



U.S. CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ON YELLOWSTONE BISON

On March 20, 2007 the House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, chaired by Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), held an oversight hearing on Yellowstone National Park bison in Washington D.C.

The oversight hearing came in response to mounting criticism by wildlife advocates of a waste of taxpayer money on a costly government plan that threatens America's last wild bison herd in Yellowstone National Park.

Congressional oversight hearing transcripts, audio, and documents submitted into the U.S. Congressional Record on Yellowstone bison are online:

<http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/legislative/congresshearing032007.html>

Rep. Grijalva set the tone for the hearing and stated: "The slaughter of bison needs to stop." His comment was echoed by Rep. Nick J. Rahall II (D-WV) who said, "The slaughter of bison is not required in order to manage the threat of disease. Slaughter is not management. It is an approach from a bygone era, and has no place in a time of rapid scientific and economic progress. We are capable of more ingenuity and more compassion if we are willing to try."

Mike Soukup, Associate Director of the National Park Service, said in written comments: "Bison are an integral part of a visitor's experience in the natural system of Yellowstone National Park. Today the Yellowstone bison herd is the nation's only continuously free-roaming herd, a small but precious genetically true remnant of the vast herds of bison that once roamed this continent. While many consider the bison emblematic of our nation's natural heritage, as a species it has not fared well."

Also testifying at the Congressional hearing were Montana's Governor Brian Schweitzer, Josh Osher of Buffalo Field Campaign, Tim Stevens from the National Parks Conservation Association, Wayne Pacelle, President and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States.

In a sharp criticism of the Interagency Bison Management Plan, Robin Nazzaro, U.S. Government Accountability Office Director of Natural Resources and Environment, wrote in testimony to the subcommittee:

"... [Eight years] after approving the IBMP, the five federal and state partnering agencies remain in step one of the three-step plan because cattle continue to graze on certain private lands. A key condition for the partner agencies progressing further under the plan requires that cattle no longer graze in the winter on certain private lands adjacent to the north boundary of Yellowstone National Park and west of the Yellowstone River to minimize the risk of brucellosis transmission from bison to cattle. The agencies anticipated meeting this condition by the winter of 2002/2003. Until this condition is met, bison will not be allowed to roam freely beyond the park's northern border, west of the Yellowstone River. The Forest Service has been successful in purchasing certain private lands and continues its vacancy of national forest grazing allotments in the area;

however, the partner agencies have yet to acquire cattle grazing rights on other private lands adjacent to the north boundary of Yellowstone National Park and west of the Yellowstone River. While a prior attempt by Interior was unsuccessful, Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks is currently negotiating with the private land owner to acquire these grazing rights."