February 22, 2021

Chairman Steve Hinebauch, Members of the Senate Fish & Game Committee
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Buffalo Field Campaign comments on SB 255: Do Not Pass

Chairman Hinebauch and Members of the Senate Fish & Game Committee,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign, I am submitting comments on SB 255. Mr. Chairman, I request my testimony be entered into the hearing record. Thank you.

SB 255 may generate revenue for government “management” but it does not support the conservation or recovery of wild buffalo in Montana. Proceeds from auctioning a state buffalo hunting license “must” go to MCA § 87-1-216, which has two parts.

First, under MCA § 87-1-216, Fish, Wildlife & Parks issues tags to hunt wild buffalo from Yellowstone’s wild herds for “disease control” when authorized by the state veterinarian and the Dept. of Livestock pursuant to MCA § 81-2-120(c).


These numbers do not count subsistence hunters traveling from all over the country to exercise Treaty reserved aboriginal hunting rights in the Yellowstone region to somehow meet the needs of 66,383 combined members of the Nez Perce Tribe, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Confederated Salish and Kootenai

“Protecting the Last Wild Bison”

Proceeds from SB 255 don’t go to conserving habitat or making more habitat available for wild buffalo, but for removing wild buffalo seasonally occupying less than 0.4% of their native Montana.

Second, under MCA § 87-1-216, Fish, Wildlife & Parks is relegated to considering proposals from any party willing to pay for the costs of complying with a 29-point list of mandates to recover wild buffalo as a wildlife species in the state. Bison Conservation and Management in Montana, Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, Ch. 7 pages 206–209 (December 2019).


Until Montana adopts the commonsense idea of managing wild buffalo like wild elk, the migratory wildlife species will not recover, and the land, the state, and the people will be all the poorer.

Do not pass SB 255.

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