Buffalo Field Campaign is the only group working in the field every day to stop the slaughter of Yellowstone’s wild buffalo.

BFC Volunteers defend the buffalo’s traditional winter habitat and advocate for their protection. Our patrols stand with the buffalo on their native habitat, and document every move made against the buffalo.

“...we are here to protect the buffalo and other precious animals of the Yellowstone ecosystem, and behold the majesty of this land, a land that our ancestors walked and prayed upon, a land that the mighty buffalo have roamed upon, and unfortunately, a land that man has developed and continues to trample upon. The buffalo of this land embody the creative spirit present here that overwhelms my soul each time I am near them.” — BFC Volunteer Jayna L. Jenson
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Bison Management Plan

Threatens Genetic Integrity of Yellowstone's Wild Bison

By Flo Gardipee

In August of 2000, the federal government and Montana released the Bison Management Plan for the State of Montana and Yellowstone National Park. This Plan contradicts the scientific research and studies used in the Final Environmental Impact Statement’s (FEIS) bibliography (at the NPS website: http://www.nps.gov/planning/yell/bisonfinal/main2.htm). The Plan proposes to cap the Yellowstone bison population at 3,000 animals, a number that is solely on political pressure to control the herd, not on any of the scientific data presented in the Plan.

We must look at the history of bison in this country to gain a full understanding of the Plan’s potential impact. When Euro-Americans arrived in the west there were an estimated 60 to 80 million bison roaming across the plains. By 1900 the herd had been reduced to less than 800 animals. This created a huge genetic bottleneck. Geographic isolation, and inbreeding have contributed heavily to this situation. The greatest risk for a condition known as the “founder effect.” The founder effect is a state in which a founding animal in a new environment results in fixation and loss of genetic variation. Due to the large genetic bottleneck bison suffered in the past, they are especially vulnerable to the effects of genetic drift and even a loss of fitness. The Yellowstone bison herd, descended from less than 30 individuals, is one such herd.

The Yellowstone bison herd exhibits other factors, besides the founder effect, that can contribute to a loss of genetic variation in populations: isolation; no migration (or gene flow); and heavy selection pressures. There is no migration of other bison into Yellowstone, so there is no introduction of new genetic material into this herd. They are subject to an artificial selection pressure when government agencies cull the bison herd of individuals that are seropositive for brucellosis.

Why is it important to preserve the wild Yellowstone bison?

A 1993 study revealed that of 14 public bison herds, two had completely lost heterozygosity (a measure of variability) through the effects of genetic drift and seven others were well on their way. Over half of the public herds are on the verge of inbreeding depression due to a variety of factors. The founder effect, intensive culling of these herds, isolation, and the absence of migration have contributed heavily to this situation. The greatest threat is the application of livestock (i.e. cattle) management techniques to wild bison herds which further threaten their genetic viability. Such forms of management serve only to decrease the possibility of bison losing their long term evolutionary potential.

Bison are going to survive into the future as a genetically intact species, it is imperative that wild, free ranging bison herds are allowed to grow and perpetuate themselves in a natural environment.

The Yellowstone bison herd is in jeopardy of losing its unique genetic integrity. Government agencies insist on needless slaughter of the Yellowstone bison in spite of scientific evidence supporting the idea that biodiversity is a gene called the NRAMP 1 Gene. The NRAMP 1 Gene (Natural Resistance Associated Macrophage Protein) is responsible for creating an immunity to brucellosis that allows them to clear the organism from their bodies. Brucellosis is transmitted usually during breeding. Most bison do not begin breeding until about 2 years of age. If they get exposed to brucellosis at that time, the NRAMP 1 Gene “switches on” and the bison make antibodies and develop long term immunity.

In a study performed on 144 bison, 117 were seropositive. Of those 117, only 23 were in the culture positive. The mean age of the bison that were culture positive and seropositive was 2.34 years of age. It seems likely that those bison may have dropped off sharply by age three. This means that when a buffalo is exposed to brucellosis during their first breeding season, they are developing immunity and clearing the organism from their bodies. No one has done a study on free ranging buffalo to determine if they actually grow out brucella organisms. What could be the reason?

What is the NRAMP 1 Gene?

Current research has discovered that some buffalo possess a gene called the NRAMP 1 (Natural Resistance Associated Macrophage Protein) that allows them to develop an immunity to brucellosis, that allows them to clear the organism from their bodies. Brucellosis is transmitted usually during breeding. Most bison do not begin breeding until about 2 years of age. If they get exposed to brucellosis at that time, the NRAMP 1 Gene “switches on” and the bison make antibodies and develop long term immunity.

What is Brucellosis?

There are no documented cases of brucellosis in Montana in the last ten years, contracted as an occupational hazard. Only two cases have been reported in Montana in the last ten years, contracted as a result of getting infected elk. There are no documented cases of buffalo transmitting brucellosis to humans or livestock in Montana.

The CARD Test vs. Culture Techniques.

The CARD test uses in the field to determine if a buffalo is seropositive for brucellosis. This test only detects antibodies to the brucellosis organism, not the presence of the organism itself. Antibodies are formed in the host in response to exposure to a pathogenic infectious agent. These antibodies are made up of proteins referred to as immunoglobulins or Ig for short.

There are three main immunoglobulins that are considered significant. IgG and IgM are primarily involved in responding to infectious agents, and IgG usually only responds to antigens. IgM antibodies are the first to be formed in response to any new infectious agent. IgG production usually continues as long as the organisms remain in the host, ceases when the organism is cleared from the body, and falls off rapidly after the organism is cleared. IgG antibodies are in the class of immunoglobulins thought to be major public health threats. The CARD test suggests that the infectious agent is still present. IgG antibody production begins rather late in the immune response and continues at high levels with exposure to the infectious organism. IgG antibody levels eventually drop off to low levels and may persist for a lifetime. A person’s lifelong IgG antibody levels are thought to be a result of exposure to vaccinations and enable them to maintain immunity to certain infections. Mammal IgG antibodies are small enough to pass through the placenta and can be found in newborns. The CARD test shows a positive result only in the presence of IgG antibodies, detecting only the animal’s immune response to exposure to brucella organisms. The test is limited to this purpose and no other determination is possible. This can only be proven by actually culturing out the organism itself. Specimens for culture are not obtained on all seropositive buffalo, and of those that are cultured only one in five is actually grown out as brucella organisms. What could be the reason?
Jackson Hole Bison Herd Update
by Pete Leusch, BFC Media Coordinator

In 1968, 15 bison escaped from a fenced ‘wildlife park’ inside of Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming. They roamed free, mixing with migrants from Yellowstone National Park and have grown to a herd of 600 animals. The Jackson Hole bison herd summers in Grand Teton, and since 1975, has moved south onto the National Elk Refuge to take advantage of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife winter feeding program.

This small herd has been targeted as a threat to the Elk Refuge and Wyoming’s lucrative elk hunting industry, and a new plan is in the works to limit the bison’s population by instituting a bison hunt on the National Elk Refuge. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has held small hunts on national forest land adjacent to the park, but has limited its desire to check the growth of this herd without a hunt on the Refuge.

The Elk Refuge and the winter feeding program were started by local ranchers after a harsh winter killed thousands of elk. The program disperses bison herds to areas in the fall that have been overgrazed. The feed keeps the elk herd at an unnaturally high level, providing a plethora of trophy kills for unethical hunters that descended on the area in the fall, and has helped the bison herd to grow at an accelerated rate. Bison that would normally calve in May are calving as early as December on the Refuge. However, the most dangerous side effect of the feeding program is the increased spread of disease, due to the unnatural clustering of the herds.

Elk Refuge managers acknowledge the need to end the feeding program, but claim public pressure makes it nearly impossible. Local ranchers and hunting outfitters came to a recent pre-scoping meeting with buttons that said, “Just Say No To Buffalo on the Elk Refuge” claiming that bison are dangerous and destructive in a valley that is ravaged by subdivisions, ranchettes, and trophy homes.

With a new planning process underway for the Jackson bison and elk herds, the time is ripe to end the feeding program. Bison have inhabited Jackson Hole for thousands of years. Canceling the feeding program would result in healthier, more naturally dispersed herds. Removal of cattle grazing inside Grand Teton Park would provide more forage for wildlife. Preservation of migration corridors to the south and east would allow the animals to migrate to lower elevations that were historically used as winter range.

The new Plan is still in the scoping phase, with alternatives for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement to come. Planning meetings have been limited to Jackson and Cody, WY. This is a national issue, and meetings should be held in other regions.

Please write the Jackson Hole/Elk Planning Team, PO Box 510, Jackson, WY 83001. Email: jackson_hole@fws.gov, requesting public meetings in other places, an end to the feeding program, and equal treatment of the bison and elk on the Refuge. For more info, contact us.

“Powerful livestock interests are robbing our treasury. America’s last wild herd of buffalo with one hand while they slaughter America’s last wild herd of buffalo with the other.”
— Dan Brister

BFC activist erected a tripod to protest the building of the Horse Butte capture facility.

As long as the grass grows and the rivers flow, as long as the buffalo are plenty, we will survive. Amos-Niyiyo, Spotted Bear

—Photo by Linda Thompson/Avocado Productions

Special Thanks to these Foundations and Individuals:

Acorn Foundation
Anderlik Foundation
Avery Farm
Avocado Productions
Joan Barlow
S. Bloom
Common Counsel
Foundation
the Cooperuses
Crs Mulvey
Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young
D. Crosby
Direct Action Fund
Doug Honnold
Earth Friends
Foundation for Deep Ecology
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Indigenous
The Indigo Girls
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the Senders
T. Smith
Wiancko Family Donor
Advocacy Fund of the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole
Louisa Wilcox
Dar Williams
Y2Y Conservation Initiative
ZZYZX Foundation

Awareness of the plight of the Yellowstone bison reached new dimensions in October 2000 when we tabbed at concerts by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. We were featured by Honor the Earth’s “Save the Yellowstone Buffalo Get out the Indian Vote” concert tour with Bonnie Raitt, the Indigo Girls, Joan Barlow, Dar Williams, Ed Juneau and Indigenous.

—Photo by Linda Thompson/Avocado Productions

“We’ve watched bison being hazed by Sheriff’s Jeeps and Highway Patrol cars chasing them with blaring sirens, DOL agents on ATV’s shouting and honking, wantonly shooting cracker rounds directly at bison, and Park Service agents charging blindly through the woods on horseback. Yet often, no more than thirty minutes after the hazing efforts leave the bison behind the Park boundary — and local wildlife in disarray — the bison are right back where they were before, grazing and making their way to Horse Butte.”
— Pete Thomson, BFC volunteer

BFC volunteer watching bison.
Jay Ericson photo

Let the Buffalo Roam!

—Photo by Nick Cook

Artwork by Nick Cook

‘Powerful livestock interests are robbing our treasury with one hand while they slaughter America’s last wild herd of buffalo with the other.’ — Dan Brister

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BFC volunteer watching bison.
Jay Ericson photo
I’ve been asked many times why the buffalo are so important. I have always seen them as the life that is holy.

The buffalo has always been the life force of this land. They gave themselves in many ways that other species could learn, live, and be religiously fulfilled. Peoples of the plains could not have found the strength to exist without the buffalo. There is a power unknown to humans that the buffalo answers. We as people sometimes come close to that understanding, but very seldom do we ever live what lessons we learn for any length of time. I have always learned through thinking out loud so let me share this.

I have been brought into the reality that there were great gifts given to us to relate to the Creator. We were given gifts like the Grail, or the Ark of the Covenant. People look at the Holy Scriptures as gifts from the Creator. People held objects given by the Creator as medicine objects. I have always maintained that when an object becomes holy. Does the word start as holy or is the ink for the pen of the prophet a holy source? The point I am trying to make has to do with the power the words of the creation, because of the relationship of being. The buffalo are trying to awaken us to understand the potential of all relationships to the Creator.

There are those who walk with the buffalo. They come here to stand in the light of the moment. There is a great relationship happening here, between the holy and the human. It has always been my belief that the buffalo are studying us and relating their findings to the Creator. We are under the microscope of the cosmos in a time when we as humans consider ourselves a higher life form.

However, in this time we grow old and change is slow. Many humans do not understand their relationship within the balance and continue to treat the animals poorly. Some humans continue to ignore the buffalo’s power to change and become holy. The buffalo are here to help awaken those people to change. They don’t realize that the buffalo are watching — Ehnamani 2001. Scott Frazier is on the Board of the Buffalo Field Campaign.
The Ecology Center, Inc. “The U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are allowing the Montana Department of Livestock to operate the Horse Butte Capture Facility located in the Yellowstone ecosystem during the winter of 1996-1997 through 1999-2000. This lawsuit seeks to uphold the laws that protect native wildlife and the ecosystems that are part of the American people’s heritage.”

The Montana Department of Livestock is failing to follow bald eagle monitoring requirements on Horse Butte, illegally operating helicopters and all terrain vehicles to haze and capture buffalo in protected bald eagle closure areas, and failing to follow biason hazing requirements and bald eagle conservation measures set by the U.S. Forest Service in the Special Use Permit to operate the Horse Butte Capture facility.

The U.S. Forest Service is charged with failing to analyze cumulative effects of biason hazing in habitat occupied by threatened, endangered and sensitive species, illegally authorizing helicopter hazing in areas where they are strictly prohibited, and failing to enforce biason hazing requirements and bald eagle conservation measures set by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the Special Use Permit and Biological Opinion.

The National Park Service is charged with illegally operating aircraft over bald eagle closure areas, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is charged with failing to protect threatened bald eagles and their habitat.

The Montana Department of Livestock has consistently and systematically violated the terms and conditions of the Special Use Permit and Incidental T ake Statement contained in the Biological Opinion, and by not analyzing the effects of the use of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft on threatened and endangered species and their habitat.

The Defendants have consistently and systematically violated the Special Use Permit terms and conditions and changed the terms of the Annual Operation Plan in violation of the Special Use Permit and the Biological Opinion nondiscretionary terms and conditions. Defendants have also consistently and systematically used helicopters to haze buffalo in areas where they are specifically prohibited by the Biological Opinion and Incidental Take Statement.

The Defendants have attempted to circumvent the helicopter ban by using the “no-fly” zone for helicopters in the 2000-2001 Annual Operation Plan. Through phone calls and communications, the Defendants have attempted to redefine the Horse Butte Area, although the definitions in the EA and BO consistently define the area analyzed for the project’s effects and cumulative effects, and consistently define the “Horse Butte Area.” Such actions therefore constitute violations of the ESA.

In the best of Plaintiffs’ knowledge and belief, Defendants have failed to consult with the Endangered Species Act of 2000.

The Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) rounds the operation of the Horse Butte Capture facility are arbitrary and capricious. “We have repeatedly warned the Montana Department of Livestock and the Gallatin National Forest that they are illegally impacting threatened bald eagles and their habitat,” said Darrell Geist of Cold Mountain, Cold Rivers the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit: “The Montana Department of Livestock has consistently and systematically violated the terms and conditions of the Special Use Permit to operate the Horse Butte Capture facility located in the Yellowstone ecosystem during the winter of 1996-1997 through 1999-2000. This lawsuit seeks to uphold the laws that protect native wildlife and the ecosystems that are part of the American people’s heritage.”

Recently, the U.S. Forest Service released its bald eagle ecology and management plan for Hedges and Earthquake Lakes. A plan recommended by professional wildlife biologists to analyze the impact of the Horse Butte Capture Facility. No analysis is presented assessing impacts to established bald eagle nesting territories stemming from the government’s biason management operations during the winter of 1996-1997 through 1999-2000. “The bald eagle and the wild buffalo are the great symbols of freedom and wildness in this land,” said Jim Coefield of The Ecology Center, Inc. “The U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are allowing the Montana Department of Livestock to run amok and do what pleases at any cost. The vast majority of people do not support the agencies’ actions, and we trust the Court to use reason and end this disgrace.”

Photo by Jay Ericson.

Photo by Chuck Praznik.

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Montana DOL helicopters were illegally deployed to haze and capture Yellowstone’s native buffalo, disturbing habitat of threatened bald eagle and sensitive wildlife.

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International Buffalo Petition Drive Update

During the past two years over 90,000 people joined together and signed a citizens’ petition requesting the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Interior put the interests of wildlife first on our public lands.

The petition represented a common sense grassroots solution to a complex problem. It requested a simple action: turn 4 federal grazing allotments over to buffalo and wildlife, as intended when the Gallatin National Forest was created as a buffer zone. This would save millions of taxpayer dollars as well as the lives of buffalo.

What was the public officials response? Simple – ignore the will of the people.

They reassigned the grazing permit without any NEPA analysis and didn’t even bother to acknowledge the petition. Why? That’s a good question.

Federal agencies and officials have continually failed to prepare legally sufficient environmental documentation analyzing all environmental impacts of buffalo management, and to prevent impacts on imperiled species. Forest Service lands should be used for wildlife as intended by law. Current grazing allotments on public lands on Horse Butte should be designated as buffalo habitat.

Now there’s a new President, a new Secretary of the Interior and a new Forest Service Chief. The new Chief, Dale Bosworth, was the Region One Forester that received the petitions and sent them to the Chief’s Office in Washington DC in the fall of 2000. He also was the direct supervisor of the Gallatin NF employee that reassigned the permit. So he is very familiar with the Yellowstone buffalo. All three can cancel this allotment with the stroke of a pen.

December 2000

Dale Bosworth, National Supervisor of the Gallatin NF employee that reissued the grazing permit

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Join us on the Front Line! Support us from Afar!

We are on patrol all day, everyday, defending the buffalo on their critical habitat outside Yellowstone National Park and documenting every action taken against them. We have immediate openings for field volunteers. All volunteers are provided room and board in a log house on Hebgen Lake, near West Yellowstone, Montana. If you can’t visit in person, your tax-deductible contribution will make our patrols possible. Please contact us for volunteer information or with questions. email: buffalo@wildrockies.org

New Gift this Year!

“Whatever becomes of the buffalo, becomes of us…”

Set of 10 cards & envelopes

Only $15

earth friendly greeting cards

100% recycled paper

Order yours today (coupon on reverse side)

Support Our Work to Defend the Buffalo and look great in a new Tee Shirt, too!

Proceeds support our front-lines work to protect Yellowstone’s native, wild buffalo herd!

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Program Development Update
Su Gregerson, BFC Program Development Coordinator
Buffalo Field Campaign is the only group working in the field 365 days a year with the last free roaming, wild bison. The Campaign also is much more than that. It encompasses everyone that cares for the buffalo and demands their protection for future generations. It includes those who cherish the beauty and wildness of the greater Yellowstone ecosystem and realize this habitat is critical for the buffalo and all the species that live there. The Campaign is the totality of all of our efforts – including the tens of thousands of folks who support our strategies, but have not set foot in Montana or Yellowstone. Thanks for allowing us to be on the frontlines and for your letters of support and donations – we couldn’t do it without all of you!

Accomplishments:
* More than 300 volunteers, from across the country and around the world, came to West Yellowstone to join us on our daily patrols. This influx of public support made it possible to maintain our constant vigil on the Park’s western boundary from October through June. Volunteers were in the field from dawn before day to dusk in harsh winter conditions. Each patrol was equipped with video cameras, radios and maps and trained in media advocacy, non-violence and backcountry skills. This brings the total number of volunteers that have been to camp to over 900!
* An ESA lawsuit was filed (see article on page 6)
* A citizen’s petition, demanding that buffalo be given precedence over cattle on public lands designated as “wildlife habitat” garnered more than 90,000 signatures. We delivered the petition to the President, Interior Secretary, and Forest Service Chief.
* We produced and printed over 100,000 educational newsletters and distributed them worldwide. We provided valuable video footage to international, national and local media to raise public awareness.
* The “Stop-the-Slaughter” listserve kept tens of thousands of people up-to-date with timely information and provided subscribers with effective actions to take to protect the Yellowstone buffalo and other wildlife and their habitat.
* We cultivated working relationships with key organizations on a regional and national level, and extended our local support in the West Yellowstone community.
* BFC’s Public Education and Outreach Program worked throughout the year to deliver accurate information to citizens with the goal of holding public agencies accountable through public pressure.

This is some of what we accomplished on a frugal, grassroots budget. I’d love for the buffalo to be truly protected and be “put out of business” but with the current management policies and political climate, that doesn’t seem likely for a while. It is critical that BFC volunteers continue to be the eyes and the ears for the American public and advocate for the last free roaming wild buffalo and their habitat.

Please take a moment and reflect on the value of the wild Yellowstone buffalo to you and to future generations. Sixty percent of our income is from concerned individuals like you. Please - send your support, now. Each donation is critical to our success. I would be happy to provide you with any additional information you need to begin to or increase your support for this important work.

It is an honor to work for the majestic buffalo. I hope you join in this work and commit to make annual donations until we know that the buffalo are truly protected. Together we can make a difference!

For all that are wild and free, Su.

Buffalo Field Campaign Headquarters on Hebgen Lake near West Yellowstone, Montana. — Chuck Ireston photo.

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Solutions to the Problem:

* Designate and protect National Forest lands surrounding Yellowstone Park as habitat for native wildlife.
* Conserve the genetic diversity of Yellowstone’s wild bison herd.
* Apply scientific expertise and fully engage public involvement to protect Yellowstone’s unique ecosystem.
* Protect and promote the Yellowstone buffalo as a wild, free-ranging herd.
* During planning processes, take into consideration the cultural and spiritual relationship between the buffalo and Native Americans.

Although Montana claims the threat of brucellosis is great, ranchers in affected counties are not required to vaccinate against the disease. Vaccination would protect livestock far more effectively and economically than the current wars against the buffalo.

* Agencies should follow the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and protect wildlife in the ecosystem.

* The Department of Livestock is the wrong agency to control the fate of the wild, free-roaming Yellowstone buffalo. DOI agents are not trained wildlife managers.

* Buffalo are not cattle. They deserve all the protections that other wild species receive.

* Debunk the brucellosis myth.

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Use your pen, phone, or computer to urge our public officials to stop the slaughter and implement common sense solutions to the problem. Letters to the editor of your local paper are a great way to let people know about this issue. Check out our website for more info and speak out for the buffalo! It just takes a moment and does make a difference!

Dale Busworth, Chief, Forest Service, Auditor’s Bldg
1014 Washington Ave SW
Washington, DC 20246
Phone: (202) 272-2166

Let them know how important wild buffalo are. Do they even know what’s happening?

President George Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500
Phone: (202) 456-1414, Fax: (202) 456-2461
email: president@whitehouse.gov

Marc Bridges; Director
Montana Department of Livestock
Box 202201
Helena, MT 59620
Phone from MT at (800) 523-3162; ext: 3 or from out of state (406) 444-2043
email: dir@dplgs.state.mt.us

Governor Judy Martz
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620
within Montana: (406) 352-2273
Out of state: Phone: (406) 444-3111
fax: (406) 444-4151

Will you spend your money in a State with a worse Bison Management Plan?

Fran Maniella; Director nominee (6-4-01)
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240
Phone: (202) 208-6843
dir@nps.gov

The White House
200A Whitten Bldg
Washington, D.C. 20246
President George Bush
Phone: (202) 456-1414; Fax: (202) 456-2461
email: president@whitehouse.gov

The Buffalo Field Campaign. BFC file photo

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Please make a tax deductible donation to the Buffalo Field Campaign

Your donation funds, clothes, equips and houses volunteers, supports our public education and outreach efforts, and helps us protect Yellowstone’s native wild buffalo!

$36 supports one activist in the field for one week.

Thank you!

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City, State, Zip _________________________

I can help defend the buffalo with my contribution:

$360 __ $250 __ $100 __ $50 __ $36 __ Other ___

Also:
Send me ___ Notecards @ $15/package of 10
Send me ___ T-shirts @ $20 Sizes: Design:
Please send contributions and requests to:
Buffalo Field Campaign, P.O. Box 957, West Yellowstone, M5 5758