



**BUFFALO**  
FIELD CAMPAIGN

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April 14, 2021

**Please Veto HB 302**

Dear Governor Greg Gianforte,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign's members in Montana and across the country, we respectfully ask you to veto HB 302.

We agree with the principle local control for local decisions, but reintroducing American bison is a decision belonging to Montana in its' trustee role, one in which local communities get to fully participate as the law requires.

Montana is a trustee for wildlife species for succeeding generations, a duty that cannot be delegated.

HB 302 suffers from the same defects as previous bills vetoed and voted down in 2019 (HB 332) and 2015 (SB 284): unconstitutionally delegating veto power to a local authority for a decision that belongs to all Montanans.

HB 302 also interferes with all Montanan's interest and right to participate in decisions to reintroduce wild American bison in the state. Mont. Const. art. II, part II, § 8 Right of Participation.

*"Protecting the Last Wild Bison"*

HB 302 undermines Montana's trust responsibility for restoring American bison, our country's National Mammal, by giving a board of county commissioners veto authority over Montana's decision.

Furthermore, Montana lawmakers have already imposed costly, unfunded mandates in Mont. Code Ann. § 87-1-216 impeding the reintroduction of wild buffalo in Montana.

Under Mont. Code Ann. § 87-1-216, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is relegated to considering proposals from any party willing to pay for the costs of fencing and containment, animal identification and tracking, disease testing and monitoring, a range survey and management plan, reduce the area available if buffalo "escape" containment, depopulation if reintroduction is "unacceptable" or the costs "impractical" or there is a disease outbreak, secure short and long term funding and a budget, assume liability for property and public safety, and comply with a 29-point list of mandates. Bison Conservation and Management in Montana, Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, Ch. 7 pages 206–209 (December 2019). The wildlife agency has no plan or proposal of its' own to reintroduce American bison.

According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, wild American bison are at risk of "extirpation in the state."

Montana is obligated to do more for American bison now roaming less than 1% of their breeding range and habitat, a precarious state for a cherished migratory wildlife species which once roamed vast territories.

Restoring a keystone ecological species in the wild, American bison, would provide resilience against the degradation and loss of habitat, clean water, and biological diversity that is accelerating under a rapidly changing climate caused by fossil fuel pollution.

Thwarting Montanan's ability to recover American bison as a wildlife species will create serious adverse consequences for the state which can be avoided by vetoing HB 302.

Qeciyewyew, Thank you, for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James L. Holt, Sr." The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being the most prominent.

James L. Holt, Sr.  
Executive Director, Buffalo Field Campaign  
Nez Perce Tribal Member

"The Earth and I are of one mind." - Chief Joseph



## About Buffalo Field Campaign

Buffalo Field Campaign was founded in 1997 to stop government harassment and slaughter of Yellowstone's wild buffalo herds, to protect the natural habitat of free-roaming buffalo and native wildlife, and to work with all people—especially Indigenous Nations—to honor and protect the sacredness of the buffalo.

Buffalo Field Campaign's Hebgen Lake office is located near West Yellowstone, in Gallatin County, Montana. Buffalo Field Campaign is supported by people from Montana and around the world who come to visit the region, advocate for native wildlife and the ecosystems upon which they depend, and enjoy the natural wonders of our irreplaceable public trust lands and waters.

As an organization and on behalf of our members, Buffalo Field Campaign is deeply committed and actively involved in protecting the only remaining descendants of indigenous American bison to continuously occupy their territory in the United States.

Buffalo Field Campaign publicizes the plight of American bison, our National Mammal, works to end their slaughter by government agencies, advocates for the enduring protection of viable populations of migratory buffalo and their freedom to roam.

Buffalo Field Campaign actively engages the American people to honor our natural heritage by allowing buffalo to exist as an indigenous wildlife species in their homelands.

Buffalo Field Campaign volunteers patrol habitat where buffalo migrate in the Yellowstone, Gallatin, and Madison river valleys, including the region's National Parks and National Forests. These direct experiences with buffalo in their territory inform our actions and strengthen our commitment for gaining permanent protections for the migratory species in the wild.