



BUFFALO
FIELD CAMPAIGN

March 21, 2023

Chairman Ross Fitzgerald
Members of the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee
State Capitol
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620

Buffalo Field Campaign comments on SJ 14: Do Not Pass

Chairman Ross Fitzgerald and Members of the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee,

Mr. Chairman, I request my testimony be entered into the hearing record. Thank you.

Buffalo Field Campaign opposes SJ 14.

SJ 14 does not reflect the will of Montanans who favor restoring wild buffalo on public and tribal lands, 75% and 78% respectively, (Tulchin Research Jan. 7, 2015).

When specifically asked 70% of Montanans support restoring a wild buffalo population in and around the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (Moore Information Feb. 23-24, 2011).

The lack of provisions in Montana law providing for a self-sustaining population of wild buffalo may make their reintroduction more likely on the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge.

"Protecting the Last Wild Bison"

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SJ 14 neglects recognizing Montana's duty to manage for the recovery of sensitive species (Mont. Code Ann. § 87-1-201) and "in a manner that prevents the need for listing" as an endangered species (Mont. Code Ann. § 87-5-107).

In Montana, buffalo are a native "species of concern" and "considered to be 'at risk' due to declining population trends, threats to their habitat, and/or restricted distribution . . . making it vulnerable to . . . extirpation in the state." (Adams & Dood, Background Information on Issues of Concern for Montana: Plains Bison Ecology, Management, and Conservation, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks June 2011, fwp.mt.gov/binaries/content/assets/fwp/conservation/bison/fwp-bison-background-document.final.pdf).

Native buffalo deserve more than another legislative attempt to stop their recovery as a valued and respected wildlife species with the freedom to roam Montana.

SJ 14 is not amendable. Do not pass SJ 14.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell Geist". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darrell Geist, habitat coordinator
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About Buffalo Field Campaign

Buffalo Field Campaign was founded in 1997 to stop the government from harassing and slaughtering 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 respect 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 Yellowstone, advocate for native wildlife and the ecosystems on 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 American bison to continuously inhabit their indigenous range in the United States.

Buffalo Field Campaign publicizes the plight of American bison, our National Mammal, and advocates for buffalo's freedom to roam.

Buffalo Field Campaign actively engages the American people to honor our natural heritage by allowing buffalo to persist and adapt as a migratory wildlife species in their indigenous range and habitat.

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 in the field inform our actions and strengthen our commitment for gaining permanent protections for buffalo remaining in the wild.