov>; Bertellotti, Gary <GBertellotti@mt.gov>; Hanauska-Brown, Lauri <LHanauska-Brown@mt.gov>



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SEP 07 2017

FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

September 5, 2017

The Honorable Steve Bullock and Director Martha Williams
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, Room 204
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Dear Governor Bullock and Director Williams,

Thank you for taking the time to visit American Prairie Reserve this summer. I appreciated the opportunity to share a project update with you, introduce you to some of the APR team, and show you around the Reserve. As a follow-up to our conversation that day, I am writing to reiterate American Prairie Reserve's interest in helping to advance a decision on Montana's *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Bison Conservation and Management*. APR will be pleased to engage with principles from any relevant parties, including the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) and the State of Montana, to explore a cooperative arrangement that advances an alternative that will result in wild bison one day inhabiting the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and, eventually, the surrounding areas.

As you know, the mission of American Prairie Reserve is to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, a refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America's heritage.

Among American Prairie Reserve's primary objectives is the development of the largest, most genetically-diverse conservation bison herd in North America. In 2005, we began this effort with the introduction of sixteen bison imported from Wind Cave National Park. Today, due to natural growth rates and additional imports from Canada's Elk Island National Park, our herd numbers close to 1,000 animals. Our herd is free of all reportable diseases and currently resides on three separate parcels including the Sun Prairie, Sun Prairie North, and Dry Fork management units. (See attached map.) On Sun Prairie alone, we have removed more than fifteen miles of interior fencing, allowing bison to graze naturally and wildlife to move throughout the 31,000 acres with minimal hindrance. As our bison population grows, we will expand the land base to keep pace with our progress toward our minimum goal of 10,000 bison.

In the past decade, American Prairie Reserve's bison management track record is known for its lack of contention with our neighbors. In fact, most of them consider American Prairie Reserve an excellent example of how bison can be managed effectively on a relatively large landscape with no negative effects on nearby livestock operations. This speaks to American Prairie Reserve's effective and responsible management as well as our demonstrated commitment to securing the resources necessary to nurture and grow this herd.

As a way of contributing to the potential of wild bison inhabiting the CMR and surrounding areas, American Prairie Reserve is willing to:

- Provide, free of charge to the State of Montana, an ecologically significant number of bison to occupy, as wild animals, an appropriately large area of the UL Bend Wilderness or some other suitably large area in the CMR. The yet-to-be-determined number of bison will be large enough to assure genetic diversity is maintained.
- Participate in frequent evaluations conducted by a management team made up of representatives from FWP, the CMR, and American Prairie Reserve to evaluate progress and identify continuous improvement opportunities.
- Commit the financial and human resources necessary to construct wildlife-friendly fencing and other infrastructure on the CMR, which has been successfully used and refined since 2005 on American Prairie Reserve lands, including those along the boundary of Sun Prairie and the Refuge. We also commit to allocating American Prairie Reserve staff time and equipment to conduct research and co-manage this effort.
- Participate with collaborators such as the National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife, and others to work on a coordinated, multi-year effort to increase social acceptance for bison in the six-county area surrounding the CMR.
- Commit to contributing future instalments of APR bison as requested to augment the CMR's population.
- At the discretion of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, we will take back the bison and reestablish them on American Prairie Reserve private lands in the event of the project's failure.
- Finally, commit to the intent to donate all of APR's bison herd to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for a future, larger, regional wild bison herd to be managed in the public trust. (APR's current bison population, commercially valued at an estimated \$1500-\$2500 per animal, has a total value of nearly \$2,000,000.)

At the same time that a new wild herd is growing on the C.M. Russell Wildlife Refuge, APR will continue to build its bison population north and south of the Refuge using our combined 400,000 acres of private, BLM, and State land sections. Importantly, at such time that the state of Montana is ready to begin the process of converting all of APR's remaining bison into wild animals to be managed by Fish, Wildlife and Parks, APR stands ready to participate. The main requirement APR has to begin this conversion process is a written commitment from Fish, Wildlife and Parks agreeing to maintain, in perpetuity, a minimum population of ten thousand wild bison in the

immediate region of the American Prairie Reserve, a number that represents an “extraordinary” contribution to conservation as defined by Eric Sanderson et al (see enclosed article).

American Prairie Reserve is a uniquely-suited collaborator. We have more than a decade of proven success restoring, researching, monitoring, and managing bison in this region of Montana. Our positive reputation with neighbors and federal and state land management partners has been earned over many years of doing what we say we are going to do.

We believe we have not only the best source herd of bison in the nation – including genetic diversity, no detectable cattle gene introgression, no Department of Livestock reportable diseases, and already on the particular prairie landscape under natural management conditions – but also the talent, resources, and organizational willingness and enthusiasm to help make this effort a stunning and highly appreciated success for future generations of Montanans.

We are excited that the time finally appears to be upon us for Montana to act boldly in establishing new, landscape-scale habitat for our national mammal. Further, the American public's knowledge and appreciation for bison's important ecological role on our country's grasslands is growing steadily and Montana's Native American tribes are expressing more hope and gratitude than ever that bison may finally be coming back and be on their way to taking their rightful place in the cherished, and globally admired, phenomenon that is Montana's reverence for wildlife and nature.

We are enormously appreciative of the Bullock administration's willingness to think big and to emerge as the progressive thought-leader on bison in the American West. Montana's future generations will look back on this period in history as an incredible point of pride.

We are delighted to be a part of this unfolding process and are eager to hear your thoughts on how we can best assist you and participate most productively in this effort. Thank you for considering us a partner and collaborator. We look forward to working with you over the next few years.

Sincerely,



Sean Gerrity
CEO

CC

Mr. Mike Volesky, Chief of Operations, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Mr. Paul Santavy, Project Leader, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge
Mr. Tom France and Mrs. Tracy Stone-Manning, National Wildlife Federation
Representative Mike Phillips

From: [Sihler, Paul](#)
To: [Hanauska-Brown, Lauri](#); [McDonald, Ken](#); [Williams, Martha](#); [Dockett, Rebecca](#); [Volesky, Mike](#); [Bertellotti, Gary](#); [Sullivan, Mark](#)
Subject: Action Items from Today's Bison meeting
Date: Wednesday, October 4, 2017 2:23:31 PM

Here's the action items I heard at the end of today's bison meeting:

1. More fully develop the process by which a third party would go about developing a bison restoration proposal and the department and commission would go about making a decision
2. Draft a decision notice for review that includes the 3 point messages that Martha presented as well as a clear description of the process for the development and approval of a bison restoration project. Also, please evaluate if the components of the decision notice are adequately evaluated in the body of the EA.
3. Develop a proposed strategy for communicating with the FWP Commission about the decision notice
4. Develop a strategy for communicating the key components of the decision notice in advance of its release, including to key stakeholders, legislators and members of the bison stakeholder group. Involve Comm Ed in developing the strategy.
5. Once the process for developing and approving a bison restoration project have been developed, convene a meeting of this group to run through several scenarios, such as the UL Bend proposal, to test run the process and make sure it works.

Time Frame: We want to have these tasks completed by the beginning of November; we will then determine when is the best time to release the Decision Notice.

Who: Mike, Becky and Lauri will determine who needs to work on each of these assignments and make sure they get completed.

Did I miss anything? Did I get them correct?

Thanks!

Paul

Paul Sihler

Chief of Staff

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From: [Hanauska-Brown, Lauri](#)
To: [Thompson, Scott](#)
Cc: [Ensign, John](#); [Schmitz, Brad](#)
Subject: RE: FAQs bison EIS
Date: Friday, January 3, 2020 1:21:00 PM

In response to your questions Scott:

- The last section seems very inviting/challenging for APR to work on a viable proposal. Being the last thing on the FAQs could leave the impression there is a proposal/plan in the works. Is it worth tempering that section a bit?

Talked this over with the DO and we agree with you....the paragraph about APR has been removed from the FAQs. Good catch.

- Similarly, should we also talk about Fort Peck Tribes cultural bison herd from Yellowstone and continuing quarantine and distribution project?

It is our thinking here that only the Blackfoot situation is a true attempt at landscape scale restoration of bison managed as wildlife. Yes, APR has desires but at this time they only have livestock bison. Yes, the tribes have taken quarantine bison but they are all secured behind fences with agreements as to what happens if those bison get off tribal lands. (Right?)

- It says the Blackfoot restoration is outside of the final EIS, but Alternative #3 is on Tribal lands. How are they different?

What about ongoing efforts to restore bison in Montana?

In early 2016, the Blackfoot Nation translocated 89 bison from Elk Island National Park in Alberta, Canada. These bison are genetically pure and free of reportable diseases, and Blackfoot tribal government intends to manage them as free roaming wildlife. The Department anticipates the need to work with the Blackfeet and with other stakeholders, as tribal intent is to eventually have bison restored in one or more of three areas: the culturally significant Badger-Two Medicine portion of the Lewis and Clark-Helena National Forest; Glacier National Park; and lands north of the park toward culturally significant Chief Mountain and into Canada. This restoration of bison to Blackfeet lands is part of a larger cultural restoration project entitled the 'Iinnii Initiative', and the state views this restoration of wildlife as it would the restoration of any native species by another sovereign jurisdiction. In preparing for the potential of eventual movement of bison off of tribal lands, it is the Department's desire to work cooperatively with the Blackfeet Nation, with other stakeholders, and within the mandates of state law. **The Blackfeet restoration effort falls outside the bounds of state law and this final programmatic EIS as tribal governments have jurisdiction for wildlife management within tribal land, in addition, this effort is neither FWP led nor directed. Alternative #3 within the EIS describes a scenario in which bison could be publicly managed on tribal lands. The bison on Blackfeet tribal lands are not publicly managed.**

Is this better?

Lauri Hanauska-Brown
Nongame Wildlife Management Bureau Chief
Wildlife Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

From: [Holmes, Patrick](#)
To: [Bullock, Steve](#)
Cc: [Williams, Martha](#); [Bovingdon, Ali](#); [Perry, Marissa](#); [Loranger, Erin](#); [Schafer, Adam](#)
Subject: Bison Programmatic EIS decision
Date: Friday, January 3, 2020 5:03:26 PM
Attachments: [Final Programmatic Bison EIS Record of Decision January 2020.doc](#)

Governor, please see attached for a final draft of Director Williams' decision on the bison restoration programmatic EIS. FWP is tentatively planning to roll this out on Tuesday a.m. through a conference call with members of the bison discussion group and related stakeholders. A press release and LTE from Martha are planned to go out on Tuesday as well and will be available for review early next week. We also plan some outreach to legislators and believe it will be helpful to have this released in advance of interim committee meetings the week of the 13th. Broadly, the decision remains unchanged from our prior conversation. We have done fairly extensive outreach with partners to gauge whether this is in fact a productive next step and have received a positive response and some suggestions that have been incorporated. A few points:

- The decision does not select any alternative and the Department is not proposing a site specific restoration initiative at this time—rather, the decision points to the need for a collaborative process, and the need for proposals to be fully vetted and developed in accordance with the extensive set of criteria that were outlined by the bison discussion group. It does however offer a pathway to advance an initiative that requires due diligence, engages and reflects landowner and local interests, and is transparent. Our view is that a collaborative approach is the only pathway for an initiative to be successful and durable in line with how we've approached other difficult wildlife issues as a state.
- Some will view this as not pushing far enough, while others will view the decision as the camel's nose under the tent and will want to portray it as the precursor to an 11th hour action on your part. Many will be relieved that there is no proposal, and that a clear process for public engagement would be required prior to a proposal proceeding in the future. To address the most significant concerns, we intend to signal that we believe it is unlikely that any proposals would be fully developed and analyzed in the near term, and so any collaborative efforts that follow would be likely laying the groundwork for a future administration to consider.
- We do not prescribe any specific next steps in the decision document and will not identify any in our rollout beyond potential to serve as a convener/facilitator when and where that makes sense. We have begun conversations with partners, including the Fish and Wildlife Service about what the next steps may look like, but will refine strategy based on the reactions to the decision. Both USFWS and FWP are aligned that there is a need for some leadership to convene a collaborative discussion, but don't want to presuppose whether or not that is in furtherance of a site specific proposal or not at this juncture. In the interim, we'll be working together to determine a strategy recognizing partners may be looking to us to help bring stakeholders together in the near future.

Let us know if you have questions. -Patrick

Patrick Holmes